



Statement from the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD and the Department of Education and Skills regarding Leaving Certificate 2020 Calculated Grades Process

Saturday 3 October 2020

The Minister for Education Norma Foley TD has updated Leaving Certificate 2020 students on matters relating to the corrected, higher Calculated Grades which are to issue to some students.

The Department of Education and Skills will re-open the student Calculated Grades portal at 6pm today, Saturday 3 October, and all students who are due to receive corrected, higher grades, will be able to access their results.

When the portal is reopening students will receive a text message to say whether their grade is changing to a higher grade or not.

The Department will e-mail students whose grades have been corrected.

Students who receive improved marks will also be able to see these new marks in the portal.

- 5,408 students will receive a higher grade, by one grade band, in one subject.
- 621 students will receive a higher grade, by one grade band, in two subjects.
- 71 students will receive a higher grade, by one grade band, in three or more subjects.

6,870 grades in total will increase affecting 6,100 students.

614 schools and other centres recognised to hold the Leaving Certificate will have one or more upgraded results. This is out of a total of 741 schools and centres.

It is important to note that no student will receive a lower grade as a result of this process.

Following the finding of errors in the code used by the Calculated Grades national standardisation process, the Minister for Education commissioned Education Testing Services (ETS) to provide an independent expert opinion on the coding. The ETS statement is now published here: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/89698/73e7a5b6-faaa-4bf7-a5e0-cf5f0d461ed1.pdf>

ETS raised two issues in their statement.

The first is an error which occurred in the use of data, where a student did not sit all three core subjects at Junior Cycle.

In those cases, the system was meant to use the average national Junior Cycle score, in the missing subject, of the group of students who took their Leaving Certificate in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Instead, it chose that student's next best subject for inclusion in the group computation.

The second issue raised by ETS is how the algorithm treated students' marks at the extreme ends of the scale. ETS noted that the treatment does not exactly match what is described in the national standardisation group's report, and confirmed that this does not have any meaningful impact on results.

This issue relates to those students whose marks are 99 per cent and above, and those whose marks are one per cent and below. The ETS statement says that a student could not have received a lower grade as a result of this issue.

Speaking directly to students, Minister Foley said:

"Last week I expressed my regret to students for what had happened. I want to reiterate that today.

"You have had an exceptionally difficult year. I'm sorry for that. And I'm sorry this last week delivered more uncertainty to you.

"When we found errors in the code, I decided to seek independent expert oversight in the interest of certainty, particularly for students.

"I am glad that we can now provide students whose grades were lower than they should have been with their corrected results today and that this period of uncertainty is now over for all students.

"I wish you all every success in your choices and your journeys."

The full set of student data has been re-run in the corrected model.

The Department's Calculated Grades Executive Office and the Educational Research Centre have each run data checks independently of each other. The results that will now be published on the calculated grades student portal are the correct results under the model. A corrected file of results has been provided to the CAO earlier this afternoon.

The CAO will now establish how many students are eligible to receive a new CAO offer.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will work with the CAO and the higher education institutions to see how these students can be facilitated to commence the course that they would, in other circumstances, have been offered in an earlier round.

Any student who has applied to a higher education institution outside the State who believes their grade change will impact those arrangements should contact the relevant higher education institution in the first instance.

The Department's helpline on 01 8892199 and will be open today until 7pm and tomorrow from 11am-4 pm. The email address is LC2020@education.gov.ie.

The National Parents Council Helpline will re-open on Monday at 11 am. Full details of these arrangements are on gov.ie/leavingcertificate.

ENDS

Notes to editors

A decision was taken on 10 April to postpone the Leaving Certificate Examinations until July, which was followed by a further announcement on 8 May to move to Calculated Grades.

Online registration for Calculated Grades opened on 26 May.

The Leaving Certificate results were issued on 7 September.

On 30 September, Minister for Education Norma Foley announced that two errors had been found in the coding used in the Calculated Grades process.

The model was designed to take the Junior Cycle results of a group of students and use that group's results to inform the calculation of their Leaving Certificate Results. It bears re-stating; the system did not take the results of a single student's Junior Cycle exams and apply it to that specific student's Leaving Certificate. Rather, the system looked at performance at an aggregate class level in the Junior Cycle examinations, and applied that in calculating students' Leaving Certificate Results.

The model was intended to use the students' scores in Irish, English, Maths and their two strongest subjects. As you know, the error we discovered meant that the coding drew in the students' two weakest subjects rather than two strongest scores.

A second error concerned the inclusion of Civil Social and Political Education (CSPE), when it should have been disregarded by the system.

Following this, the Minister commissioned Education Testing Services (ETS) to provide an independent expert opinion on the coding. This statement has now been published and students are being issued with their corrected grades via the calculated grades student portal at gov.ie/LeavingCertificate.

It was announced on 26 August that the postponed examinations will commence on 16 November. Registration for these examinations is open until Wednesday 7 October.