

State Examinations and Accredited Grades - Arrangements for Leaving Certificate Applied 2021

1. Introduction

In July 2020, the Department published advice for management and teachers of Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) 2020/21 in Second-Level Schools and Centres for Education. The published advice set out the curriculum and assessment arrangements for the LCA Year 1 and Year 2 students for the current academic year 2020/21.

However, owing to COVID-19 and the resultant closure of school buildings, students and learners have experienced a significant loss of face-to-face teaching and learning in the early months of 2021 as well as that experienced in the later part of the 2019/2020 school year. Therefore, the Minister is making arrangements to put in place the necessary legislative requirements to enable the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to operate a system of SEC Accredited Grades in addition to conventional examinations (inclusive, where applicable, of additional assessment components) for current Leaving Certificate Applied students.

This means that for Leaving Certificate Applied 2021 results will be awarded on the basis of the better of

Either

- Students' performance in Leaving Certificate Applied examinations in any subject taken by them, including, where appropriate, their performance in the completion of additional components (coursework, orals, etc.)

Or

- SEC Accredited Grades awarded to students in each subject based on schools' estimates of students' likely performance in the 2021 LCA examinations¹ and a national standardisation process.

Given the modular nature of the LCA programme, students are assessed and awarded credits at regular intervals over the two-year programme. In addition to the completion of modules, students' tasks, practical coursework, practical performance, oral and written examinations are assessed by external examiners appointed by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

As part of the planning for the certificate examinations in 2021, specific arrangements that reflect the modular approach in LCA are required to facilitate LCA students in achieving their programme award. Typically, the LCA coordinator assists in co-ordinating the arrangements at school level.

Information provided in this guide should be considered in conjunction with [A Guide to State Examinations and Accredited Grades for Leaving Certificate 2021](#).

¹ Note that changes have been made to the LCA examinations in 2021. See section 2 of this guidance and Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021

2. State Examinations

All students may opt to take Leaving Certificate Applied examinations, (including written examinations and related additional components) in 2021.

The State Examinations Commission will put in place the necessary arrangements to provide these, subject to prevailing health advice. Students who wish to take the examinations will be able to participate in orals, practical performance tests and practical coursework while those who do not have the option of SEC Accredited Grades.

LCA Year 2 candidates will be required to register on the SEC's Candidate Portal; confirm their subject; opt for the examinations and/or to receive SEC Accredited Grades. The SEC Candidate Portal will open on 10 March 2021 at 12 noon and close on the 16 March at 6pm.

In the case of LCA Year 1 candidates, the SEC will be in contact with schools and centres in due course. LCA Year 1 candidates do not have to register on the SEC Candidate Portal in March.

2.1 Adjustments to the Examinations

In response to the disrupted learning experienced by students during the periods of school closures in 2020 adjustments were made to the assessment arrangements for post-primary students taking State certificate examinations, including LCA, in the 2020/21 school year. Details of those adjustments were communicated to schools, teachers and students in the **Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021** available [here](#). Specific advice and arrangements were communicated in relation to LCA in the **Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Advice for management and teachers of LCA 2020/21 in Second-Level Schools and Centres for Education** available [here](#).

In addition to these arrangements and to take account of the further period of school closure in January/February 2021 some further adjustments have been put in place and these are outlined in the following sections.

2.2 Adjustments to the LCA Written Examinations

In the case of LCA written examinations, the assessment arrangements set out in **Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021** confirmed that no adjustments would be made to the final examination papers but a scaling, by a factor of 1.15 was to be applied to the mark awarded.

Further adjustments to the LCA written examinations will follow the same approach so as to retain the familiar structure of the examination paper and a scaling by a factor of 1.25 to the mark awarded. For example, if a candidate is awarded 120 marks out of a total 200 marks the mark will be scaled by 1.25 so that the mark awarded for grading purposes will be 150 marks out of a total of 200 marks (120 x 1.25). The scaling will be implemented up to the total mark for the examination and capped at that total.

Overall, the change made can be viewed as reflecting and recognising disruption of normal teaching and learning patterns and some associated loss of learning time, while acknowledging that teachers have made very significant efforts to provide for continuity in learning through remote teaching.

LCA written examinations are scheduled to commence on 9 June 2021. The timetable for these examinations is available [here](#).

2.3 Additional components (practical coursework, practical performance tests and oral examinations)

These components allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning across a range of practical and applied skills.

The details of the altered arrangements for each subject (including adjusted dates for the submission of coursework and the completion of other components) are outlined below.

2.3.1 Practical Coursework

Practical coursework is assessed in the LCA vocational specialisms which include:

1. Graphics/ Construction
2. Engineering
3. Technology
4. Childcare/ Community Care
5. Craft & Design

LCA Year 2 candidates will complete the practical coursework for each of these vocational specialisms. The projects will be made available in the school for marking as normal by SEC appointed examiners. For each of the vocational specialisms 1-4 listed above, candidates will be required as normal to attend for an interview on the day that the external examiner is marking the practical coursework in schools. This will take place as usual during the weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021.

In the case of Craft & Design, as in any year, candidates are not required to present for interview on the day when the external examiner is in the school.

These arrangements are subject to public health advice and the provision of appropriate public health measures in relation to physical distancing.

Flexibility in the arrangements for the completion and submission of coursework was notified to schools in January 2021. In finalising the submission dates, due consideration has been given to the need to protect students' tuition time for the remainder of the school year and ensuring that public health requirements are adhered to.

2.3.2 Practical performance tests

Practical performance tests will be scheduled to take place between 17- 21 May 2021 for the following vocational specialisms:

- Hotel Catering & Tourism
- Office Administration & Customer Care
- Active Leisure Studies
- Hair and Beauty
- Agriculture/Horticulture

These assessments will be delivered in schools as close to normal as possible by external examiners appointed by the SEC, subject to public health advice at the time.

In selecting activities and completing practical performance tests, consideration will have to be given to the relevant public health advice at the time and the possible options that students complete in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

In relation to public health requirements consideration will need to be given for example to the following:

- Active Leisure Studies: Teachers are advised to select activities from the brief that they are satisfied can be both engaged in and assessed in line with public health advice. For example, a school that normally selects aquatics may need to consider choosing an alternative activity.
- Hair and Beauty: limitations may apply to accessing live models for practical aspects.

In the case of the vocational specialism, Information & Communication Technology, the two-hour practical performance and written test will proceed as normal on 12 May 2021, subject to public health advice.

Practical performance tests will proceed as normal and will be conducted under examination conditions, subject to public health advice.

2.3.3 Oral examinations/tests

LCA oral language examinations generally take place in the month of May. This year these examinations will take place during the period from 3 to 12 May 2021, in the languages of English and Communication (LCA Year 2 candidates), Gaeilge Chumarsáideach, French, German, Spanish and Italian (LCA Year 1 and LCA Year 2).

Schools will hold the examinations at times outside of normal tuition time so that students' normal tuition is not interrupted to take the examination. For example, examinations may be scheduled in periods before or after the normal school day or at weekends. The scheduling of the examinations, within the period 3 to 12 May 2021, will be a matter for the management of the school but schools should seek to limit the period for running of these examinations as far as practicable to a period of five consecutive days.

Oral examinations will be conducted under examination conditions by a teacher or teachers, qualified in the relevant subject/s, appointed by the management of the school. The teacher may be a suitably qualified member of staff of the school, a neighbouring school, or another suitably qualified teacher engaged by the school. Teachers carrying out this task will be remunerated by the SEC under arrangements similar to those which apply to the local appointment of examinations personnel. Normal rules with respect to the vetting of teachers will apply.

Teachers conducting the examinations will be provided with guidance by the SEC. The oral examination will be recorded electronically, and the recording will be sent to the SEC for marking.

The SEC has a scheme annually for examination aide provision which can be used in the administration of these tests.

2.4 Tasks

In order to prioritise face-to-face assessments in other events for which this interaction is more integral and fundamental to the assessment, the **interview element** of the LCA Tasks is cancelled as an exceptional measure. The purpose of the task interview is to provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their learning and their oral communication skills. In the case of the Contemporary Issues Task, candidates are required to provide a short oral presentation as part of the interview for which there are discrete marks allocated in the marking scheme. The interview also provides candidates with an opportunity to exemplify and validate the material in their portfolio and during the interview candidates may gain or lose marks depending on the responses provided.

In the absence of the interview, as an exceptional measure for 2021, the following arrangements are being put in place for the assessment of LCA tasks. Candidates

presenting for tasks in Year 1 and Year 2 (with the exception of the Contemporary Issues Task, see below) will be awarded 10 marks in addition to what they are awarded for their written portfolio. These marks are to compensate candidates for the marks that they may have been awarded for oral communication skills and marks that they may have gained for their written portfolio had the interview taken place.

In the case of the Contemporary Issues Task, completed by Year 2 candidates in Session 3, candidates will be awarded 18 marks in addition to what they are awarded for their written portfolio. These marks are to compensate candidates for the marks that they may have been awarded for their oral communication skills, the oral presentation and marks they may have gained in other areas of their written portfolio had the interview taken place.

Both Year 1 and Year 2 candidates will also be required to complete and submit their Personal Reflection Task. The assessment of this Task does not include an interview.

2.4.1 LCA Year 1 (2020/21)

- Tasks in Session 1 (General Education Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner over the Easter holidays, week beginning 6 April 2021.
- Tasks in Session 2 (Vocational Preparation Task and Vocational Education Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner in the week beginning 8 June 2021.
- The Personal Reflection Task Statement 1 should be completed in May 2021 and submitted to SEC for marking as normal.

2.4.2 LCA Year 2 (2020/21)

- Tasks in Session 3 (Practical Achievement Task and one or other of Vocational Education Task or Contemporary Issues Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner over the Easter holidays, week beginning 6 April 2021.
- The Personal Reflection Task Statement 2 should be completed in May 2021 and submitted to SEC for marking as normal.

2.5 LCA Modules

In July 2020, advice regarding the awarding of credits to LCA was set out in the [LCA Advice to management and teachers of LCA 2020/21 in Second-Level Schools and Centres for Education](#). This required LCA Year 2 candidates to complete a minimum of two Key Assignments and be awarded the credit for satisfactory completion of the modules, provided that the school is satisfied the student has engaged meaningfully in the modules concerned.

There is no adjustment to the number of key assignments to be completed by LCA1 candidates. The school may award the credit for satisfactory completion of the modules, provided that it is satisfied the student has engaged meaningfully in the modules concerned.

Students will be awarded the credits for the satisfactory completion of modules through the LCA portal as per normal arrangements.

Appendix 1: 2021 arrangements for all subjects with additional components

	Examination arrangements for 2021
Gaeilge Chumarsáideach	Oral: 3 -12 May 2021 Written : 10 June 2021
English & Communications	Oral: 3 -12 May 2021 Written :9 June 2021
Modern Foreign Languages: French; German; Spanish; Italian	Oral: 3 -12 May 2021 Written :10 June 2021
Sign Language	10 June 2021 * See Note on Published Timetable 2021.
Social Education	Written : 9 June 20201
Mathematics	Written : 11 June 20201

Vocational Specialisms- Assessment Year 2 Candidates	
	Examination arrangements for 2021
Hotel Catering & Tourism	Practical Performance: 17- 21 May 2021 Written:11 June 2021
Office Administration & Customer Care	Practical Performance: 17- 21 May 2021 Written:15 June 2021
Active Leisure Studies	Practical Performance: 17- 21 May 2021 Written: 17 June 2021
Hair & Beauty	Practical Performance: 17- 21 May 2021 Written 15 June 2021
Agriculture /Horticulture	Practical Performance: 17- 21 May 2021 Written: 16 June 2021
Information & Communication Technology	In- school assessment 12 May 2021
Childcare/Community Care	Practical Coursework including interview weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 14 June 2021
Technology	Practical Coursework including interview weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 16 June 2021
Engineering	Practical Coursework including interview weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 14 June 2021
Graphics & Construction Studies	Practical Coursework including interview weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 15 June 2021

Craft & Design	Practical Coursework weeks beginning 8 and 14 June Written exam: 17 June 2021
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