

8th May 2020

Dear 6th Year student/parent

By now I'm sure you are all aware that there is finally some clarity around the Leaving Certificate 2020.

While we are all relieved that there is finally a decision, the announcement also brings us further into new territory for both students, parents and teachers.

'New' can often be challenging, but the ability of our students and teachers to adapt, innovate and excel in the face of diversity has been more than proven over the past few months.

Attached is a document that has been produced by DES (Dept of Education & Skills) with regard to today's announcement and the 'Calculated Grade' system, along with some other potentially useful links.

DES acknowledges that there is still some fine tuning to be worked out with this process and we will keep you informed as we learn more.

DES has stated that the system of calculated grades that is being offered is based on the following key principles:

- **Teacher professionalism:** Teachers know their students and can balance a variety of factors in arriving at a professional judgement in relation to their students' expected performance. Their professional code of practice, underpinned by the values of Integrity, Trust, Care and Respect is core to how they work in schools to ensure the best outcomes for their students.
- **Support for students:** Ensuring that student wellbeing is promoted and that the need for students to be provided with valid certification is satisfied.
- **Objectivity:** Teachers and schools will be objective in their assessment of the student's expected performance and will take into consideration a range of evidence to support the judgments that are made. Schools and teachers will work collaboratively to ensure that no bias, conscious or unconscious, influences the decisions made in relation to a student's expected performance.
- **Fairness and equity:** Schools and teachers will strive to achieve fairness and equity in the way in which they apply the process at school level.
- **Collaboration:** A collaborative approach will be used in schools to ensure that each stage of the process is completed.
- **Timeliness:** Schools and teachers will ensure that the deadlines set for the completion of the in-school processes are met and that each stage is completed within the designated timeframe.

The staff at Presentation Milltown want to assure our students and parents that these principles will form the basis of all decisions made for our students during this process.

P.T.O. →



There are two sections of the DES guidelines attached that I would like to draw your attention to.

Section 6.2 & 6.3 (Page 5)

6.2 Are additional assessments required?

The teacher's judgement will be based on evidence of learning and achievement such as that indicated above up until the point of school closure. Teachers will not set additional assessments for the purposes of determining an estimated percentage mark.

6.3 What about work done or not done by students since schools closed in March?

Where additional work has been completed after schools were closed on 13 March, teachers will be advised to exercise due caution where that work suggests a change in performance. In many cases, this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done rather than what might have happened if everything had been normal. This caution about interpreting what has happened since schools closed will not, of course, preclude teachers from taking account of the degree to which many students under normal circumstances would intensify their levels of commitment in the run-up to the examinations.

As you can see **no further work will be set for the purposes of calculated grades**. Therefore, 6th Year students are no longer required to engage in online learning through Office 365. **Please note that our career guidance and pastoral care supports remain available to students who require assistance.** Your son/daughter will also be aware that we are working on some form of virtual graduation in order that our students will have an opportunity to celebrate their completion of secondary school. The relevant teachers will be in contact through Office 365 in relation to this. Please note however that teachers will not be in a position to discuss the calculated grades process in anyway (see below).

Section 11.1 (Page 11)

11. Ensuring objectivity and fairness

11.1 Processing of school's estimated marks/rankings At the core of both the school-based and national standardisation phases of the system of calculated grades is a commitment to objectivity and fairness. To ensure this, the school-based process must not be compromised.

Therefore, the principal, deputy principal(s), teachers or other members of the school staff must not under any circumstances discuss with any student or with the parents or guardians of any student the estimated marks that the school is submitting. There are two reasons for this:

- *The mark assigned by the school is not necessarily the final mark that the student will receive and it would therefore be misleading for the student to receive that mark before the calculated grade processes are complete*
- *Allowing access to and discussion of estimated grades before the calculated grades process is complete would interfere with the process being carried out properly and fairly. If teachers discussed the marks with some students but not others, or if some teachers did this and others did not, these discussions might actually influence (consciously or unconsciously) or be represented or construed as influencing the mark the teacher submits to the subject alignment group.*

After the results are issued, students will be able to see the final mark that led to their grade.

P.T.O. →

Principal – Kerry Harkin

Deputy Principal – Sean Costelloe



The text highlighted in green is crucial if the integrity of this process is to be maintained. Therefore, school staff will not be in a position to discuss grades with students or parents from this point.

I am sure there will be many questions and concerns as we all get to grips with the information provided today. Rest assured that we will continue to liaise with DES in order to ensure the very best outcome for each of our students.

To our wonderful 6th Year students, we are all extremely proud of the way you have adapted and coped with the immense pressure you have faced over the past few weeks. We are glad that there is finally clarity on the process going forward, but acknowledge that you may have concerns around the new process. Our teachers have always believed in you and continue to do so. Your best interests will be at the heart of everything we do throughout this process. While we cannot discuss the calculated grades process we are more than happy to help you in any way possible. Please just ask.

Kindest regards and best wishes to you and your families,



Kerry Harkin
Principal

