



13 September 2020

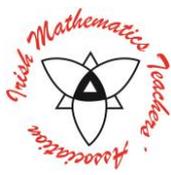
A Chara,

The Irish Mathematics Teachers' Association welcomes the work that has been done by the DES, the NCCA and the SEC to enable schools to reopen as safely as possible for the 20/21 academic year. We also appreciate the efforts that have been put in place to address the loss of teaching time during the period of lockdown from March to May 2020 and that this has been reflected in the Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2020 (<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/assessment-arrangements-junior-cycle-and-leaving-certificate-examinations-2021.pdf>).

However, there are several points that we would like to highlight in response to this document.

- The document does not reduce the workload of Leaving Certificate students. Many teachers, particularly those in DEIS settings, feel as if the period of online teaching from March 13th to May 31st can effectively be written off. While some of our members have reported that they had full engagement with certain classes, there is a significant number of students in schools right across the country who did not engage at all, for a myriad reasons which have been well highlighted by the inspectorate (<https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/summerprovision/reconnecting-with-school-guidance-on-summer-programme.pdf> page 2) and the School of Education in Trinity College, Dublin, among others. (<https://www.tcd.ie/Education/news/teacher-survey-during-covid-19>)
- There are obvious anomalies between subjects if one examines the document closely. If one compares mathematics ONLY to Irish and English, there are clear discrepancies. In Irish students have been instructed to reduce their Sraith Pictiurí from 20 to 10 and in English they have 1 additional poet that can be studied. These are merely 2 simple examples of reduced workload which is not evident in the requirements for mathematics. There are many other subjects including Accounting, History, Home Economics, for example, that have seen clearly defined topics identified for study and/or omission.
- The changes are presumed to allow candidates to omit one topic from paper 1 and one topic from paper 2. This is problematic for several different reasons as follows:
 - Topics are not well-defined e.g. a trigonometry question might also include some elements of coordinate geometry or synthetic geometry.
 - Topics from the syllabus sometimes appear in more than one question - this would result in a candidate being unable to answer two or more questions fully. For example probability may appear in more than one question from section A in paper 2.
 - Multiple topics from the different strands of the syllabus sometimes appear in one individual question. This could result in a candidate being unable to answer sections within a question fully
 - Topics from the syllabus sometimes appear on two different papers. A candidate may have omitted to cover traditional paper 1 topics which then appear on paper 2. This would result in a student being unable to answer more than one question on paper 2.





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- Much more guidance on this is required.
- Teachers are being encouraged to initially focus on well-being, establishment of routine and grounding of students in suitable technologies in case of future school closures, rather than being recommended to launch straight into new content or going all out from Day 1 on catch-up. How exactly are teachers and students then expected to get the whole LC syllabi (Higher/Ordinary/Foundation) covered from mid-September to end-May? Remember, the syllabus is designed to be completed in normal times in May.
- A strict list of topics to be assessed should be provided (with internal choice where necessary) or a small list of topics could be identified for omission - example formal proofs/constructions/induction/inferential statistics/financial maths (or combinations thereof). The sooner such a list could be offered the better, to allow teachers plan accordingly. We realise that it is impossible to know what plans each school follows and therefore a list of topics to omit becomes problematic. However, if they could be identified as choices within a question then it would help greatly. This was the approach taken to question 6 on Paper 2 during the initial phases of Project Maths (Synthetic Geometry V Formal Proof and/or Construction). For example, topics like Financial Maths can take up to 3 weeks to teach adequately. If this is not going to feature as a question at all will such schools be disadvantaged further?
- Would it be possible to survey teachers on topics covered so far? We would be happy to work with you on this.
- In relation to Junior Cycle, we would ask that the sample paper is issued as an immediate priority to ease fears of teachers and students.
- We would also ask that there be no CBAs in junior cycle maths this academic year, i.e. for the current 2nd and 3rd Years. This is to make up for time lost already for each of these groups, and time likely to be lost this year. (With no Assessment Task for 3rd year students there also seems to be less of a reason for even one CBA for the 3rd Year group at all.)
- At a minimum, we would ask that the choice in each section is increased by 1 full question (Section A – 7 questions, Do 5. Section B – 5 questions, Do 3). Each question needs to be on a stand-alone topic/strand.
- As there is an element of choice, an extra 10 minutes is essential to allow students time to read the paper so they can decide which questions they are doing.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read our submission. We look forward to your response as soon as possible,

Le gach dea-ghuí,

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