

## Information note in relation to the completion of Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science Individual Investigative Study 2021

The Individual Investigative Study Coursework Brief 2021, when issued directed candidates to investigate a research question which they must link to their chosen enterprise and to use the theme of “*Improving Sustainability in Irish Agriculture*”. The completion of the Individual Investigative Study is supported by the strand “Scientific Practices”, which is at the core of the Agricultural Science specification.

The published documents: The Thematic Brief, The Specification and the Guidelines are present to assist, support and guide candidates in the completion of their Individual Investigative Study. Materials and resources produced by the PDST are also a valuable resource in supporting the work of the Individual Investigative Study. In addition, a suite of guidance documents and supports on the gov.ie website, <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a128d-back-to-school/> for ‘back to school docs’, including the *Roadmap for the Full Return to School (July 2020)*, *Returning to School: Guidance on Learning and School Programmes for Post-Primary School Leaders and Teachers (July 2020)* and the *Return to School Guidance for Practical Subjects in Post-Primary Schools and Centres for Education* are also available to support schools in planning to mediate the curriculum.

The issued Brief allows candidates choose their own preferred enterprise on which to base their Individual Investigative Study. Candidates also have flexibility to carry out the investigative work for their Individual Investigative Study in a range of locations including on site in their chosen enterprise, in the school laboratory and in a field site (e.g. home) (or a combination of all or some of these locations).

The candidates’ ability to generate their own primary data is an important element of the Individual Investigative Study. Primary data is the result of the candidates’ own investigative process. As set out in the Brief under Instructions for candidates, “*You must decide what experiments are necessary to address your research question and plan and carry out these yourself*”. Some candidates may have already collected their primary data and in such cases should continue to progress their study using this data. Other candidates may only be in the process of commencing this work and it may be necessary, due to the current restrictions, to consider an alternated means of gathering the primary data.

In light of the current exceptional circumstances due to Covid-19 please note the following in relation to the completion of the Individual Investigative Study for 2021.

- Candidates may still choose an enterprise, school laboratory and/or field site (or a combination of all or some of them) in which to carry out their experimental work/investigative activities in order to generate their primary data. Candidates can carry out their experimental work/investigative activities where it is practicable and safe to do so and within the parameters of current public health advice.
- As set out in the NCCA Guidelines, when completing the Individual Investigative Study, candidates can “*adapt, modify and extend the specified practical activities from the course, in order to generate primary data*” (NCCA Guidelines, 2019, p12).

The following additional flexibility to the arrangements for the completion of the Individual Investigative Study, are being introduced in light of the ongoing exceptional circumstances for the 2021 cohort of candidates.

### **Working in Groups**

While the gathering of primary data should be completed by the individual candidate where possible, to alleviate the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 situation, candidates may work in groups to gather and share primary data from the experiment(s)/investigative activities undertaken from their location(s) of choice (enterprise, laboratory and/or field site while adhering to the parameters of current public health advice), as part of “The Investigative Process”. Group size should be in line with *Return to School Guidance for Practical Subjects in Post-Primary Schools and Centres for Education* and also adhering to the parameters of current public health advice. Where candidates collaborate in groups to gather and share primary data:

- a. Each candidate must complete their own unique Individual Investigative Study report.
- b. Groups may collaborate to gather primary data, and this could be based on the same hypothesis, but candidates must individually detail how the data was gathered.

### **Use of Secondary Data**

Where candidates, individually or in groups, encounter challenges to the collection of primary data from an enterprise, laboratory and/or field site, they may use data from a secondary source in place of primary data. In this context:

- a. Examples of secondary data sources could include, published reports, journals, agricultural publications (from agencies and government) or research etc.
- b. Candidates may share secondary data sources in groups. Group size should be in line with *Return to School Guidance for Practical Subjects in Post-Primary Schools and Centres for Education* adhering to the parameters of current public health advice.
- c. The secondary data source should be acknowledged and referenced in the report.
- d. Each candidate must complete their own unique Individual Investigative Study report.

### **Choice of Agricultural Enterprise**

In normal circumstances, all candidates are required to carry out their Individual Investigative Study in the context of a specific agricultural enterprise. In addition, the footnote in the Brief states an “*Enterprise, can be considered at any scale. For instance, a specific individual family farm is an enterprise, but so too is a multinational company. However, “the beef industry” is not a specific enterprise*”.

In light of exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible for a candidate to access a specific enterprise, in which to base their Individual Investigate Study, it will now be accepted that candidates may base their study on a broader enterprise (e.g. the barley industry) as a link to an enterprise.

**Note:** The additional flexibility for the 2021 cohort allows all candidates to meaningfully complete their examination coursework in line with the expectations of the Brief and the Guidelines in these exceptional circumstances due to Covid-19. All approaches to completion of the 2021 brief as set out above will be treated equally.