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STATE EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **REPEAT EXAMINATIONS**

**15th JUNE 2004**

The State Examinations Commission is fully aware of the constraints imposed by the current examinations system on accommodating the life experiences of individual candidates. Within the limitations of our examination system, every possible effort is made by the SEC to accommodate candidates who suffer illness, bereavement or other trauma either immediately before or during the examinations. Each year, arrangements are made to cater for a wide range of emergencies. These include alterations to the standard examination timetable and special examination sittings in venues such as hospitals.

The Leaving Certificate is a terminal examination, which is examined by external examiners. It is an inevitable consequence of a terminal point in time system of assessment that some students will take particular tests at a time that they do not consider optimum for them. At the Leaving Certificate this is the case for the written examinations that are held in June.

The issue of repeat examinations has been considered from time to time but it has been concluded that the constraints, inherent in a terminal and externally examined examination system, will result in significant difficulties in relation to the provision of repeat examinations. These constraints include:

- the length of the school year,
- the timescale required for holding examinations (the Leaving Certificate timetable covers 13 exam days - almost three weeks),
- defining eligibility to enter for repeat exams - it is very unlikely that such a facility could simply be confined to those who missed the original exam because of illness or other emergency but would also have to be open to other categories of students such as those, for example, who felt they had not performed to their optimum ability in the original exam,
- obtaining sufficient additional suitably qualified persons to act as examiners,
- providing adequate time for the preparation of marking schemes for the repeat exam papers and arranging for comprehensive briefing and training of examiners,

- providing ample time for those examiners to conduct the marking to a high standard,
- the pressing requirement of having results available to feed into the college entry process which is conducted by the CAO and college admissions offices in August each year,
- the need for an appeal system for the review of repeat results.

When one considers that our state examinations currently operate against the tightest of timeframes and to maximum capacity in delivering a high quality product at both Leaving and Junior Certificate levels, it is considered that it would not be possible to hold repeat examinations, confine eligibility, and have results available to the deadlines required.

We believe that the arrangements for the operation of the state examinations comply with the terms of the Equal Status Act 2000.

ENDS.

Andrea Feeney,  
Press Officer,  
State Examinations Commission

E-mail: [andrea\\_feeney@education.gov.ie](mailto:andrea_feeney@education.gov.ie)  
Phone: 090-644 2777  
Mobile:087-2379973