



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

**Report to the Minister for Education and Science on the security breach in
Leaving Certificate English - Paper 2, Higher and Ordinary Levels - on 3 June
2009**

3 July 2009

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

A security breach occurred in the Leaving Certificate examination in English, Paper 2, Higher and Ordinary Levels, on the morning of 3 June 2009. The breach arose when a Superintendent opened an incorrect packet of examination papers scheduled for the following morning, 4 June, and distributed them to the candidates in the centre for a brief period. When the Superintendent realised the error, the Superintendent immediately retrieved the incorrect papers, and re-commenced the examination with the correct papers, giving the candidates the full allocation of time for the examination session.

The issue was first reported to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) at approximately 15.55 on the afternoon of 3 June. The SEC immediately commenced an investigation in order to determine the nature and extent of the security breach. The SEC concluded that the integrity of the Leaving Certificate English, Paper 2 examination had been significantly compromised. Having considered all potential options, the SEC decided to postpone the Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 examination (Higher and Ordinary Levels) that was scheduled for 9.30 am on Thursday 4 June, and to re-schedule the examination for two days later i.e. Saturday 6 June at 9.30 am. The Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied examinations for the same sessions were not affected.

On 4 June, under Section 33 of the State Examinations Commission (Establishment) Order 2003, the Minister for Education and Science requested the SEC “to investigate and to report on the circumstances that required the rescheduling of the Leaving Certificate English exam and measures needed to address any weaknesses identified and to minimise the risk of any future recurrence.”

1.2 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

Section 2 outlines the context in which the State Examinations operate and the role of the Superintendent within the examinations. It also outlines the application and appointment processes for Superintendents, and the training, security and quality assurance processes put in place by the SEC in relation to the work of Superintendents.

Section 3 details the investigation by the SEC into the security breach on 3 June. It outlines the actions taken by the SEC following the initial report of the breach. It describes the findings of the investigation, the conclusions reached and the factors that were considered by the SEC in arriving at the decision to postpone the English Paper 2 examination scheduled for 4 June.

Section 4 considers the issues arising within the context of the delivery model of the State Examinations. It also considers current security procedures in relation to the opening and

distribution of examination papers and makes recommendations regarding the particular issues that might be considered in the immediate future. In addition, it identifies broader issues which are to be the subject of urgent examination.

There are six Appendices, as follows:

Appendix I	References
Appendix II	Report from the SEC official investigating the security breach in Centre 1735 on 3 June 2009
Appendix III	Excerpt from the Leaving Certificate <i>Day to Day Instructions</i> for 3 June (morning)
Appendix IV	Copy of the “warning” bulletin included in the boxes of examination papers
Appendix V	Excerpt from the <i>General Instructions for Superintendents 2009 – Significant Changes for 2009</i>
Appendix VI	Glossary

2. Superintendents in the State Examinations

2.1 Context

The operation of the State Examinations is a significant logistical exercise, involving over 115,000 candidates in over 4,600 main examination centres and 7,000 special centres. It involves the development of over 250 different test instruments – including oral tests, aural recordings, practical briefs, project briefs, portfolio and coursework items, in addition to the written examination papers. It includes examinations in 89 curricular and 15 non-curricular subjects, and the appointment by the SEC of Superintendents in each of the 4,600 main examination centres. About 3 million individual exam papers comprising over 30 million pages are distributed for the written tests in June. Some 1.9 million individual test items are examined by 6,000 Examiners, under the direction of the Chief Examiner in each subject.

2.1.1 Distribution of the examination paper boxes

The distribution of the boxes containing the examination papers to the Superintendents is, in itself, a significant logistical exercise. The boxes containing the examination papers for the 4,600 main examination centres are distributed to 13 Distribution Centres throughout the country on either the June Bank Holiday Monday, two days before the commencement of the examinations, or on the day before the commencement of the examinations. On the latter day, the 4,600 Superintendents attend the relevant Distribution Centres at allocated times and take possession of the box of examination papers assigned to them. The Distribution Centres are staffed by officials from the SEC.

At the Distribution Centre, each Superintendent is required to check the contents of the box of examination papers assigned to him/her against the Examination Paper Quantity List, so as to ensure that the box contains the appropriate examination papers for the candidates in the examination centre. Having verified the contents of the box, the Superintendent then brings the box directly to the designated secure location for storage. In many cases, this will be a Garda Station, but it may also be a secure location in a school.

Having secured the box of examination papers in its designated location, the Superintendent is required to complete some administrative work in conjunction with the school authority, test the CD equipment and acoustics of the centre in preparation for the examinations with aural components, ensure that the centre is appropriately laid out for the commencement of the examinations the following morning, and, finally, ensure that the attendant is available and appropriately briefed with regard to his/her duties (*General Instructions for Superintendents 2009, Appendix 1, page 32*).

2.2 The Superintendent application and appointment processes

The recruitment of Superintendents for the State Examinations begins in November of each year when advertisements for the position are placed in the main national newspapers and on the Commission's website. Application forms are available in all second-level schools, on the website, and by request. The closing date is generally at the end of the first week in December. Information collected on the application form includes: teacher employment details; employment status (permanent, regular part-time, substitute etc.); current school; teaching experience; relatives sitting the Certificate Examinations; previous school; capacity to superintend through Irish; other skills such as a foreign language; academic qualifications; and previous service as a Superintendent at the Certificate Examinations.

The applications are processed by checking for completion of all necessary details, and the certification by the applicant and by the Principal of the school or CEO in the case of applicants from vocational schools. There are two elements to the certification. Applicants certify that they will not undertake any other work during the period of superintendence and that they will abide by all rules and instructions issued for their guidance by the Commission. Principals, and CEOs where appropriate, certify that, to their knowledge, the applicant is a suitable and reliable person to act as Examination Superintendent in the State Examinations.

In March, applicants are advised of their appointment to either the main or reserve panel and are requested to indicate their acceptance or otherwise of this appointment. Applicants who accept the offer of appointment are subsequently assigned to a specific examination centre. In early May, they are advised of the centre/school to which they are assigned and are supplied with a copy of the *General Instructions to Superintendents*, a 40 page booklet giving detailed instructions on the role and responsibility of the examination superintendent. A training DVD *The Work of the Superintendent* is supplied to all new Superintendents and made available on request to existing Superintendents, who would have been supplied with it previously (see 2.4 below).

2.3 The role and responsibilities of the Superintendent in the State Examinations

Superintendents in the State Examinations have three core responsibilities. Firstly, they are responsible for the security of the examination papers assigned to them. Secondly, they are responsible for the safe custody and transmission of each candidate's work to the State Examinations Commission. Thirdly, they are responsible for ensuring that the examinations are conducted in accordance with the regulations in the centre to which they are assigned (SEC, 2009, (a), page 3).

2.4 Training and monitoring processes

There are a number of processes in place with regard to the training of Superintendents, and the monitoring of the work of Superintendents and examination centres during the examination period.

2.4.1 Training of Superintendents

There are five key elements to the training and briefing of Superintendents so as to ensure that they are fully aware of the role, responsibilities and procedures involved in superintending the State Examinations. These elements include:

- (i) a training DVD entitled *The Work of the Superintendent*
- (ii) a booklet entitled *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009* which contains detailed instructions on the procedures to be followed in relation to all aspects of the work of a Superintendent
- (iii) a booklet entitled *Day to Day Instructions 2009* which contains specific instructions relating to each individual examination subject and session
- (iv) a “warning” bulletin in each box of examination papers which emphasises, among other key points, the Superintendent’s role as the last line in the SEC’s quality control measures aimed at ensuring that the correct examination papers are distributed at the correct time
- (v) a briefing session for new Superintendents which is conducted by SEC officials in each Distribution Centre, in parallel with the training DVD *The Work of the Superintendent*. SEC officials are also available in the Distribution Centres to answer any questions that Superintendents may have, and to deal with any issues that may arise.

(i) The dedicated training DVD *The Work of the Superintendent* is made available to each new Superintendent prior to the commencement of the examinations and is available to all other Superintendents on request. Superintendents who have worked in previous years would have previously received a copy of the DVD. The DVD content places a particular emphasis on the importance of maintaining the security of the examination papers, both in respect of their secure storage, and in respect of the opening of the examination packets and the distribution of examination papers to candidates.

The DVD deals with key aspects of the work of the Superintendent including:

- the security of the examination papers
- the role and responsibilities of the Superintendent
- the procedure for checking the contents of the box of examination papers at the Distribution Centre
- the procedures to be followed on arrival at the school / examination centre
- the procedures to be followed in the opening of the packets of examination papers and the distribution of examination papers
- the conduct of the examinations and related administrative procedures
- the transmission of answerbooks to the SEC.

(ii) On appointment, each Superintendent is provided with a copy of the *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009*. This document provides detailed instructions regarding the procedures to be followed in relation to all aspects of the work of the Superintendent. Superintendents are instructed to study the *General Instructions for Superintendents* carefully and to make themselves thoroughly familiar with them before the examinations commence (SEC, 2009, (a), page 3). The contents of the *General Instructions* are laid out in 18 parts, the first part of which is concerned with the security of the examination papers. In the *General Instructions for Superintendents*, a particular emphasis is placed on the issue of the security of the examination papers on which the integrity of the examinations depends.

A number of changes were made to the examination timetable in 2009. Arising from these, the SEC included in the 2009 *General Instructions for Superintendents* a specific section entitled 'Significant Changes of Procedures' on the inside cover of the document. This section made specific reference to the timetable changes and to the fact that 'Leaving Certificate examination paper boxes will contain two green packets of papers for English – Paper 1 for the morning of Wednesday 3 June and Paper 2 for the morning of Thursday 4 June.' It was also highlighted, in bold, that 'it is essential that the *Day to Day Instructions* for Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate be carefully consulted before each examination session to ensure that you correctly open and distribute the appropriate examination papers'.

Part 9 of the document (page 14) details the specific security procedures to be followed regarding the opening and distribution of examination papers and answerbooks (these procedures are described in section 2.5 below).

Prior to leaving the Distribution Centre, Superintendents are required to certify in writing on Form S46 that they have:

- (a) Checked the contents of the Examination Paper box against the Examination Paper Quantity List (Transfer Notice where applicable) for the Centre and found the papers as listed correct
- (b) Read and understood the *General Instructions for Superintendents* and
- (c) Viewed the Training DVD for Superintendents.

(iii) Each Superintendent is provided with a copy of the *Day to Day Instructions 2009*. These are designed to assist Superintendents in dealing with the requirements of each individual examination session. As previously noted, Superintendents are instructed that the *Day to Day Instructions* should be consulted each day before the examinations begin (SEC, 2009, (a), page 3). Before the start of each examination session, the Superintendent is required to certify that he/she has ensured that the packet(s) of examination papers is proper to this examination session in accordance with the examinations timetable, and that each examination paper is proper to the session before distributing the examination papers to candidates. Superintendents are required to sign and date this certificate in respect of each individual examination session.

In the case of the *Day to Day Instructions* for the 2009 Leaving Certificate English Paper 1 examination on 3 June, Superintendents were advised that "The examinations in English Paper 1

and English Paper 2 are morning examination sessions and both packets therefore are coloured Green. Before opening the packet this morning ensure that you have the packet for Paper 1 and NOT Paper 2” (SEC, 2009, b, page 11).

(iv) A “warning” bulletin is placed at the top of each box of examination papers. The bulletin alludes to the fact that the Superintendent is the last line in the quality control and further states that ‘on them rests the responsibility for the safe custody of the question papers entrusted to them and only they can now ensure that the correct papers are distributed to the candidates at the correct time’.

Highlighted on this bulletin in 2009 was a specific reminder that Leaving Certificate examination paper boxes contain two green packets of papers for English – Paper 1 for the morning of Wednesday 3rd June and Paper 2 for Thursday morning 4th June. It was emphasised that it was essential that the Examination Session *Day to Day Instructions* be carefully consulted before each examination session to ensure that the correct packet of examination papers was opened and distributed. Superintendents were also instructed not to proceed with undue haste at the commencement of an examination session and it was indicated that it was preferable to commence the examination a few minutes late, ensuring that the candidates are given back this time at the end, rather than open the wrong packet or distribute the wrong papers under pressure.

(v) SEC officials in the Distribution Centres conduct briefing sessions for Superintendents, including the playing of the instructional DVD *The Work of the Superintendent*. This is mandatory for newly appointed superintendents but experienced superintendents can also attend these sessions. In addition, SEC officials are available in the Distribution Centres to answer any queries and to deal with any issues that may arise.

2.4.2 Monitoring of the work of Superintendents and examination centres

During the examinations, members of the Examination and Assessment Division of the SEC visit examination centres to monitor the conduct of the examinations and to ensure that they are being conducted appropriately. The officials are also available to assist Superintendents in relation to any questions they may have or any issue that may have arisen. The monitoring is conducted in accordance with established SEC procedures and protocol, and reports are submitted to the SEC in relation to each centre monitored.

2.5 Specified security procedures for the opening of examination papers

As the integrity of the examinations is dependent on the maintenance of the security of the examination papers, the SEC has placed significant emphasis on the security procedures to be followed by the Superintendent in opening and distributing the examination papers, and on ensuring that each Superintendent is aware of, and fully compliant with, these procedures.

In order to ensure that the correct packet of examination papers is opened and the correct papers are distributed, Superintendents are required to adhere to the following security procedures (SEC, 2009, a, page 14):

(a) Prior to opening the packet of examination papers:

- The packets of examination papers are coloured green for morning examination sessions and orange for afternoon sessions
- The Superintendent must check the label on the packet of examination papers against the timetable and ensure that it is the correct packet for the session
- The Superintendent must request two candidates in the centre to satisfy themselves that the security of the packet is intact and that the label on the packet is the correct label for the examination session. When the two candidates are satisfied in relation to these two issues, they sign the packet in the spaces provided
- The Superintendent must certify, by signing on the *Day to Day Instructions* for the session that he/she has ensured that the packet(s) of examination papers is proper to this examination session in accordance with the examinations timetable.

(b) Following the opening of the packet of examination papers and prior to distributing the papers to candidates:

- Having followed the procedures above and opened the packet of examination papers, the Superintendent is required to check that each individual examination paper in the packet is proper to the session. This must be certified by signing the *Day to Day Instructions* for the session. Having satisfied him/herself in this regard, the Superintendent distributes the papers to the candidates (SEC, 2009, a, page 14).

3. Report on the security breach of 3 June 2009

3.1 Initial report to the SEC

The issue was first brought to the attention of the SEC at approximately 15.55 on 3 June when the Principal of St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda, Co Louth telephoned the SEC and was put through to the Director of Operations. The Principal indicated that it had been brought to his attention by a parent of a candidate in his school, and the parent of a candidate in another school in Drogheda, that there had been a breach of security at Centre No. 1735 in the school on the morning of 3 June in relation to Leaving Certificate English Paper 2. He indicated that the candidates were aware of the name of one poet on the paper. The SEC thanked the Principal for bringing the issue to its attention and requested him to attempt to ascertain from these parents the extent and nature of the information that was allegedly leaked.

3.2 The investigative processes

The SEC immediately commenced an investigative process in order to ascertain the veracity of the report and to determine the nature and extent of the alleged security breach. It became immediately clear that the poet named by the Principal was included on the examination paper.

The SEC then contacted one of the Examinations and Assessment Managers (EAM) assigned to the Louth/Meath area at about 16.00. It was apparent from the monitoring schedules that he had visited St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda on the morning of 3 June as part of a routine monitoring visit. He was instructed to return to Centre 1735 and to investigate and report on the issue as a matter of urgency. At that stage, the EAM was in Dunshaughlin, Co Meath. He immediately travelled to Drogheda and was expected to arrive at the school circa 17.15.

The Principal spoke again with the SEC's Director of Operations at approximately 16.20 and advised him that both parents had been contacted. The parent of the candidate in his school confirmed that the name of one poet was known. However, the parent of the candidate from the other school in Drogheda had advised him that the names of three poets, though not the content of the related questions, were known, as was the question on *Macbeth* which, it was stated, related to the theme of 'deception'.

By this point, the SEC had ascertained that the three named poets and the question on the theme of 'deception' in *Macbeth* accurately reflected part of the content of the Higher Level paper. It was considered that knowledge of the theme of the question on *Macbeth* represented a fundamental breach of the integrity of the paper.

In the course of the conversation with the Director of Operations, the Principal also advised that he had spoken with the Superintendent in question who confirmed that an incident had occurred but

that the Superintendent was satisfied that the candidates had not seen any detail on the paper. As the information emerging at that point indicated that there had been a breach of security in relation to the Higher Level paper, it was necessary to ascertain if any breach of security had also occurred in relation to the Ordinary Level paper. The Director of Operations asked the Principal to have the Superintendent ring him immediately, which the Principal undertook to do. A member of staff in the school took over the superintending duties in the centre.

The Superintendent in question rang the Director of Operations at about 16.30. He confirmed that he had inadvertently distributed the Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 (both Ordinary and Higher Level papers) to the candidates in the centre and directed them to leave them face down on their desks. When all examination papers had been distributed, he instructed the candidates to turn them over. He looked at the copy of the papers he held in order to confirm the finishing time of the examination, and he realised that he had distributed the wrong papers. He immediately retrieved the incorrect papers. He considered that the papers had been with the candidates for no more than 30 seconds and he was satisfied that they had not seen the contents. For that reason, he had not advised the SEC official of these events earlier that morning when the official conducted a monitoring visit of the centre.

In order to ascertain the extent of the spread of this information among the full candidature, the SEC then monitored a number of exam-related websites to ascertain if any material from the Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 was posted. In this regard, it should be noted that the SEC receives hoax calls each year during the examinations alleging leaks etc. and the SEC must exercise care and prudence in assessing each report. It was apparent that in the case of a number of websites and blogs, the names of the poets in the Poetry Section of the examination paper were known. It was also apparent that in a number of chatrooms, there was discussion on the manner in which the security breach had occurred, including some specific references to the school in Drogheda. It then became apparent that, in addition to the names of the poets on the examination paper, the theme of the question on the Shakespearean drama *Macbeth* was also known. On the basis of this information, it was clear that elements of the paper were widely available on a number of websites, blogs and other electronic media and that consequently it was apparent that the integrity of the Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 examination had been significantly compromised.

Once the seriousness and implications of the error were clear, the Chairperson of the Commission was advised by phone and it was agreed that the Commission had no option but to replace the compromised paper. At that stage, once the necessity to replace the examination paper was clear, the Department of Education and Science was also notified of the position at around 17.00.

The Chairperson, who arrived in Athlone at 19.00, had arranged while en route for his colleague Commissioners to be briefed by phone on the developing situation on 3 June and they agreed that the appropriate action would be to reschedule the English examination for Saturday, 6 June. The Commission met early on the following day, 4 June, to review the matter and to ensure that all the necessary steps were in place to arrange for the rescheduled examination.

The EAM who was investigating Centre 1735 reported his initial conclusions to the SEC at approximately 17.30. He confirmed that a security breach had occurred in Centre 1735 on the morning of 3 June. He confirmed that the integrity of the examination had been significantly compromised. He also confirmed that the Superintendent had not reported the incident to either the SEC, or to him when he had visited the centre for monitoring purposes at approximately 10.00 on 3 June (see Appendix II).

It emerged in the course of the SEC investigation, from CCTV records available in the school that the Leaving Certificate English examination in Centre 1735 had commenced at 09.19 on Wednesday 3 June, as opposed to the scheduled time of 09.30. The Superintendent has confirmed to the SEC that he had opened the packet of question papers to provide the paper to the Superintendent of a special centre and, as all of the candidates were in attendance and ready to start, he decided to proceed with the examination at that juncture. It also emerged from these records that while the candidates in Centre 1735 had access to the Paper 2 examination papers for just 25 seconds, the examination paper had been in the special centre for 3 minutes.

In summary, there are comprehensive documented procedures to be followed in order to ensure that the correct paper is distributed for each session of the examination process. These involve the following (see 2.5 above):

- colour coding of examination paper packets
- clear labelling of all these packets detailing the subject, date and time, centre number and question paper quantities
- checking by the superintendent of (i) the label (ii) the exam paper and (iii) that all the examination papers in the pack are for the correct session, and (iv) formal sign off that this is the case by the superintendent
- two students also confirm in writing that the examination paper packet is the correct one for each particular session and that the packet is intact.

In this case, none of the documented procedures was carried out correctly by the Superintendent.

3.3 The decision-making process

The SEC has alternative papers in each examination at Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied. A full print run of the alternative Leaving Certificate English (Higher and Ordinary Level) Paper 2 was available and arrangements were put in place to make these papers ready for packing for each individual examination centre.

In considering the available options, the key considerations included the importance of maintaining fairness for all candidates and upholding the integrity of the State Examinations. In this regard, while no evidence or information had emerged among candidates in relation to the contents of the

Ordinary Level paper, it was decided that consideration of the action required of the SEC must also involve that paper, as it had also been inadvertently distributed to candidates by the Superintendent.

As a consequence of the fact that the issue was initially only brought to the attention of the SEC at approximately 15.55 on 3 June, the timeframe for operationalising logistical issues was severely curtailed.

3.3.1 Options considered

(a) The first option was to ascertain if it would be possible to maintain the examination schedule using the alternative paper. The SEC contacted An Post to ascertain if guaranteed delivery could be given in relation to every examination centre in the country in time for the commencement of the examinations at 09.30 on the following morning, 4 June. It became apparent following detailed discussions with An Post that, while An Post could guarantee to deliver to a significant number of centres before 09.00 the following morning, it could not guarantee 100% penetration within the available timeframe. Incomplete penetration would give rise to significant difficulties in relation to maintaining the integrity of the examinations and to upholding the principle of inter-candidate equity. Accordingly, it was decided that the sitting of the alternative examination paper at 09.30 on 4 June was not a viable option.

(b) The second option was to consider the possibility of a delayed start to the examination schedule on 4 June. The principal difficulties in this option were the impact on the remainder of the timetable and on the candidates taking the Engineering examination on Thursday afternoon 4 June, the danger that the delayed start would be jeopardised because not all candidates would be aware of the timetable change, and the availability of school transport for the later session. Accordingly, this option was excluded.

(c) The possibility of reversing the examination schedule on the 4 June was also considered. This would have involved re-scheduling the Engineering examination to 09.30 and the English examination to 14.00. The difficulty with this option was the limited timeframe and the likelihood that not all candidates could be informed of the change within the available timeframe.

3.3.2 Decision

Having considered all of the issues, the SEC concluded that the option that most effectively took account of the logistical issues, upheld the integrity of the examinations, maintained fairness to all candidates, sought to ensure that English Papers 1 and 2 would be taken as close together as possible, and had the least impact on the examination timetable, was to postpone the English examination on the morning of 4 June and to reschedule the examination for two days later on Saturday 6 June.

It should be noted that in considering the Saturday, 6 June, option the SEC also examined the possibility of using the following Saturday, 13 June, for the rescheduled examination. This was not considered feasible because the majority of students would have completed their examinations by then and would have made holiday and other commitments. Accordingly, scheduling the examination for Saturday, 6 June, was considered to be the option that would meet the needs of the optimum number of students.

3.4 Logistical issues

Significant logistical issues required consideration over the course of the evening of Wednesday 3 June in relation to the rescheduled examination. These included the availability of schools on 6 June, the availability of sufficient Superintendents, school transport issues, packing and distribution/delivery arrangements for the alternative papers, and non-school examination centres.

3.4.1 Education Partners

The SEC made contact with the education partners, (school management bodies, teacher unions and parents' representatives) to advise them confidentially of the emerging situation and of the SEC proposal to reschedule the examination. The partners signalled their affirmation that this was the appropriate alternative in the circumstances.

3.4.2 Superintendents

The SEC Superintendents Section was available for 17 hours each day from Wednesday evening to Saturday to deal with issues emerging regarding the superintendence of the rescheduled examination on the Saturday morning.

3.4.3 School transport

The SEC engaged with the Department of Education and Science, which advised that school transport would be available on Saturday 6 June.

3.4.4 Packing and distribution/delivery arrangements

The SEC worked closely with senior officials of An Post throughout the evening of Wednesday, 3 June. An Post indicated that they would put in place robust arrangements, similar to those which apply in the case of the issue of the Leaving and Junior Certificate results each year, to effect delivery of the alternative papers to all centres by Friday 5 June.

Within the SEC, the alternative examination papers required to be packed in centre envelopes and distribution envelopes to each examination centre. The packing by centre of the papers, in accordance with the normal security and quality assurance protocols, took place on the evening of Wednesday 3 June. Arrangements in respect of candidates who had been given Reasonable Accommodations including, for example, Braille, modified or enlarged versions of the alternative examination papers, were also put in place that evening.

The distribution envelopes were passed to An Post on Thursday 4 June for onward distribution in accordance with their schedule and arrangements. An Post had despatched two senior members of staff to the Athlone Distribution Centre early that morning to oversee the arrangements. An Post confirmed to the SEC at 23.00 that evening that all arrangements were in place to effect delivery the following day. Throughout Thursday and Friday, the SEC was in ongoing contact with the school management bodies and teachers' unions to resolve any issues that arose. The SEC had prepared instructions to Principals and Superintendents regarding the rescheduled examination, which were made available to the school management bodies on Thursday 4 June, to assist them with queries received from their members.

The SEC contacted all of the non-school examination centres, prisons etc. to confirm the arrangements. The SEC also made spare copies of the alternative examination paper available to its Examinations and Assessment Division throughout the country, and to a central location in Dublin, to provide for speedy resolution of any shortfall in paper distribution to schools that might emerge.

3.5 Media and Communications issues

When the SEC Press Office was advised some time after 16.00 on Wednesday 3 June that there was potentially an issue with the examination paper for the following day's Leaving Cert English examination, its efforts focussed on upholding the integrity of the state examinations process through the provision of timely information that adequately addressed the concerns of the various public stakeholders including the media.

The scale of the problem meant that clear lines of communication with the public were essential in order to provide a consistent message and to address issues as they arose. A number of steps were taken in order to ensure that these lines of communication were available throughout Wednesday evening and in the following days:

- The Switch operators and Press Office staff were alerted to be aware of calls from the media or the public reporting a problem with an examination paper
- A freephone number was dedicated to dealing with calls on the issue. The Help-Line number was broadcast at every available opportunity. The Help-Line operated until 01.00 on Thursday morning, 4 June, from 07.00 – 24.00 on Thursday and Friday and from 07.00 – 17.00 on Saturday 6 June. Up to 20 staff members served on the Help-Line during the peak period

- Personnel from the SEC's Internet Service Provider were retained on Wednesday night 3 June to update the website with the Help-Line number, the Press Release and the Q&A (designed as a quick but comprehensive reference guide to the key issues arising for all concerned) as soon as they became available. Information relating to the event appeared in the most prominent locations on the home page.

Public/Media Engagement

- Prior to 20.00 on Wednesday 3 June, the Press Office notified key journalists in RTE and in the print media to expect a significant announcement. This was a holding position as all of the arrangements required to definitively confirm the rescheduling of the examination were being finalised at that point. However, it was crucial to book time and headlines in order to communicate the key message that the examination was not now taking place on Thursday morning
- Shortly before 21.00, being in possession of all relevant information (i.e. that the examination was compromised, that it would not be possible to distribute the alternative paper in time for the Thursday morning; that the examination was being deferred to Saturday 6 June and that school transport would be available), the Press Office issued the first press release. After the press release issued, the Press Office arranged with RTE to conduct an interview that would be carried on RTE's *9 o'clock news*. It was fully appreciated that rescheduling of the examination gave rise to distress and inconvenience for students and the SEC apologised to candidates and their families in its media broadcasts
- Continued dissemination of the key message on the evening of Wednesday 3 June and the morning of Thursday 4 June that the examination had been deferred
- TV and Radio Interviews with RTE, TV3, INN, Newstalk, Today FM and other radio stations
- Publication of a Questions and Answers Document to address the issues and concerns of the key stakeholder groups directly affected i.e., candidates and parents; superintendents; school authorities
- Prominent advertisements were placed in the main daily newspapers on Friday 5 June regarding the rescheduled examinations.

In response to the event, the SEC received some 600 emails, most of them on Wednesday and Thursday, and some 1,200 phone calls to the Help-Line alone. The SEC main number and other direct phone lines and email addresses available on the website were also inundated with contacts. The Help-Line remained open on Saturday afternoon until 17.00 in order to deal with any phone calls following the conclusion of the deferred examination session. It should be noted that fewer than 10 calls were received in that period.

It is noteworthy to mention that despite the SEC's extensive media campaign, a small number of Superintendents and candidates attended for the deferred paper in English on the morning of Thursday, 4 June, and only discovered at that stage that the examination was rescheduled for Saturday, 6 June.

3.6 The rescheduled examination on 6 June

The rescheduled examination took place on Saturday 6 June, commencing at 09.30. The examination session was monitored throughout the country by members of the SEC's Examinations and Assessment Division in the normal manner. No issues of concern regarding the availability of the alternative papers or security emerged and the examination session executed successfully.

3.7 Conclusion

The security breach occurred at the commencement of the examination session on the morning of 3 June. The issue was first brought to the attention of the SEC at 15.55 that afternoon. The SEC immediately investigated the issue and having established the facts and considered all options, decided that, in order to protect the integrity of the State Examinations and to uphold the principles of inter-candidate equity and fairness, the Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 examination at Higher and Ordinary Levels on 4 June would be postponed and rescheduled to Saturday 6 June.

Had the security breach been reported to the SEC immediately it occurred, or to the SEC official who visited the centre at about 10.00 on 3 June, the SEC would have had the opportunity to arrange for the alternative paper to be taken by the candidates at the scheduled time on 4 June.

4. Recommendations

The rigorous quality assurance and security processes in relation to the security of the packets of examination papers that the SEC has established are outlined in Section 2 above. While the procedures and detailed instructions and the training and quality assurance processes described above are in place, every assessment system is reliant on individual adherence to, and compliance with, the prescribed procedures. In any system, the possibility of human error can never be totally discounted.

Notwithstanding this, a number of options have been identified for consideration with regard to the strengthening of existing procedures.

4.1 Timetable

Any subject composed of two written examination papers will be scheduled so that one paper is held on a morning session and one on an afternoon session. (Leaving Certificate Irish, English and Mathematics; Junior Certificate Irish, English, Mathematics and Business Studies). While it is possible that representations will be received to retain morning starts for Leaving Certificate Mathematics and English which followed on the 2008 revised timetable arrangements, it is clear that morning only or afternoon only starts for Papers 1 and 2 may contribute to a wrong packet of examination papers being opened in error.

4.2 Specific Direction

A specific direction will be displayed prominently in both the Superintendents' General and Day-to-Day Instructions to contact the SEC immediately if there is any risk that any of their actions may have compromised the integrity of an examination. A dedicated phone number in the SEC will be reserved for Superintendents in this respect.

4.3 Examination Paper Packets

The plastic packets in which the examination papers are packed fulfil the key requirement of being tamper-evident. However, the number of warning messages and the fact that all of the messages are provided in Irish and English may diminish the impact for the user and some of the key messages may be lost. The layout of the packets will be reviewed to:

- a. Prioritise the key messages
- b. Consider separating Irish and English warnings; English on one side and Irish on the other
- c. Put the key messages in positive language (For example - Open Here rather than Do Not Open Here)

- d. Increase the space available for the key information label so that the label may be increased in size
- e. Generally to reduce the risk that packets could be opened in error

4.4 Labelling of Packets

The design of the labels affixed to the packets of examination papers will be reviewed with a view to ensuring that the key information is prominently displayed. It is likely that the size of the label will also be increased.

4.5 Numbering on labels on Packets

As well as information denoting date, time and subject, examinations paper packet labels can also include an identifier number that relates the packet to the timetable. The numerical system will be known to Superintendents so that they can place the examination paper packets in timetable order to facilitate checking the contents of the examination paper box when they collect their examination paper box at the Distribution Centres (see 2.4 above). The numerical system will be used as part of the checking procedure before each examination session.

4.6 Procedures regarding the opening of examination packets - validation by another person

A. Validation by the Attendant

This matter has been considered. It is now felt that it is not appropriate for examination candidates to be asked to validate procedures because they are not best placed to give their full attention to the matter immediately before the commencement of their examinations. Similarly it is considered that Principals, examination aides and other Superintendents would not be best positioned to give their full attention to this very important task because of their other duties and responsibilities. It is considered that the Examination Attendant assigned to each main examination centre is ideally placed to fulfil the role of counter-checking and verifying with the Superintendent that the examination paper packet is intact and is the correct packet for the time and date of the examination as per the examination timetable. The SEC will research options so that the Attendants' counter-check validation is a mechanism or process, rather than just a signature. (Possible options include, for example, the use of a tear-off label retained by the Attendant in an *Instructions to Attendants* booklet that mirrors the *Day-to-Day Instructions to Superintendents*, providing Attendants with transparent labels that they place over the main label and confirm that the details match, or inserting the examination timetable details in a prescribed area on the packet). Introducing a role for the Attendant will eliminate the need to have examination candidates involved in this process.

B. Validation by the Superintendent

All examination papers are sequentially numbered for security reasons during the print run. In future, Superintendents will be instructed to transcribe the first and last numbers of the examination

papers for each level in the examination paper packet into the *Day-to Day Instructions* followed by the subject name and title. This is designed to compel each Superintendent to make a final check before distributing the examination papers.

4.7 Distribution of Examination Papers to Candidates

Most of the SEC's examination papers conform to a standard layout. In most cases the front page of the examination paper contains only the name, date and time of the examination followed by the examination rubrics. From next year, Superintendents will be instructed to distribute the examination papers to candidates face-up. This will allow candidates to see immediately whether they have received the correct examination paper for the session. In this way, candidates will have the opportunity to immediately alert the Superintendent if s/he has distributed an incorrect examination paper. This change will require a re-design of a very small number of examination papers that still have examination material on the front page.

4.8 Key Responsibilities of Superintendents

The SEC will produce in leaflet and poster format a set of "Golden Rules for Superintendents". These rules will supplement the other training material and instructions provided to Superintendents and will serve to remind Superintendents of their core responsibilities and obligations, and of what action to take in the event of an issue arising. In addition, the *General Instructions for Superintendents* and the *Day-to-Day Instructions* will be reviewed to identify areas where instructions can be clarified and further enhanced to assist Superintendents to discharge their duties efficiently and effectively.

4.9 Training of Superintendents

The SEC will review the current training arrangements to seek to identify measures that can be taken to enhance the training arrangements for both new and experienced superintendents.

4.10 Broader issues

The above recommendations, which are designed to deal with the particular issues which arose this year, will receive immediate attention in the SEC.

The SEC will also continue its practice of reviewing its procedures with attention being given to risk assessment and risk management.

Having regard to the broader issues which arose this year in relation to the secure and timely delivery of live examination papers to centres, the SEC intends to undertake as a matter of urgency a detailed examination of such issues including:

- opportunities for the digital transfer of examination papers to centres
- the option of a secure daily distribution and delivery of examination papers to centres
- pre-packing of all alternative examination papers
- the provision of a full supply of alternative examination papers in each centre
- the establishment of a regional hub network for the storage of alternative papers to provide for easier access if required.

Consideration of the feasibility of any of these approaches will be necessarily complex as improved agility in the distribution and delivery of examination papers can have implications for the interdependent issues of security and affordability and for the production quality of the examination papers themselves.

The SEC intends to complete its examination of these and related issues by the autumn and will then engage with the Minister and the Department in the consideration of its outcome.

Appendix I – References

State Examinations Commission (2009, a) *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009* Athlone

State Examinations Commission (2009, b) *Day to Day Instructions* Athlone

State Examinations Commission (2009, c) *Instructional DVD - The work of the Superintendent in the State Examinations* Athlone

State Examinations Commission (2009, d) *Form S46 – Certification by each Superintendent that they have checked the contents of the examination box, read and understood the General Instructions for Superintendents and viewed the Training DVD The work of the Superintendent* Athlone

State Examinations Commission (2007) *The preparation of test items – Principles and Protocol* Athlone

State Examinations Commission (2009) *Leaving Certificate Examination Timetable 2009* Athlone

Appendix II - Report from the SEC official investigating the security breach in Centre 1735

Report on breach of security re Leaving Certificate English (Paper 2, Higher and Ordinary Levels) in Centre no. 1735 on Wednesday 3 June 2009.

1. Introduction

I visited St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda, Co Louth on Wednesday 3 June at 9.35 am for the purpose of monitoring the examination centres in the school. I visited all of the examination centres in the school and spoke with the Superintendent in each centre. During the course of my visit, I found no evidence, nor was I given any indication by any individual, that anything untoward had occurred. I left the school at approximately 11.00 am and continued the monitoring of examination centres in other locations, in accordance with my monitoring schedule.

At approximately 4.00 pm on Wednesday 3 June, I was contacted by the Assistant Head of the Examinations and Assessment Division in the SEC. She informed me of a security breach that had allegedly occurred regarding Leaving Certificate English (Paper 2) in St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda, in Centre no. 1735. She requested me to return to this centre to investigate and report on the issue as a matter of urgency.

This report describes the initial monitoring visit in the school on Wednesday morning 3 June, the investigative visit on Wednesday afternoon and the follow up visit on Thursday morning 4 June.

2. Investigation

2.1 Wednesday morning 3 June - initial monitoring visit

I arrived at St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda, Co Louth at approximately 9.35 am on 3 June. I met the Principal, the Examinations Aide, and the School Chaplain. They indicated that they were very happy with all arrangements in respect of the examinations and that the examinations had commenced and were proceeding satisfactorily in all centres.

During the course of the monitoring process, I visited all examination centres in the school (16). I also visited one of the 23 special centres in the school.

In each examination centre I visited, I verified the general administrative work of the Superintendent, including the centre roll. I also asked each Superintendent if everything was satisfactory and if there were any issues, concerns or questions. In all cases, including in the case of Centre 1735, I was not given any cause for concern. Specifically, I received no indication or report from the Superintendent that an error had occurred in the distribution of the examination papers in Centre 1735.

I conducted the monitoring in each centre in accordance with the SEC procedures. I also visited the strong room where the boxes of examination papers were stored. I checked the security of the area and I verified that all the examination boxes were locked and stored securely.

I concluded my visit at approximately 11.00 am and I continued the monitoring of examination centres in other schools, in accordance with my schedule.

2.2 Wednesday afternoon 3 June – investigative visit to Centre 1735

At approximately 4.00 pm on 3 June, I was contacted by the Assistant Head of the Examinations and Assessment Division in the SEC. She informed me that a breach of security was reported to have occurred in Centre 1735 which was located in St Oliver’s Community College, Drogheda. She requested me to return to this centre as a matter of urgency in order to ascertain the facts and to report my findings and conclusions as soon as possible.

I immediately left Dunshaughlin and arrived at St Oliver’s Community College, Drogheda at approximately 5.15 pm. On arrival at the school, I briefly met the CEO for County Louth VEC. I then went to meet with the Superintendent of Centre 1735.

2.2.1 Investigation

I interviewed the Superintendent. During the course of the interview, he admitted that he had not followed the specified quality assurance procedures in relation to the opening and distribution of examination papers as outlined in the *General Instructions to Superintendents 2009* document.

Specifically, arising from the interview, I concluded that:

1. He had failed to follow the specified security procedures in the *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009, page 14, Part 9, Section 1 (a)*, with regard to the checking and verification of the label on the packet of examination papers by each Superintendent prior to opening.
2. He failed to follow the specified security procedure in *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009, page 14, Part 9, Section 1 (a)*, which specifies that, prior to the opening of the packet, two candidates are requested to confirm that (a) the label on the packet is the correct one for the examination session and (b) that the security of the packet is intact. In this case, while two candidates were asked to sign the packet, it would appear that they were not asked to confirm that the packet was the correct one for the examination session. As a consequence, this procedure was rendered invalid.
3. He failed to follow the specified security procedure in *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009, page 14, Part 9, Section 1 (b)*, which stipulates that, subsequent to opening the packet and prior to the distribution of papers to candidates, the Superintendent

is required to ensure that each of the enclosed papers is the appropriate paper for the subject as on the timetable.

4. He failed to follow the specified security procedure on the *Day to Day Instructions for Leaving Certificate* before the examination session, in which he is required to confirm, by signature, that, prior to opening, he has verified that the packet is the correct packet for the examination session.
5. He opened the incorrect packet of Leaving Certificate English papers. Specifically, he opened Leaving Certificate English Paper 2 (Higher and Ordinary Levels), which was scheduled for the morning of Thursday 4 June.
6. He gave one English Paper 2 to the Superintendent of a special centre before the other papers were distributed to the candidates in Centre 1735.
7. He distributed papers to all candidates in Centre 1735 and they were placed face down on the desk as per *General Instructions to Superintendents*. Three Ordinary Level papers were distributed. The Ordinary Level papers were numbered from 11921 to 11935, 15 in total. Thirty-one Higher Level papers were distributed. The Higher Level papers were numbered from 14925 to 14957, 33 in total.
8. He instructed the candidates to turn over the examination papers and to commence the examination. He looked at the examination paper again to confirm the finishing time of the examination. At this stage, he realised his mistake. He instructed candidates to place the papers face down on the desks and he began to collect the papers.
9. He stated that in his estimation, approximately 15 seconds had elapsed between the time that he gave the instruction to the candidates to turn over the paper and the time that he realised his mistake and gave the new instruction.
10. The superintendent of the special centre had, by that stage, noticed the mistake and returned to the main centre to return the incorrect paper.
11. All of the examination papers that were incorrectly distributed were retrieved.
12. He asked the superintendent of the special centre to remain in the main centre while he went to the strong room in the school to get the correct packet of English papers.
13. He returned with the correct packet of examination papers and recommenced the examination.

I asked him specifically, as the error had occurred some 30 minutes prior to my monitoring visit in the morning, why he had not informed me of what had occurred. He said that he never considered telling me as he believed at the time, that although the incident was serious, he did not think the examination was compromised. He accepted, on reflection, that he should have reported the error.

I took possession of the packet containing the English Paper 2 examination papers and in his presence I checked the candidates' signatures on the packet. I noted that the packet had been sealed with sticky tape and that the spaces requiring the time and date of the examination were not completed. I confirmed that all of the Higher and Ordinary level papers were accounted for. I also confirmed that they were all in numerical sequence.

I informed the Superintendent that his employment as a Superintendent for the SEC was suspended. I then took possession of all his examination materials and documentation, and the key to the box of examination papers for the centre.

In interviewing the Superintendent, I found him to be most co-operative. He was most upset about what had occurred and, indeed, was very contrite.

Subsequent to the interview with the Superintendent, I viewed CCTV footage of Centre 1735 that was available in the school. On the basis of the footage, it appeared that the amount of time during which the candidates had sight of the incorrect paper in Centre 1735 was no more than 25 seconds. It also appeared that over 3 minutes elapsed between the time that the superintendent in the special centre received the incorrect paper from the Superintendent in Centre 1735 and the time that she returned the examination paper. It also appeared from the footage that the examination commenced in Centre 1735 at approximately 9.20am, almost ten minutes prior to the scheduled time.

I reported my findings verbally to the SEC.

2.3 Thursday morning 4 June - briefing of replacement Superintendent

On Thursday 4 June, I visited the school and briefed the replacement superintendent. He was very professional in his approach to the task and I thanked him for taking up the position at such short notice.

I also spoke with the CEO of Co. Louth VEC and the Principal that morning, but nothing additional of consequence to what had already been established was gleaned.

3. Conclusions

Having investigated the matter, I concluded the following:

(a) As a result of failure on the part of the Superintendent in Centre 1735 to adhere to the specified security procedures in the *General Instructions for Superintendents 2009* and the *Day to Day Instructions* with regard to the opening and verification of the contents of examination papers prior to distribution, the security and integrity of Leaving Certificate English Paper 2, Higher and Ordinary Levels, were seriously compromised.

(b) The Superintendent failed to report the issue to either the State Examinations Commission or to me when I visited the centre at approximately 10.00am subsequent to the occurrence on the morning of 3 June.

Dónall Mac Diarmada,
Examinations and Assessment Manager
4 June 2009.

Appendix III

Excerpt from the *Day to Day Instructions Leaving Certificate Wednesday morning 3 June.*

WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE

8.55 a.m.

Collect examination papers in time to reach the Centre before 9 a.m. Note that the examination paper envelopes are colour coded GREEN for MORNING examination sessions and ORANGE for AFTERNOON examination sessions.

9.00 a.m.

Admit candidates 30 minutes before the examination begins and ask them to sign the Centre Roll. See the General Instructions to Superintendents for instructions on completing the Centre Roll.

Leaving Certificate candidates must sign the Roll in the appropriate space beneath their name on the left hand side of the Centre Roll.

ENGLISH Paper 1

Morning 9.30 – 12.20

Important: The examinations in English Paper 1 and English Paper 2 are morning examination sessions and both packets therefore are coloured GREEN. Before opening the packet this morning ensure that you have the packet for Paper 1 and NOT Paper 2.

Examination paper details: Packet coloured GREEN

Higher level - One paper coloured pink

Ordinary level - One paper coloured blue

Check list of corrections for any reference(s) to the paper(s) for this session.

Examination stationery: One standard answerbook.

Four page supplementary answerbook on request plus treasury tag.
(See section E and F of this document).

Checklist to be completed by

Superintendent:

Before the start of this examination session I have ensured that
(a) The packet(s) of examination papers is proper to this examination session in accordance with the examinations timetable

(b) Each examination paper was proper to this session before distribution

(c) I examined the “List of Corrections” and made any necessary announcement as instructed, to candidates and to Superintendents of Special Centres

(d) I distributed all necessary stationery, to candidates and to Superintendents of Special Centres, as outlined above, for this session.

Signed: _____

Centre No: _____

Superintendent: _____

End of examination session: Divide the candidates' answerbooks into separate bundles for each level in numerical order.

Use standard **GREEN** transmission envelopes and bar-code labels provided. Double check you are using the bar code labels for **English Paper 1**.

Appendix IV Copy of the “warning” bulletin included in the boxes of examination papers

QUESTION PAPER SECURITY

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Dear Superintendent

The examinations start tomorrow after many months of preparation, culminating in the distribution of question papers to you today.

You are the last line in our quality control! On you rests the responsibility for the safe custody of the question papers entrusted to you and only you can now ensure that the correct papers are distributed to the candidates at the correct time.

It is important to be aware that the Leaving Certificate timetable has again been significantly changed for 2009, with some consequential changes at Junior Certificate. For example, on the first day of the Leaving Certificate examinations, Home Economics is timetabled in the afternoon instead of English Paper 2 (as was the case for many years heretofore). Hence Leaving Certificate examination paper boxes will contain two green packets of papers for English – Paper1 for the morning of Wednesday 3rd June and Paper 2 for Thursday morning 4th June. It is essential that the “Day to Day Instructions” be carefully consulted before each examination session to ensure that you correctly open and distribute the appropriate examination papers.

Please remember

- Do not leave the question papers unattended at any time;
- Go directly from the distribution centre to the location where the papers will be stored (ie School, Garda Station, etc.);
- Do not stop for lunch or any other business while you have question papers in the car;
- Do not leave question papers exposed in your car, even while driving it, and keep the door locked en route.

On exam days, please

- Check that you can clearly read the day and subject details (the packets are colour coded – GREEN for morning and ORANGE for afternoon sessions, and also state “Morning” and “Afternoon” as appropriate);
- Do not open any packet without a double check that it is the correct packet;
- Check that the contents of the packet are correct before distribution (remember, a question paper handed early to a candidate may cause major difficulties).

To help you, we have again included a checklist for each session in the Day to Day instructions, which you must complete.

Finally,

Do not rush. It is better to start the examination a few minutes late, ensuring that the candidates are given back this time at the end, than open the wrong packet or distribute the wrong papers under pressure.

With thanks, and wishing you every success over the examination period.

Aidan Farrell, Director of Operations.

Appendix V **Excerpt from the *General Instructions for Superintendents*
2009 – Significant Changes for 2009**

Significant Changes of Procedures

These brief notes are designed to assist Superintendents. It is incumbent on Superintendents to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the contents of these General Instructions (and the Day to Day Instructions which you will receive when collecting the Examination Paper box).

- The Leaving Certificate timetable has again been significantly changed for 2009. On the first day of the Leaving Certificate examinations, Home Economics is timetabled in the afternoon instead of English Paper 2. Hence Leaving Certificate examination paper boxes will contain two green packets of papers for English – Paper 1 for the morning of Wednesday 3rd June and Paper 2 for the morning of Thursday 4th June.

Engineering has been brought forward to the afternoon of Day 2, i.e. 4th June, with Chemistry reverting to the third week of the examinations.

Design and Communication Graphics replaces Technical Drawing Paper 1 on 12th June and Accounting replaces Technical Drawing Paper 2 on 15th June.

It is essential that the “Day to Day Instructions” for Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate be carefully consulted before each examination session to ensure that you correctly open and distribute the appropriate examination papers.

- Leaving Certificate candidates should sign the Roll in the appropriate space beneath their name on the left hand side of the centre roll.
- DVD’s will again be used instead of Videos for the appropriate LCA subjects. This arrangement must be confirmed with the School Authorities and tested when you set up the examination centre on Tuesday 2nd Jun.
- When bringing the examination paper and stationery boxes to the Post Office for return to the SEC on the conclusion of the examinations in your Centre, you must have the Record of Posting Booklet stamped in the Post Office – see Part 15 (6) of these General Instructions for details.

Alternative papers

Examination papers that are prepared independently of the main examination papers for use in the event of a security breach or other contingency situation.

Attendant

A person who assists the Superintendent in the preparation of the examination centre on the day preceding the examinations and who, during the examinations, is positioned outside the centre to which he/she is assigned. The Attendant must comply with all relevant instructions issued by the Superintendent for the maintenance of the security and integrity of the examinations. The specific duties of the Attendant are listed in the *General Instructions to Superintendents 2009*, (Appendix 1, page 32).

Chief Examiner

The Chief Examiner for each examination is normally an Examinations and Assessment Manager – a full-time officer of the Examination and Assessment Division of the SEC, and is responsible for maintaining standards in assigned subjects from year to year. The Chief Examiner manages the preparation of examination papers and their marking schemes and has overall responsibility for the examination papers as well as for the conduct of the marking and appeals processes. This role is delegated to him/her by the Head of the Examinations and Assessment Division.

Distribution Centre

A venue at which, on the day before the commencement of the examinations, each Superintendent takes possession of the box of examination papers assigned to him/her. At the Distribution Centre, each Superintendent is required to check the contents of the box of examination papers assigned to him/her against the Examination Paper Quantity List, so as to ensure that the box contains the appropriate examination papers for the candidates in the examination centre. There are 13 Distribution Centres nationwide.

Examination Centre

A place approved by the SEC where State Examinations are held. A centre is generally either a Junior Certificate centre or a Leaving Certificate centre. In an individual school, there may be a number of examination centres.

Examination paper packets

The tamper-evident packet into which live examination papers and material are packed. The packet for examinations scheduled for mornings are coloured green, while afternoon examinations are coloured orange. Each packet is labelled with the day, date, subject, start time, finishing time, number of papers enclosed, and centre number. Specific instructions and security procedures are in place with regard to the opening and distribution of examination paper packets (*General Instructions to Superintendents 2009*, Part 9, page 14).

Examination and Assessment Manager (EAM)

The EAM, as a member of the Examinations and Assessment Division, is a full-time official of the SEC. He/she may be assigned responsibility, as Chief Examiner, for particular examinations. He/she also has responsibility for the monitoring of examination centres.

Examiner

A person appointed by the SEC to mark the work presented by candidates. Examiners report to an Advising Examiner, who in turn reports to a Chief Advising Examiner. Overall responsibility for the examination rests with the Chief Examiner.

Superintendent

A person appointed by the SEC to invigilate the State Examinations. Superintendents are responsible for the security of the examination papers assigned to them, for the safe custody and transmission of each candidate's work to the SEC, and for ensuring that the examinations are conducted in accordance with the regulations in the centre to which they are assigned.

Special Centre

A place in which a candidate granted a Reasonable Accommodation, such as, for example, a reader or a scribe, sits the examinations. In an individual school, there may be a number of special centres.