



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Cor na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

To: Authorities of Post-Primary Schools.

S68/08

CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS
PRACTICAL COURSEWORK

In order to maintain the integrity of the examinations process and ensure inter-candidate equity, the State Examinations Commission, in co-operation with school authorities has procedures in place to determine the authenticity of Practical Coursework submitted by candidates for assessment.

This circular updates and replaces circular S74/03 and S68/04, regarding Practical Coursework submitted by candidates for assessment.

Practical coursework includes all components of examinations other than written, oral and practical examinations. The following subjects/courses have such components:

Leaving Certificate:

Agricultural Science - Coursework
Agricultural Economics - Project
Construction Studies –Project
Engineering - Project
Home Economics (Scientific & Social) - Coursework
Link Modules (LCVP) - Portfolio
Music - Composing Elective - Portfolio
Religious Education - Journal
History - Coursework
Geography – Coursework

* **Design and Communication Graphics (to be examined from 2009 onwards)**

* **Technology (to be examined from 2009 onwards)**

Junior Certificate:

Art, Craft, Design – Project
Home Economics- Project
Materials Technology (Wood) - Project
Metalwork – Project
Religious Education – Journal
Science – Coursework Journal
Environmental and Social Studies (ESS) - Project
Technology - Project
Civic, Social and Political Education - Action Project/ Coursework Assessment

Leaving Certificate Applied:

Student Tasks

Vocational Education Tasks
General Education Task
Vocational Preparation Task
Contemporary Issue Task
Practical Achievement Task
Personal Reflection Task

Vocational Specialisms

Childcare / Community Care
Graphics & Construction
Technology
Engineering
Craft & Design

The following procedures outline the role of school authorities, teachers and candidates in the authentication of Practical Coursework submitted for assessment.

1. Acceptance of Practical Coursework for assessment

The State Examinations Commission will accept Practical Coursework for assessment only where it has been completed under the following conditions:

- The subject must be timetabled (with timetable available to Commission personnel)
- The school/centre must be available for monitoring by Commission personnel.
- Practical Coursework must be conducted under the supervision of a class teacher with the work authenticated by the teacher and principal in accordance with this circular.

2. Role of school authorities and teachers

The management of Practical Coursework by the class teacher to safeguard inter-candidate equity is of great importance. This management involves intervention by the teacher, as appropriate, to ensure that each candidate is responsible for his/her own individual work. The class teacher should monitor the progress of all aspects of Practical Coursework on a regular basis. The work of each candidate should be completed under the required conditions, as set out for individual subjects.

Schools should bring to the Commission's attention, at the earliest possible date, any Practical Coursework that a teacher cannot authenticate as being the candidate's own individual work (see Section 3 below regarding Form P20).

Most candidates accept the decision to invalidate Practical Coursework on the grounds that it cannot be verified as being the candidate's own individual work. However, in a small number of cases candidates may wish to appeal this decision. Any such appeal should be transmitted to the Commission. The Commission has no expectation that a school or teacher should be required to defend to any party their role in upholding the examination requirements and the integrity of the examinations generally. The Commission, for its part, will be glad to convey that position directly to candidates and parents if need be and to make clear that responsibility rests with the candidate himself/herself.

In recent years the posters issued to schools for the attention of candidates taking examinations with Practical Coursework components. The purpose of these posters is to outline the conditions required for the acceptance of Practical Coursework for assessment and to make candidates fully aware of the consequences of not adhering to the rules. They are intended to strengthen the position of schools and teachers who are unable to verify that to the best of their knowledge the work is the candidate's own individual work. The notices for display in rooms where practical coursework work is carried out are enclosed.

3. Responsibility of candidates

It is the responsibility of the candidate to fulfil examination requirements, which includes providing a basis for proper authentication by the class teacher. Candidates must complete Practical Coursework under the supervision of the class teacher so that the teacher can monitor progress on a regular basis and be in a position at the Practical Coursework completion date to verify that the work is the candidate's own individual work. To enable the class teacher authenticate a candidate's work, it is essential that every candidate maintain records of work in progress throughout the duration of the Practical Coursework.

4. Authentication

Form P.3

Form P3 assists in dealing with situations where candidates are entered for subjects with Practical Coursework components, as outlined in this circular, but who are carrying out the Practical Coursework in schools/centres other than where they were entered. The principal and the teacher in the school/centre where the Practical Coursework is being carried out must sign the P3 to verify the authenticity of the candidate's Practical Coursework.

Form P.2

Candidates are required to sign **Form P.2** as a declaration that the submitted Practical Coursework is their own individual work and was completed under the required conditions as set out in the individual subject. **Form P.2** must also be signed by the class teacher and the school principal as confirmation of the authenticity of the Practical Coursework submitted.

Form P.20

Form P20 assists in reporting cases where the class teacher and the school principal/ manager cannot verify the authenticity of a candidate's work. It will be issued to schools prior to the Practical Coursework completion dates and should be returned, duly completed by the class teacher and school principal/ manager, no later than one week after the completion dates.

In subjects where the teacher marks the candidates Practical Coursework, form P20 should be completed as appropriate and returned to the State Examinations Commission in advance of the commencement of monitoring. The teacher should not award marks for candidates listed on form P20.

5. Consequences of submitting invalid practical coursework

Practical Coursework is deemed invalid where:

- (i) Requirements for the completion of the Practical Coursework have not been met i.e. where it is not carried out in accordance with the conditions as set out for the individual subject. The penalty is to discount any marks awarded for the Practical Coursework.
- (ii) There is evidence to suggest that a candidate made efforts to gain an unfair advantage over other candidates e.g. incidences of suspected copying, plagiarism or inappropriate help from a third party. Penalties in such cases are set out in the *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools* and range from loss of the subject, to loss of the entire examination in all subjects or being barred from the Certificate Examinations in subsequent years. There may be serious consequences for any other party involved in improperly assisting candidates as the Education Act 1998 provides for certain criminal offences in relation to the conduct of the examinations.

For both instances (i) and (ii) marks will be withheld and the evidence will be presented to the candidates for their observations. On receipt of the evidence, a decision about the award will be made.

Please bring this circular to the attention of relevant teachers and candidates.

Thank you for your co-operation and if you have any queries regarding the contents of this circular, please contact Practicals Section, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, telephone 090 6442741 /090 6442749.

Majells Smyth
Higher Executive Officer
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