

Circular S13/21 State Examinations Commission Leaving Certificate Oral Language Examinations 2021 Guidance to School Management

Supplementary Note – 24 March 2021

Guidance in respect of the conduct of oral language examinations was published by the State Examinations Commission on 19 March 2021.

That guidance provided that the wearing of face masks was not appropriate for either the interviewer or candidate during the interviews.

In recent days significant levels of concern were raised by teachers who had indicated their intention to carry out the oral interviews. The State Examinations Commission has carefully considered those concerns and reflected on the approach for the oral interviews.

All of the control measures contained in the guidance published last week were informed by public health advice. Having regard to the concerns that have been raised with the SEC in recent days, there will now be an additional requirement for both interviewer and candidate to wear face masks during the entirety of the interview.

- **Please note that all oral interviewers and candidates are required to wear masks for the duration of the interview, with the exception of candidates who are exempted from wearing masks normally.**

- **All other public health requirements including the use of Perspex screens, social distancing, adequate space and ventilation must still be in place for the oral interviews.**

The SEC will only be in a position to mark the interviews as submitted by the schools. Schools are, therefore, asked to carry out adequate testing of the recording equipment with one or more practice runs of people wearing face masks to ensure that the recording is audible. As previously advised, schools are responsible for testing the recordings before submitting them to the SEC for marking. However, in light of the new requirement to wear face masks, schools are now required to test the quality of **each** individual recording in advance of submission to ensure that each individual recording is of sufficient and satisfactory quality to be marked by the SEC, including that the voices of the interviewer and the candidate are not muffled. The testing of each individual recording must involve the school listening to a sufficient portion of the recording to satisfy themselves that the quality of that particular recording is satisfactory. This must be carried out either by the Examination Aide or the school principal. Where the recording is not audible, the candidate should be recalled for re-interview before submitting recorded material to the SEC.

There will be no further opportunity for candidates to retake the oral interview once the recordings have been submitted to the SEC in accordance with the timelines as set out previously. Furthermore, there will be no measure in place to compensate candidates for any issue or perceived issue with the quality of their oral interview recording. As advised, the SEC will only be in a position to mark the material that is submitted.

The SEC appreciates that schools may have made arrangements for the conduct of the Oral Language Examinations in accordance with the previous guidance. It should be noted that irrespective of these arrangements face masks must be worn by both interviewers and candidates.

This change has been made to ensure the full confidence of teachers and candidates in the safety of the arrangements for the oral interviews. While not strictly required under public health advice, it is believed that the concerns raised in recent days can be met through this additional measure.