An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020

Guide for Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Class Rank Orderings

21 May 2020

Version 1.0

Part I: Before you begin
Pages 6 to 10

Part II: Estimating marks and rank order
Pages 11 to 22

Part III: Student-, programme-, and subject-specific information
Pages 23 to 27

Part IV: Oversight by the principal
Pages 28 to 31

Part V: Standardisation by the Department
Page 32

Part V: General issues for teachers and principals
Pages 33 to 37

Part I: Before you begin 6

1. Introduction 6
2. What are calculated grades? 6
3. How will calculated grades be arrived at? 7
4. Role of the school 8
5. Important information to remember before you start 9
   - 5.1. Including all students in the school 9
   - 5.2. Level of entry 9
   - 5.3. Accompanying forms 9

Part II: Estimating marks and rank order 11

6. Professional judgment 11
7. The evidence that will inform the professional judgment 11
8. Making the preliminary judgment about marks and rankings 14
   - 8.1. The school's 'best estimate' of the 'most likely' percentage mark 14
   - 8.2. Spacing your estimated marks appropriately 15
   - 8.3. Avoiding inappropriate clustering 15
   - 8.4. Avoiding unconscious bias 16
   - 8.5. Alignment across classes 16
9. Completing Form A – the estimated percentage mark 17
10. Completing Form B – the class rank order 17
11. The in-school alignment process 19
    - 11.1. Purpose 19
    - 11.2. Who is involved in the alignment process? 19
    - 11.3. Preparing for and arranging the alignment process 20
    - 11.4. Carrying out the alignment process 20
12. After the alignment process 21

Part III: Student-, programme-, and subject-specific information 23

13. Some student-specific issues 23
14. Programme-specific and subject-specific information 24
    - 14.1. Established Leaving Certificate subjects, and LCVP 24
    - 14.2. Leaving Certificate Applied – specific information 25

Part IV: Oversight by principal 28

15. Oversight of marks and ranking process by principal 28
16. Specific measures for noting 29
    16.1. Subjects outside of the school 29
    16.2. Students new to the school 30
    16.3. Repeat students 30
    16.4. New or substitute teachers 30
17. Reporting to the Department 31

Part V: Standardisation by Department 32

18. Standardisation of data by Department 32
19. Issue of provisional results 32
20. Appeals process 32

Part VI: General issues for teachers and principals 33

21. Confidentiality and data protection 33
22. Conflicts of interest 34
23. Student-teacher contact and fairness in the calculated grades model 34
24. Basis of the calculated grades model 36
25. Legal indemnity 37

Appendices 38

Part I: Before you begin

1. Introduction

This is a guide for schools to assist them in the process of arriving at an estimated percentage mark and ranking for each of their students in this year's Leaving Certificate class. The processes of estimation and ranking comprise the school-based part of the system of Calculated Grades which is being offered to students this year. Once estimated marks and rankings have been provided by the school, these will be subject to a process of national standardisation.

This guide is for teachers, principals, and deputy principals (and corresponding positions) in schools, Further Education and Training Centres, and all other settings, including private colleges, which have students who are entered for the Leaving Certificate examination in 2020. In the guide, 'school' should be taken to include all such settings. Throughout this guide, 'principal' should be taken to include the director of a centre or other such person in the corresponding position to a school principal. 'Student' is taken to include all learners in such centres who have been entered for any Leaving Certificate examination in 2020.

Although parts of the guide are more relevant to some personnel than others, understanding the whole process is important for everyone's understanding of their own role, so it is strongly recommended that all involved read the entire guide. The separate document, issued by the Department of Education and Skills at the time of the Minister's announcement, *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020*, which is available on www.education.ie, should be read before this Guide for Schools.

The arrangements described in this document apply to:

- Established Leaving Certificate – subjects
- Leaving Certificate Applied – subjects, vocational specialisms and tasks
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – Link Modules

Except where otherwise made clear, the guidance given should be taken to apply to all of the programmes above. Some programme-specific and subject-specific additional information in relation to the *Established Leaving Certificate* and the *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – Link Modules* and some further information in relation to arrangements for the *Leaving Certificate Applied* are provided in Section 14.2.

2. What are calculated grades?

Calculated Grades are grades that can be provided to students following the combination of school information about a student's expected performance in an examination and national data available in relation to the performance of students in examinations over a period of time.

A calculated grade results from the combination of two data sets:

- A school-based estimation of an overall percentage mark and ranking to be awarded to a student in a particular subject.
- Data on past performance of students in each school and nationally.

The combination of these data sets through a process of national standardisation determines the grade to be awarded to each student in each subject, thereby resulting in a calculated grade.

Because calculated grades are not results from a state examination (as defined in the Education Act 1998) the administration of the calculated grades system falls outside the statutory remit of the State Examinations Commission. For this reason, the Minister has established an executive office within the Department of Education and Skills to administer the scheme. This office is called the *Calculated Grades Executive Office*.

3. How will calculated grades be arrived at?

There are two main phases in the process of arriving at a calculated grade:

- A school-based phase
- A national standardisation phase

In providing the estimated marks and rankings in the school-based phase, there will be four main steps:

- The teacher's estimation of student marks and rankings
- School alignment of marks for a subject through a subject alignment group comprising teachers who are teaching the subject to Leaving Certificate students this year
- Oversight of the alignment process by the school principal
- Transmission of the marks and rankings for national standardisation.

After this school-based phase comes the national standardisation phase carried out by the Department of Education and Skills:

The school-sourced data will be combined with historical data through a process called standardisation in order to generate the calculated grade for the students in the subject. This standardisation process will bring the two data sets into alignment with each other and will be used to ensure that the calculated grades reflect standards that are properly aligned across schools and with a common national standard.

After the standardisation process, the calculated marks will be converted into calculated grades, and these grades will be issued

to students. The calculated grades will be expressed in the same manner as currently applies to Leaving Certificate grades – Higher level grade 1, etc.

It is open to a student to appeal his/her calculated grades. The appeal process will include the following:

- A series of checks that data was correctly entered at school level and correctly transferred to the DES
- A review to establish whether the data was correctly received and processed by the DES.

If a student remains dissatisfied after notification of outcome of this appeal, he/she can seek verification of the DES processes by independent appeal scrutineers.

Finally, students who remain unhappy with the outcome of the calculated grade awarded will have the opportunity to sit a Leaving Certificate written examination when the holding of conventional examinations becomes possible. If a student sits such an examination and achieves a higher grade than his/her calculated grade, then:

- The stated results provided to the student will be amended
- If the improvement in the student's grade means that he/she would have been entitled to a higher offer of a CAO course, he/she will be facilitated in taking up that place as soon as practicable.

4. Role of the school

The role of the school is to provide marks and rankings that reflect:

- An estimate of the percentage mark in each subject that each student is most likely to have achieved if he/she had sat the Leaving Certificate examination in 2020 under normal conditions
- A class ranking for each student in each subject – i.e. a list of all the students in each individual class group for a particular subject in order of their estimated level of achievement.

What teachers are asked to do

Teachers are asked to use their professional judgment, drawing on existing records and available evidence, to arrive at an estimated mark for each student and a rank order for each class. They will engage with their subject alignment group to make sure that all teachers of the subject with final year Leaving Certificate classes are applying a similar standard in respect of the same subject. In the case of a subject for which there is only one teacher with a class for examination, in relation to the in-school alignment process, they will engage either with the deputy principal or, subject to agreement by the principal, with another teacher of the same subject.

What the principal is asked to do

Principals are asked to provide oversight of the in-school alignment process to assist with ensuring that different teachers of the same subject are applying consistent and appropriate standards. When the final school estimated marks and class rank orders are finalised, the principal arranges for the inputting of the data and its transmission to the Calculated Grades Executive Office of the Department for the national standardisation process.

5. Important information to remember before you start

5.1. Including all students in the school

Students are being provided with an option of receiving calculated grades to facilitate their timely progression from second-level schooling in light of the postponement of the Leaving Certificate examinations. In due course they will be provided with the opportunity to opt in or opt out of receiving results from the calculated grades system. Irrespective of whether any individual student ultimately decides to opt in or opt out of receiving calculated grades, an estimated percentage mark must be generated for all students and all must be included on the corresponding rank order for the class.

5.2. Level of entry

Students will be asked to confirm their level of entry via an online system. Once this process has completed, the DES will confirm levels of entry back to the school, and the principal/deputy principal will relay this onwards to the teachers.

Pending this confirmation and in order to expedite the estimation of marks and the subject alignment process, teachers should proceed on the assumption that each student remains entered for the subject at the level the teacher currently understands them to be at. Given that teachers are not to make contact with their students, no teacher should seek any further confirmation of the level directly from the student or their parents. If there is any doubt about whether a Higher Level student has decided to change to Ordinary level, it should be assumed that he/she is remaining at Higher level pending confirmation of the position.

While the process of estimating grades and ranking of students within a class can proceed to a certain extent (up to and including the subject alignment process) pending receipt of confirmation of levels, the in-school sign-off process must not take place until after all levels are confirmed and there is a final estimated percentage mark at the confirmed level for each student.

5.3. Accompanying forms

The following forms are provided to assist with the process and are referred to later in the guide where their use arises. For ease of reference, they are included as appendices to this

guide, but they will be provided as standalone documents that can be completed by hand or digitally (subject to subsequent printing out and signature).

- Form A: Estimated Percentage Mark form for recording each student's estimated mark
- Form B: Class Rank Order form for recording the rank order of the particular class
- Form C: School sign-off on estimated mark for a subject studied outside of the school
- Form D: Subject entry for which the school cannot sign off on an estimated mark.

Part II: Estimating marks and rank order

6. Professional judgment

The cornerstone of the Calculated Grades model is a reliance on the professional judgment of teachers, including principals and deputy principals, in providing the best possible estimate of how each student is most likely to have performed in the examination if the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 virus had never arisen.

We know that Irish schools have a large amount of information on the learning achievements of their students, but the context and circumstances in which this data is collected can vary from school to school. Most schools use a range of tests, for example, but these tests can vary in their content, structure and style. Different teachers mark them in different ways – some considering, for example, that mock exams should be marked severely to motivate students, while others mark them more leniently to encourage students who lack confidence. We also know that schools collect and record such data in different ways. That is why teachers' professional judgment is vital in coming to an accurate estimation of the achievement of each student.

Teacher professional judgment facilitates incorporating a range of available evidence of the likely performance of students, as appropriate. Teachers know their students and are able to balance a variety of evidence in arriving at a professional judgment in relation to each student's expected performance.

For these and other reasons, the professional judgments involved need to be suitably informed by relevant data, but they should not be overly constrained or dominated by such data. Accordingly, the calculated grades model developed by the Department cannot ensure fairness if statistical or algorithmic models – such as those offered by commercial companies – are used in the course of generating data at school level and their use must be avoided.

7. The evidence that will inform the professional judgment

Teachers should use a range of evidence to support their judgment-making when estimating students' marks and rankings. It may include both formative and summative assessment activities undertaken during the course of study. When considering what evidence to use, it is very important that it is only evidence that relates to student performance that is considered.

Given the timing of the school closures and the stage in the year, it is recognised that the range and amount of available evidence will vary across subjects. Judgments should be based on the evidence that is available. As all tuition for Leaving Certificate students ceased with effect from 11 May, additional assessments, mock examinations or homework tasks **must not**

now be set for the purposes of determining an estimated percentage mark. Furthermore, students should not be disadvantaged if they have been unable to complete any work set after schools were closed on 12 March.

Where additional work has been completed after that date, teachers are asked to exercise due caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this may reflect the circumstances and context in which the work was done rather than what might have happened if everything had been normal.

When trying to decide whether or not a particular form of supporting evidence should be considered, ask yourself:

- Does the evidence relate specifically to student performance and achievement?
- Can the evidence be accessed? (If accessing this evidence requires contacting the student then it should not be included.)
- Is it feasible to consider this evidence in the time available?
- Is this evidence likely to improve the quality of the professional judgment made?
- If the evidence is accessible in respect of some students and not others, can it be considered in such a way as not to disadvantage either category?

The following should also be considered:

- The estimation of students' marks and ranking should be based on the assumption that schooling had carried on as normal in 2020, that students had finished out any relevant coursework components, oral assessments and practical examinations as normal, and had taken their examinations under normal conditions.
- Estimation should take account of evidence about student performance from both summative and formative assessment activities. The knowledge and experience that teachers have of the curriculum and the examination are essential to this process. Judgments should draw on existing documentation and other available evidence, and should have regard to any reasonable accommodations that apply in the case of particular students.
- Teachers use evidence every day when observing students at work and planning and adjusting learning activities. Basing judgments on evidence is not the same thing as basing judgments on *records* of evidence. It is important to review all relevant available records, but it is equally important not to be overly constrained in making judgments by considering only the forms of evidence that have generated these records. Not all forms of evidence will be grounded in records.

The supporting evidence considered should not be submitted with the estimated mark and rank order. The estimated mark and the rank order (that is, the completed forms) comprise the full documentation that is to be submitted to the principal.

Professional judgment may be informed by:

records of performance over the course of study	▪ A range of evidence ▪ May vary from subject to subject. ▪ Assignments, projects, and experiments completed as part of normal learning activities. ▪ Quality of work in class activities
performance on class assessments	▪ House exams, Christmas exams, monthly or term assessments, summer examinations and (with caution) mock examinations. ▪ Take into account the quality of each test, the level of difficulty and the purpose that it was designed to serve. This helps give a picture of the quality of the performance that goes beyond the mark.
Appropriately weight all components (written, oral, practical, etc.)	▪ The estimated mark is a single combined mark for all components of the examination (written, oral, aural, practical, and coursework), with each component contributing its normal weighting. (Except for Home Economics – section 14.1) ▪ **Teachers should not incorporate an award of full marks for the oral component of a language or for performing in music.** The earlier decision to cancel these assessments and to award full marks was based on the premise that the remaining components would proceed as normal and this no longer applies.
Performance on coursework components, even if not complete	▪ Applies to subjects that include a coursework component ▪ Consider quality of engagement and quality of any work done. ▪ For example, in the context of the Geographical Investigation, how well did the student engage with the planning and preparation for the investigation and the gathering of information? ▪ For Engineering and Construction Studies, practical skills demonstrated in the project will also inform likely performance in the day practical.
Previous results in the school in this subject	▪ When interpreting these, draw also on your knowledge and experience of the structure and demands of the examination paper at the level concerned.
Comparing this year's students to others previously taught	▪ How did students of similar ability in previous years get on in the exam ▪ Records may be available from school management to assist teachers in this regard.
Any other relevant information	▪ Projects or activities a particular student did that enhanced his/her knowledge and understanding of the subject, improving likely performance

8. Making the preliminary judgment about marks and rankings

Fairness of the calculated grades process is critically dependent on getting high quality data from schools.

8.1. The school's 'best estimate' of the 'most likely' percentage mark

Schools are asked to provide their best estimate of the overall percentage mark that each student is most likely to have achieved in each subject if the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 virus had never arisen.

Clearly, it is not possible for anyone to estimate with certainty the exact mark that any student will receive. This is not what is required. No matter how much or little certainty can be claimed for the judgment, there is still always a 'most likely' mark. It is critical to the process that the school gives this *most likely* mark, and not, for example, the mark that one may *hope* the student might get, or the mark one may think they have a reasonable chance of getting 'on a good day'. When considering this it might be useful to think of it in terms of the illustration in figure 1 below, in which the intensity of the shading represents the chances of a student getting a particular mark.

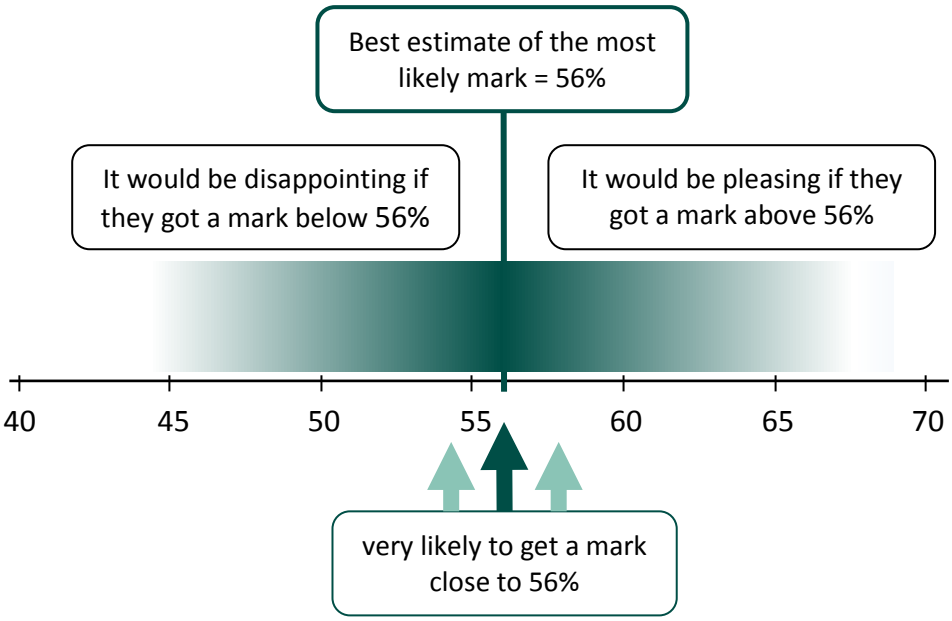


Figure 1: what it means to say that the best estimate of "the most likely mark" is 56%

It is anticipated that most estimated percentage marks will be given as whole numbers. However, if a teacher is unable to decide between two adjacent numbers, he/she may use a decimal number between the two.

8.2. Spacing your estimated marks appropriately

Making sure that students are placed in the correct rank order is of course important, but remember too that the gaps between the estimated percentage marks are also important. If, for example, there is one very strong student in the class, it is not enough to make sure to put that student ahead of everyone else, but equally important to ensure that the space between her/him and the others is a true reflection of the size of the gap. The statistical standardisation process that happens later might move all of these marks up or down, or it might stretch or squash these gaps, but the fairest outcome for all can only be achieved if the students are placed accurately relative to each other in the first place (see figure 2).

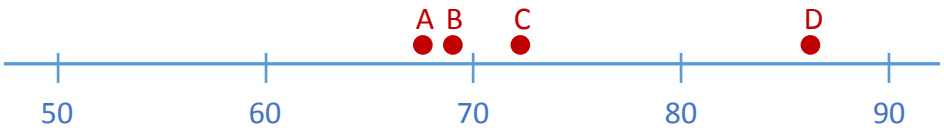


Figure 2: If student D is much better than students A, B, and C, then the gap between their estimated marks must show this.

8.3. Avoiding inappropriate clustering

Research shows that, when estimating numbers, people tend to subconsciously gravitate towards multiples of 5 and, especially, multiples of 10. Research also shows that, when estimating marks on test scores, teachers gravitate towards grade boundaries.

It is important to try to guard against these tendencies (Figure 3).

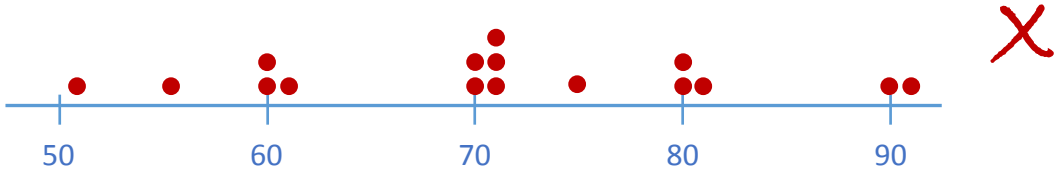


Figure 3: clustering near grade boundaries hinders proper standardisation and leads to unfairness.

Clustering marks in this way means that the gaps between different students are no longer accurate, which means that some of the numbers no longer represent the best estimate of the most likely mark. The standardisation process cannot properly fix this.

It is important to be aware that if estimates for some students are moved above a grade boundary, then this affects the collective accuracy of the distribution. This may cause the standardisation process to move the estimates down a little for everyone, and this has the effect of disadvantaging other students in the class (or in another class in the school). Maximum fairness for all is achieved if the Department gets the genuine best estimate for each student in all cases.

Likewise, it is important to guard against the tendency to bring an estimate *down* so as to avoid having it too close to the next grade boundary. If this is done, and if the standardisation process later moves all of these marks up a little, this student may be disadvantaged because the estimate was too far from the boundary. Again, maximum fairness for all is achieved if the genuine best estimate in all cases is submitted.

It is important to be mindful of the tendency to move marks above boundaries when dealing with marks that are close to a particularly critical grade boundary, such as the boundary between grades 7 and 8 at Higher level. For example, if the best estimate of the most likely mark is 28% or 29%, it is very tempting to record this as 30%. However, as described earlier, this could cause another student in your school who was correctly placed just above a boundary to fall below it in the standardisation process.

8.4. Avoiding unconscious bias

It is very important to remain alert to possible sources of unconscious bias that might affect estimates. For instance, research in many countries shows that teacher estimates of student performance are often affected by the teacher's experience and perceptions of the student's classroom behaviour. By being alert to this source of unconscious bias, there is a better chance of examining the evidence more objectively, focussing on evidence that is clearly about attainment in the subject and not about other factors. Similarly, research also suggests that teacher estimates can be unconsciously affected by what they know or think they know about students' backgrounds, such as their socio-economic or family background. Knowing that this can happen gives a teacher a better chance of focussing on evidence and considering why it is thought a particular student will achieve a particular standard.

8.5. Alignment across classes

The need to align standards between different class groups will arise when:

- The same teacher teaches two different class groups in the subject
- Two or more teachers are teaching different Leaving Certificate class groups in the subject.

A single teacher may be teaching two different class groups that may be nominally of mixed ability but where one is, in reality, a stronger group than the other – perhaps as a result of self-selection effects caused by the other subjects that are timetabled against that subject in the timetable 'blocks'. Over the course of the programme, the teacher might have had a tendency to mark one group more leniently than the other, as a result of what he/she believed was required to motivate them.

For the calculated grades process being put in place by the Department to be fair to all, this tendency needs to be set aside so that none of these students has her/his estimate inappropriately influenced by virtue of which class s/he was in.

Alignment of standards among different teachers of the same subject in the same school is also critical. In the standardisation process that will be carried out later by the Department, there is good evidence and sound statistical methods for aligning standards in a given subject

across different schools. However, the Department does not have the kind of data or evidence that would allow the reliable realignment of standards between different teachers within the same school.

This is why the alignment procedures that are to be followed at school level are so important. Full and careful participation in the alignment procedures within the school are the only means through which fairness across different class groups taking the same subject within a school can be achieved. The process used for this is dealt with later in this guide in the section *the in-school alignment process.*

9. Completing Form A – the estimated percentage mark

Once the available evidence for a student has been considered by a teacher, a preliminary judgment can be made as to the percentage mark that the student is most likely to have achieved at the level concerned, and Form A completed (as a draft) accordingly. The estimate is not considered final until it has been through the in-school alignment and oversight processes and, as a result of these processes, becomes the school's estimated percentage mark.

The estimated percentage mark for each student in the class should be based on the teacher's professional judgment, balancing different sources of evidence described previously. Further information relating to specific subjects for the various programmes is available later in the document. In order for the calculated grades model to work, estimated marks are required for all students. It should be for the level (Higher, Ordinary, or Foundation) that the student is entered for, as described previously.

It is very important that there is consistency in the standard that is applied to all students. The Estimated Percentage Mark form (Form A) has been provided to assist with being systematic about the process. A separate form should be completed for each individual student. The preliminary estimated percentage marks entered by the teacher on the form are not considered final until the subject alignment and oversight processes are complete, at which point they are the school's estimated percentage marks. It is very important that care is taken that all forms related to the process are treated in compliance with the school's data protection policy as, noted later.

Some additional information about generating the estimated percentage mark in the case of Leaving Certificate Applied is given in section 14.2.

10. Completing Form B – the class rank order

When the teacher has completed estimated marks for each student, he/she should then rank order each class of students. The rank order for the class is required as an additional piece of evidence to assist with the standardisation process that the Department (in order to produce a calculated mark for each student) will carry out after the data are submitted by the school.

The process of creating the rank order will also serve as an additional cross-checking mechanism that the percentage marks a teacher has awarded are reasonable in terms of how students have been assessed relative to each other.

A separate rank order for each level (Higher, Ordinary, and Foundation) is required for each class. These rank orders should be recorded on separate Rank Order forms (Form B) for each level.

To prepare the rank order, the teacher should take the relevant set of draft Estimated Percentage Mark forms (Forms A) and place them in order with the highest estimated percentage mark at the top and the lowest at the bottom. Then, on Form B the student identified with the highest estimated percentage mark should be entered as number one on the form and so on, working through the class set of Forms A and entering the students in the order of their estimated percentage mark. The estimated percentage mark for each student should also be transferred from Form A to Form B.

If, during this process, there are two or more students with the same estimated percentage mark, the following two steps should be taken:

1. Consider whether the mark that has been estimated for each is the correct mark or whether it should be moved up or down for any of them. If after consideration it is believed that the marks are correct as they stand, then they should be left stand. If it is decided to move them up, they do not have to be moved by a whole number. Decimals may be used, to one decimal place – e.g. 53.2%. (This is equivalent to marking out of 1000 and converting back to a percentage mark.)
2. If, following this consideration, the teacher concludes that the estimated mark is correct, a decision must be made in relation to rank ordering these students. For example, if there are two students with an estimated mark of 74% and the teacher has concluded that both should remain at 74%, then the teacher must use his/her professional judgment based on all the evidence he/she has considered in order to place the student that they are most confident will achieve that mark ahead of the other.

The process of rank ordering may cause a teacher to revisit the estimated percentage mark awarded and, in such cases, the Form A should be reviewed and amended for one or more students.

The rank order for any class group must not include any students from outside that class group. In cases where a student is studying the subject outside of the school, he/she should not be included in the rank order for any class group in the school. (This situation is dealt with at Section 16.1).

Once the estimated scores and class rank orders have been drafted, the teacher should recheck that the estimated marks on Form A match the estimated marks on Form B.

11. The in-school alignment process

11.1. Purpose

The main purpose of the alignment process is to ensure that all teachers who are providing estimated percentage marks in respect of the same subject in the school are applying standards that are appropriate and are consistent with each other when doing so. This does not, of course, mean that the distribution of marks will or should necessarily be the same for each class.

It also has the purpose of ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, that this shared standard is aligned as closely as it can be to the national standard.

The process does **not** involve or lead to the school creating an overall rank-order listing of all the students taking the subject in the school. The rank ordering is by class and, within a class, by level taken.

It is important to note that the national standardisation process that will be carried out by the Calculated Grades Executive Office will not use the rank-order position of a student within a class in any way that goes beyond the class. Therefore, the rank orders within each class should not be given undue attention in the in-school alignment process. The main focus of that process should remain on alignment of standards between classes for the same subject at the same level.

In addition to its main purpose of ensuring alignment of standards among teachers of the same subject, the process may also be used as an opportunity for those involved to cross-check each other's clerical work, to the extent that the circumstances allow. This will minimise numerical and transfer errors.

The professional judgment of the individual teachers is the most important *input* to the alignment process. However, crucially, once the alignment process is complete, the estimated percentage marks and the class rank orders are considered to represent the collective professional judgment of all those involved, rather than solely the professional judgment of an individual teacher. Once the principal is satisfied that the oversight process has completed as described in Section 15, these marks and rankings represent the collective professional judgment of the school. The estimated mark that is transferred to the Department is the school's estimated mark.

11.2. Who is involved in the alignment process?

In cases where two or more teachers have classes/students taking the subject concerned for the 2020 examinations, these are the teachers who will be involved in the alignment process. Other teachers of the same subject in the school but who do not have a Leaving Certificate class in 2020 will not be involved.

In the case of a subject for which there is only one teacher with a class for the 2020 examination, the alignment process will be carried out with the deputy principal or with

another teacher of the same subject in the school, who does not have a Leaving Certificate class in 2020, subject to the agreement of the school principal.

If the deputy principal is the sole teacher with an examination class for the subject in the school, then the alignment process is carried out with another teacher of the same subject in the school who does not have a Leaving certificate class in 2020 (if available) or with a second Deputy Principal, or with the principal.

In cases where the alignment process is being carried out by a subject teacher and a deputy principal who does not have any expertise in the subject concerned, the alignment process serves as both a checking mechanism for the subject teacher and an opportunity for discussion and reassurance for both of them that the estimated percentage marks are reasonable in light of what is known about the group of students in the class.

11.3. Preparing for and arranging the alignment process

Before the alignment process begins, the teacher should have completed, in draft, a form A for each student in their class, and placed all of these forms (separated by level) in rank order. It may also be useful to have the rank order listing of the students, either by completing form B in draft form or otherwise.

The principal/deputy principal will assist teachers with making arrangements for the alignment process to transact. He/she will provide the teachers involved with whatever available data or information they consider useful to support the process and which the teachers may not already be in possession of.

It is recognised that, given the special circumstances that arise from COVID-19, different schools may need to transact the alignment process in different ways. This will require engagement between teachers, which may be in person or remotely. Some will be able to transact it all on paper, while others will need to or prefer to share material electronically. In any case, care must be taken that documents are treated and conversations conducted in a manner that is in compliance with the school's data protection policies, (as noted later in this Guide).

11.4. Carrying out the alignment process

There is no strictly delineated set of tasks that must be carried out during the alignment process. This is because there are differences between

- the contexts of different schools,
- the kinds of information schools and teachers have available to them,
- how they organise that information, and
- the kinds of information about student performance that may have informed the professional judgments made in different subjects.

Nevertheless, the following questions may serve as useful prompts for the process:

- What do we collectively know about the different class groups to which we are trying to apply a common standard? This knowledge might relate to
    - the way the classes may be streamed or set,
    - our previous experience of teaching them,
    - individuals who may have moved from one of our classes to another, and how they compared to the others in the class they left and the class they moved to,
    - whether the different classes have self-selected into broadly 'better' or 'weaker' groups because of the way different subjects are timetabled against each other.
- In short, what do we know that helps us discern how we might expect these class groups to perform relative to each other?
- In considering the above, are we sure that we have focussed on information about achievement and likely achievement, (rather than, for example, classroom behaviour)?
- How do the students in my class compare – in terms of aptitude, engagement and achievement – with others I have taught before? Do the same observations hold for other teachers in respect of their groups?
- If the estimated results for one group appear to be stronger than those for another, are there good reasons for this?
- Are there particular students who are exceptionally strong or weak at this subject in comparison to others in the class(es) and other students that I/we have taught?
- Taking the combined set of estimated marks for all groups, and if we think that these students are broadly comparable to previous groups, is our distribution of estimated marks broadly in line with the results we have achieved in the school in recent years? If not, is the discrepancy attributable to the estimated marks?

This list is not exhaustive, and these prompts do not all need to be considered. Any information that will enhance the fairness or accuracy with which the alignment group can form a collective professional perspective to align their standards with each other, can be considered.

As for the initial estimation process, no evidence or information that requires a teacher to make contact with any student or parent should be sought.

12. After the alignment process

The alignment process may cause a teacher to revisit the estimated marks for one or more students, which may in turn (but will not necessarily) result in a change to the rank order too.

Therefore, following the alignment process, each teacher should review the estimated marks and rank order and adjust them as necessary.

After the alignment process each teacher will finalise Forms A and B for each level for her/his respective class groups. Before submitting the two forms to the principal, a final check should be carried out to make sure that each mark on Form B corresponds with the mark on that student's Form A. (If this is all done collectively during the alignment process, then it can be agreed that one person will forward them all, or that each teacher will forward her/his own, whichever is the more convenient.)

Unless the principal has cause to refer something back to the alignment group, in accordance with the specified criteria (set out later in this document), this concludes the work of the teachers, so it is important that care be taken with this submission of finalised data.

In the event that any teacher realises after he/she has submitted the data that an error has been made he/she may still contact the principal to seek to rectify the error, provided that this is done in sufficient time to allow for any amendments that are required to be transacted. If this occurs, the amended record will need to be considered by the teacher, the subject alignment group and the principal before final sign-off and submission.

Some additional information about a potential variation in the alignment process in the case of Leaving Certificate Applied is given in section 14.2.

Part III: Student-, programme-, and subject-specific information

13. Some student-specific issues

Students who are new to a class

If a student has joined a class from another class in the school, the teacher should consult with the previous teacher and get whatever relevant documentation he/she has.

If the student has joined a class from another school, and if the length of time is such that it is considered that the teacher does not have enough evidence to make a sound judgment, the principal/deputy principal should be consulted. See section 16.

Students who have recently changed level

There may be one or more students in a class who have recently changed level (from Higher to Ordinary or from Ordinary to Foundation) or about whom the teacher receives notification from the Department, through the school, of a change of level. When considering the available evidence of achievement for such a student, the teacher should draw on her/his experience of how similar students in the past have fared when they changed level.

When reviewing numerical or grade data in records of tests or other assessments, it should be borne in mind by the teacher that they will have set and marked these at the standard of the level the student was intending to sit at the time. Therefore, performance would obviously be better on comparable tasks set and marked at the standard that applies at the lower level for which the student has now opted.

In estimating a mark for a student who has changed level, teachers should base their professional judgment on the student concerned and the teacher's own experience of students who have changed levels in the past. If further help is required, the in-school alignment process may be of assistance in relation to this.

Answering through Irish

In the case of students who are entered to take their examinations through Irish, the teacher should base her/his estimate of the student's likely mark on the assumption that the bonus that is applicable for answering the written paper through Irish is included in the estimate. It is anticipated that most teachers who are teaching through Irish will have internalised and taken account of the impact of the bonus when making their initial judgments, so that no explicit calculation of the bonus will be needed. Nevertheless, if any teacher is unsure how the bonus applies in their subject, information is available on the State Examinations Commission's website at https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ca&sc=im.

Reasonable accommodations

Where any reasonable accommodation has been approved for any student, (such as a reader, scribe or waiver), the estimate of the student's likely performance should be based on the

assumption that this accommodation would have been available had the examinations been conducted in the normal way. Since accommodations are intended to reflect students' normal way of working in class, this should not require any special intervention beyond the teacher's existing understanding of how the student gets on with the relevant supports in place.

14. Programme-specific and subject-specific information

14.1. Established Leaving Certificate subjects, and LCVP

Most subjects have more than one examination component – whether that be coursework, two written papers, an oral or practical examination, and so on. When weighting the evidence, each component must be given its usual weighting for the Leaving Certificate examination.

In the case of these subjects, a single overall estimated mark for the subject as a whole is required, encompassing all of the examination components - not a separate mark for each component.

Languages and music

It should be noted that the earlier decision to cancel the oral component of the language examinations and the performing component of the Music examination and to award full marks for these was based on the premise that the remaining components would proceed as normal. This premise no longer applies.

Therefore, an estimated mark for language subjects should be based on the assumption that the oral examination component would have proceeded and have been marked in the normal manner.

Likewise, for Music, the estimate should be based on the assumption that the performance test would have proceeded and the student performed to her/his expected standard.

Subjects with a coursework examination component

As noted above, the estimate should be for the subject as a whole and take account of all evidence available. In the case of coursework that has already been completed, the overall estimate should incorporate the mark the teacher thinks that this coursework would have achieved if it had been marked in the usual way. Similarly, where coursework has not been completed the overall estimate should incorporate the mark the teacher thinks this coursework would have achieved if it had been completed and marked in the usual way.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – Link Modules

The LCVP Portfolio of coursework is being returned to schools and may assist teachers with the process of estimating marks. They are not to be marked and are to be returned to the State Examinations Commission once the process has completed. As in the case of other subjects with a coursework component, the estimated percentage mark should incorporate both the Portfolio of coursework and the written examination.

Home Economics – Scientific and Social

This is the **only** subject with more than one examination component where teachers are required to provide an estimated percentage mark for the written examination paper only. The Journal has already been marked by the SEC. This mark will not be adjusted as part of the statistical standardisation process. Instead, the mark for the Journal will be combined with the calculated mark (derived from standardisation of the estimated mark provided by the school) to arrive at the final mark for grading. The written examination should be treated as a full component and the estimated mark assigned out of 100%. (The DES will scale accordingly at grading time).

In considering the estimated mark for the written paper the teacher may still reflect on the student's engagement with the coursework in so much as it will assist with your professional judgment in relation to the estimation of a mark for her/his expected performance in the written examination.

New Subjects – Physical Education and Computer Science

Given that this is the first year for examinations in Physical Education and Computer Science, teachers will not have data on previous outcomes in these subjects in the school to reflect on and assist with this process. Teachers are advised to refer to the specifications and guidelines for both subjects. In particular, refer to the *Assessment* section of the specifications, and to the *quality descriptors* in the guidelines. These documents are available on www.curriculumonline.ie.

As outlined above, the estimate should be for the subject as a whole, combining all components into a single estimate, and taking account of all evidence available.

14.2. Leaving Certificate Applied – specific information

A broadly similar process for arriving at the estimated mark and rank order applies for the Leaving Certificate Applied as is outlined previously in this document. The earlier information should be considered in conjunction with the information specific to the Leaving Certificate Applied programme which follows.

Given the modular nature of the LCA programme, students are assessed on the completion of each module. Therefore, as well as providing estimated marks and rank orders for the assessments that could not transact in May for Year two (session four) students, schools are also required to provide the same data for Year one (session two) students for a number of subjects and tasks as outlined below.

What evidence informs professional judgment?

As noted earlier, it is important that the judgments are objective, and they should only take account of evidence about student performance from both summative and formative assessment activities. Knowledge and experience of the curriculum and the examination are essential to this process as is consideration of all available and relevant evidence.

Other evidence for consideration specific to the LCA programme includes key assignments completed for both current and previous sessions in the subject as appropriate. Given the

integrated and cross-curricular nature of the programme consideration should also be given to how the students engaged with and performed in previous modules and tasks relevant to the subject area under consideration. For example, when considering Social Education, students' engagement with and performance in the Contemporary Issues Task, which is anchored in this subject, may be considered.

Estimated mark, rank order and in-school alignment

A description of the process of arriving at the estimated mark and rank order is provided earlier. This requires teachers to work independently to arrive at a draft estimated mark and rank order for each student which is followed by review and consideration by the subject alignment group. In the case of the LCA there are two possible approaches that may be followed.

1. It is likely that, for the most part, there will be single teachers involved in teaching LCA subjects in schools. For this reason, it is advised, where possible, that the LCA coordinator undertakes the alignment process with the single subject teacher. The coordinator has significant experience with the programme requirements and also with the students.
2. An alternative approach to the process, which is satisfactory given the cross-curricular nature of the programme, is to involve a number of (or all of) the teachers in a single collective process of estimating marks, rank ordering and alignment, assisted by the LCA Co-ordinator.

Subject-specific Information

While schools are providing an estimated percentage mark, these will be converted to the appropriate credit allocation in due course. When weighting the evidence of the subjects with more than one component, each component must be given its usual weighting for the Leaving Certificate Applied examination. In the case of these subjects, a single overall estimated mark for the subject as a whole is required, encompassing all of the examination components – not a separate mark for each component.

Core Subjects and Modern European Languages

English and Communications is studied over the two years of the programme and therefore consideration should be across the two years. The estimated mark should incorporate both the oral and written examination.

Similarly, Gaeilge Chumarsáideach and the Modern European Languages require a single combined estimated mark for the oral assessment and the written examinations. In some schools these are completed in one year and not over the two years of the programme. Therefore, there may be Year one and Year two students for whom teachers will be required to submit an estimated percentage mark and rank order. An individual rank order should be completed for each class.

A single estimated mark is also required for students sitting sign language.

Vocational Specialisms

The Vocational Specialisms involve a written examination and another component (project or practical performance test). The estimated mark should be for the two components combined. As outlined earlier, the coursework may be fully or partially completed. In arriving at the estimated mark the teacher should reflect on the quality of the work completed by the student, the quality of his/her engagement and level of performance over the course of the study and what they expect would have been the quality of the completed work had the school year continued as normal.

Tasks

Year One (Session two):

An estimated percentage mark and rank order is required for Year One students for tasks in Vocational Preparation, Vocational Guidance and Personal Reflection.

Year Two (Session Four) Personal Reflection Task:

While students have submitted the year one statement to the SEC, it has not been marked and will not be marked due to the current circumstances. Therefore, schools are required to provide an estimated mark for what they expect each student would have achieved had the Year Two statement been completed and marked with the Year One statement. In other words, the estimated mark is an estimated mark for the two statements combined. A rank order for the class is also required.

Satisfactory completion of modules

In the case of any module that was being carried out in Session 2 (Year One students) or Session 4 (Year Two students) each student may be awarded the credit for satisfactory completion of that module, provided that the school is satisfied the student had engaged meaningfully with the module concerned. The level of engagement need only be such as to provide a reasonable prospect that the student would have completed the module, giving the benefit of any reasonable doubt to the student.

Late tasks from sessions one and three

In respect of students who were unable to present for assessment in their tasks in sessions one and three, and who were to be provided with the opportunity to be assessed in May 2020, estimated percentage marks should be provided. It is possible that the rank order in these cases may only include a single student.

Part IV: Oversight by principal

15. Oversight of marks and ranking process by principal

In line with the principles of fairness, equity and objectivity, the principal will review the process applied to the collection of the data to assure the fair treatment of individual students and to ensure that an appropriate standard is applied within the school and that it is consistent in situations where more than one class group is entered for a subject.

He/she should review the Forms B with regard to the estimated marks for each class group to confirm as far as possible in the circumstances that the standard applied by the teachers is fair and appropriate. This is of particular importance where there is more than one teacher teaching the subject. Forms B are reviewed to ensure that there is a consistency of standard across teachers and that the standards are comparable in respect of the estimated percentage mark. Such consistency of standards across teachers does **not** mean that the distribution of marks for each class should be the same. The principal, based on his/her own knowledge of the school along with his/her experience of examination outcomes from previous years, should be able judge to whether the standards being applied are broadly aligned.

Where it appears that an anomaly or error has arisen, the data sets should be returned for further review to the subject alignment group. In such circumstances, the principal does not have any role in altering a student's estimated mark or rank order; his/her role is to return the queried marks/rankings to the subject alignment group for further review.

A principal may return the data sets to the subject alignment group for further review if he/she reasonably believes that one or more of the following grounds may apply:

- There was a procedural flaw in the process up to this point – for example a misalignment between the estimated mark and the rank order for a class group
- There were unexplained inconsistencies in the data sets submitted following the subject alignment stage
- There is persuasive evidence that a student's estimated mark is inconsistent with the school's information on the student's achievement from a range of sources
- There is evidence of lack of objectivity (i.e. bias, discrimination, undue influence) in the procedure as applied.

In instances where the data sets are returned by the principal to the subject alignment group for further consideration, the principal indicates the reason(s)/stated grounds for the return of the data. The stated grounds are confined to one or more of the above grounds. The group will consider the stated ground(s), and, if deemed necessary, will make any adjustments it may consider appropriate and return its final consideration to the principal.

Once the process of reviewing the data sets is concluded and the principal is satisfied that the process of alignment and, where applicable, the review has transacted in good faith in

accordance with this Guide, the Form B for each class should be counter signed by the principal. The person(s) to whom the data submission task has been delegated will then commence the inputting of the data using the designated data collection system, the details of which are being finalised currently. There will be separate guidance for those involved in this data submission process.

Once the final set of estimated marks and rank order for each class are inputted, the principal will sign a print out of the final set of data. This is to be attached to the relevant Form B. This will constitute a confirmation that all processes have been completed at the point of submission of data.

The Forms A and Forms B should be kept securely in the school until the appeals processes has concluded.

After all of the data for all of the subjects has been entered, the system will allow a view of the full suite of estimated marks submitted for each student on a single screen as a further check.

16. Specific measures for noting

16.1. Subjects outside of the school

Where a student is studying a subject outside of the school, every effort should be made to provide an estimated mark where the principal is confident that there is sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgment. If the subject is one which is offered by the school, the student (or students) studying the subject outside the school should **not** be included in the rank order for any class group.

It is envisaged that the Examinations Aide will assist the principal/deputy principal in identifying such students. To assist the Examinations Aide with the process, a school roll of students and the subjects they are entered for will be provided. If the student is receiving tuition outside the school setting that is provided by a registered teacher, the principal should request an estimate of performance from that teacher and discuss with her/him the basis for the estimate that they provide. This teacher will complete a Form A while the principal will be required to complete and sign a Form C to confirm that there is evidence to support the judgment reached. There is no need for a Form B.

If the student is not being taught by a registered teacher, the principal will need to consider whether there is sufficient evidence, including through a tutor, on which to base an estimate. If there is not sufficient evidence it is highly unlikely that the Department will be able to generate a calculated grade for this student in this subject. An important objective in using the calculated grades model in the current health emergency is to allow as many students as possible to have their learning achievements acknowledged in a way that allows them to progress to third-level education or the world of work. Consequently, all reasonable efforts should be made to obtain a satisfactory evidence base. However, if, having made every effort to identify evidence on which to base a judgment, the principal is of the view that the school has insufficient evidence on which to base an estimate, Form D should be completed,

providing details on the form. These forms should be retained securely with the other documentation and may be requested from the schools later in the process.

16.2. Students new to the school

If there is not sufficient evidence available in the school on which to base a sound estimate, the principal should contact the previous school the student attended to ascertain whether additional information can be made available to support the process.

It should still be possible for the school to provide estimated marks for such a student, even if it does not prove possible to get information from the previous school. This will depend on how long the student has been in the school and the amount of evidence of learning that the school has acquired. As much relevant information as possible should be sought and/or assembled to allow the teachers involved to make the best judgment possible in the circumstances.

16.3. Repeat students

If a student is repeating in the school, having previously been enrolled in that school for the first sitting of the Leaving Certificate, evidence of achievement from both cycles should be considered, but particular weight should be given to the student's work and level of achievement during the repeat year. If the student has a different teacher during the repeat year from the one he/she previously had, arrangements should be made to ensure that the most recent teacher (who will be making the estimate) is in a position to consult with the previous one and has access to any necessary documentation.

If the student was previously enrolled in a different school, the same procedures as described above in respect of *students new to the school* apply.

16.4. New or substitute teachers

The principal should seek to ensure that the estimates of student performance are made by the person best able to do so. In many cases, this will be a matter for the judgment of the principal in the circumstances that apply. In the case where, at the point of school closure, a class was being taught by a temporary or recently appointed teacher who would have had little opportunity to get to know the students and their levels of achievement, then consideration should be given to whether the assistance of the previous teacher can be made available. For instance, it would be anticipated that a recently retired teacher, a teacher on approved leave or others who may still be contactable by the school, may be willing to co-operate with this process in whatever way they can in the best interests of the students in these circumstances.

Nonetheless, it is recognised that there may be cases where there is no access to the previous teacher for a variety of reasons. In such a case, arrangements should be made for assistance for the new teacher, whether that be from the principal or another experienced teacher in the school. Whatever can be done to ensure the best available estimates in the circumstances should be done.

17. Reporting to the Department

The submission of the data to the Department will be facilitated through an application on the ESINET portal or, in the case of LCA, through the online system for collection of module credits. Further guidance on the submission of data to the Department will issue shortly to the management of schools.

Part V: Standardisation by Department

18. Standardisation of data by Department

Research makes clear that because teacher judgments are made in the context of each school, they need to be examined and adjusted at a national level to ensure comparability across different schools and that a common national standard is applied. For this reason, the school-sourced data will be combined with historical data through a process called standardisation in order to generate the calculated grade for the students in the subject. This standardisation process will bring the two data sets into alignment with each other and will be used to ensure the calculated grades reflect standards that are properly aligned across schools and with a common national standard.

The rank order within the class group is preserved in the statistical process. However, the teachers' estimated marks from each school will be adjusted to bring them into line with the expected distribution for the school. **The standardisation process being used will not impose any predetermined score on any individual in a class or a school.**

If the group of students in a school in the current year is particularly "strong", the expected level of achievement of the group will reflect that fact. Likewise, if one or more individuals stand out as particularly strong, that will be reflected in the school's estimated marks and thereby be taken fully into account.

19. Issue of provisional results

After the standardisation process, the calculated marks will be converted into calculated grades, and these grades will be issued to candidates. The calculated grades will be expressed in the same manner as currently applies to Leaving Certificate grades – Higher level grade 1, etc.

20. Appeals process

As has already been made clear in *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020,* the scope of any appeal of a calculated grade by any student will not encompass a reopening of or challenge to the professional judgments exercised within or by a school (incorporating teachers, principals, and deputy principals) in generating the school's estimated percentage marks or class rank orders. Accordingly, no documentation other than the final completed Forms A and B, and, in the case of Forms C and D, the final forms and any supporting documentation, will be retained by the school for the purpose of appeals.

Further information in relation to the appeals process will issue in due course.

Part VI: General issues for teachers and principals

21. Confidentiality and data protection

In the course of the work, documentation that includes personal data about individuals will be accessed, generated, and discussed. It is important that all involved remain at all times in compliance with the school's data protection policies, whether that be in relation to generating, accessing or transmitting records, or in relation to the channels through which confidential information is discussed. For instance, if discussions are going to take place between colleagues over conference calls or using online facilities, the principal/deputy principal must be aware of the platform being used and satisfied that it is in compliance with the school's policy. If sharing digital draft or finalised completed forms by email with colleagues across networks that extend beyond those controlled by the school, it is likely that the school's policy will require that the documents be encrypted, (or perhaps that they should not move that way at all). This needs to be confirmed before any material is shared. Likewise, if sharing these by some other digital means, the principal must be satisfied that the method used is satisfactory.

Documentation should not be retained for any longer than it is required.

- For teachers: When the principal has signed off on the post-alignment estimated marks and rank orders and submitted them to the Department, teachers **should not retain** copies of Forms A or B or any drafts of the forms or any documentation that was generated in the course of completing them. Any such documentation should be securely destroyed.
- For the principal: When the principal has signed off on the post-alignment estimated marks and rank orders and submitted them to the Department, he/she should retain copies of Forms A, B, C and D until the school has been notified that all stages of the appeal process have been completed.

If a school receives a data access request from a student for their estimated marks and/or class rank before the issue of results, the school should respond to say:

- that in line with section 56 of the Data Protection Act, it is not possible to respond to the request at present, and
- that the request will be taken to have been made on the later of either the date of the first publication of the results of the 'examination' (i.e. the calculated grades process), or the date of the request.

In an effort to reduce the volume of requests that might be made to schools for this date, the guidance provided to students will also make this clear.

ETB schools are public bodies for the purposes of FOI. While each FOI body is an independent decision maker, the DES is of the view that Section 30(1)(a) of the FOI Act provides a basis for

exempting the estimated grade/school ranking from being released prior to the final calculated grade being issued.

22. Conflicts of interest

The principles of equity, fairness and objectivity are paramount in the calculated grades system. If there is a student in a class about whom there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest involved in giving an estimated mark to, such as a son, daughter, sister, or brother, this should be drawn to the attention of the principal. The teacher may still need to assist in the process, by handing over data or factual information, but should not be involved in any judgment process that relates to that student as an individual. There will be additional oversight by the principal/deputy principal in such cases. This will include the principal/deputy principal countersigning Form A to confirm that appropriate arrangements were put in place and that he/she provided additional oversight and approval of the estimated mark. In instances where the principal is the teacher concerned, the deputy principal will make the necessary arrangements and oversee all tasks in relation to this student and this student's class.

23. Student-teacher contact and fairness in the calculated grades model

At the core of both the school-based and national standardisation phases of the system of calculated grades is a commitment to objectivity, equality and fairness both to individual students and all other students to protect the integrity of the decision-making process. To ensure this, the school-based process must not be compromised. Therefore, the principal, deputy principal(s), teachers or other members of the school staff will follow the Department's specified procedures and **must not under any circumstances** discuss with or disclose to any student or parent or guardian of any student the estimated marks and ranking that the school is submitting. There are two reasons for this:

- The mark assigned by the school is not necessarily the final mark that the student will receive and it would therefore be misleading for the student to receive that mark before the calculated grade processes are complete and decisions have been finalised.
- Allowing access to and discussion of estimated grades before the calculated grades process is complete would interfere with the process being carried out in an objective manner and ensuring equality and fairness between all students. If teachers discussed the marks with some students but not others, or if some teachers did this and others did not, these discussions might actually influence (consciously or unconsciously) or be perceived as influencing the mark the teacher submits to the subject alignment group.

Conversely, parents/guardians and students **must not under any circumstances** contact, either formally or informally, directly or indirectly, a teacher or other member of staff at any stage to discuss or with a view to influencing the decision-making process relating to the estimated marks or ranking to be assigned to a student in any subject or which may confer an undue advantage to a particular student.

Teachers and schools **must not be subjected to any type of influence, inducement (including gifts), pressure or coercion by a parent/guardian, student or any other person** in relation to a student's mark or ranking either before or after it has been assigned. This includes any financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise the teacher's impartiality and independence in the context of the decision-making process.

Such contact would be inappropriate, as it could objectively be viewed as an attempt to interfere with the fairness, equality of treatment and objectivity required of teachers and schools in the assigning of estimated marks and ranking for the individual student concerned, and for the students in the school as a whole. This would in turn undermine the integrity of the calculated grades model.

Where a person (student, parent/guardian or other person) contacts a teacher or other staff member in respect of a student's estimated marks, regardless of whether it is their intention to interfere with the integrity of the process, the teacher or staff member should:

- Not engage in discussion on the topic
- State that he/she is not permitted to discuss any aspect of the student's work, academic progress, estimated marks or rankings, or anticipated Leaving Certificate grades/points
- State that the contact made will not in any way influence the teacher's decision-making concerning the student's academic progress, estimated marks or rankings as part of the process
- If the attempt to engage in discussion or contact persists, state that he/she will have to make a formal record of the contact and pass this record to the school principal and that the principal will have to inform the Department that contact about the student was made.

Where the attempt to contact or engage in discussion persists, the teacher or staff member must report this contact immediately to the principal of the school and provide the principal with a written record of the contact or attempted contact. That record shall include the following details regarding the fact of contact:

- The name of the person/s who contacted the teacher or other staff member
- The name of the student/s in relation to whom the contact was made
- The date/s and time/s of the contact
- The way in which the contact was made – e.g. telephone, email, letter, direct personal contact etc.
- The contact details (e.g. telephone number, email address) of the person/s who made contact if those details were obtained.

That record will be maintained by the principal until the conclusion of any potential review or appeal process associated with the awarding of the candidate's calculated grades.

The principal, in his/her oversight role, must exercise particular care to ensure that, in cases where contact has been made in respect of a candidate, the principles of objectivity, fairness and equality which underpin the calculated grades model have been fully observed.

The principal must notify the Department as soon as is practicable that the school has a record of a contact by a person in respect of the marks and/or ranking to be assigned to a named student.[1]

The purpose of the notification of this information to the Department is to ensure the transparency, the maintenance of appropriate records, and adequate oversight of the decision-making process associated with the process of assigning estimated grades and rankings. In line with that purpose, the Department will request a specific written affirmation from the principal in respect of the marks and ranking assigned to the named student that all procedures at school level were followed with the diligence and care required at each stage (i.e. teacher estimation, subject alignment and oversight phases) despite the alleged contact. Receipt of this affirmation by the Department will be required before the student's marks and ranking can be processed for national standardisation.

24. Basis of the calculated grades model

The calculated grades model was developed following consultation regarding arrangements for Leaving Certificate 2020 with representatives of students, teachers, school management bodies, school leaders, the State Examinations Commission, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills. Its design was also informed by advice from a Technical Working Group comprising experts drawn from the State Examinations Commission, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, the Educational Research Centre, and international external expertise.

The calculated grades model was established by the Minister for Education and Skills following a Government decision. In making that decision, Government decided to approve the Minister putting in place a system for the Calculated Grades model which is to be operated by the Minister on an administrative basis so that Leaving Certificate students could opt to have calculated grades issued to them by the Minister in order to facilitate their progress to third-level education or the world of work in Autumn 2020.

Government also agreed that this system must include a number of key elements, including reliance on the professional judgment of each of the candidate's teachers which will not be subject to appeal; in-school alignment to ensure fairness amongst candidates at school level; approval by the school principal of the estimated marks and rankings of students in the school; a process of standardisation at national level to ensure fairness amongst all candidates; a right of appeal by candidates which will involve data checks on school-entered data, correct

[1] The information transferred to the Department will not include personal information in relation to the third party who has made the contact (their name, email, telephone number, etc) and this information will only be retained by the principal.

transfer of that data to the Department of Education and Skills, a review that the data was correctly received and processed by the Department, a verification of the Department's processes by independent appeal scrutineers and, if the candidate remains dissatisfied, the opportunity to sit the written Leaving Certificate examination when it is safe and practicable for such examinations to be held.

The Minister recognises that teachers and schools will carry out the duties described in this Guide [*Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020: Guide for Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Class Rank Orders* (May 2020)] on behalf of the Minister. This means that all of the tasks being undertaken by teachers, principals and schools are being done on behalf of the Minister and further to the exercise by him of his Executive powers in establishing and operating the calculated grades model.

This Guide is issued as an appendix to Circular 0037/2020.

25. Legal indemnity

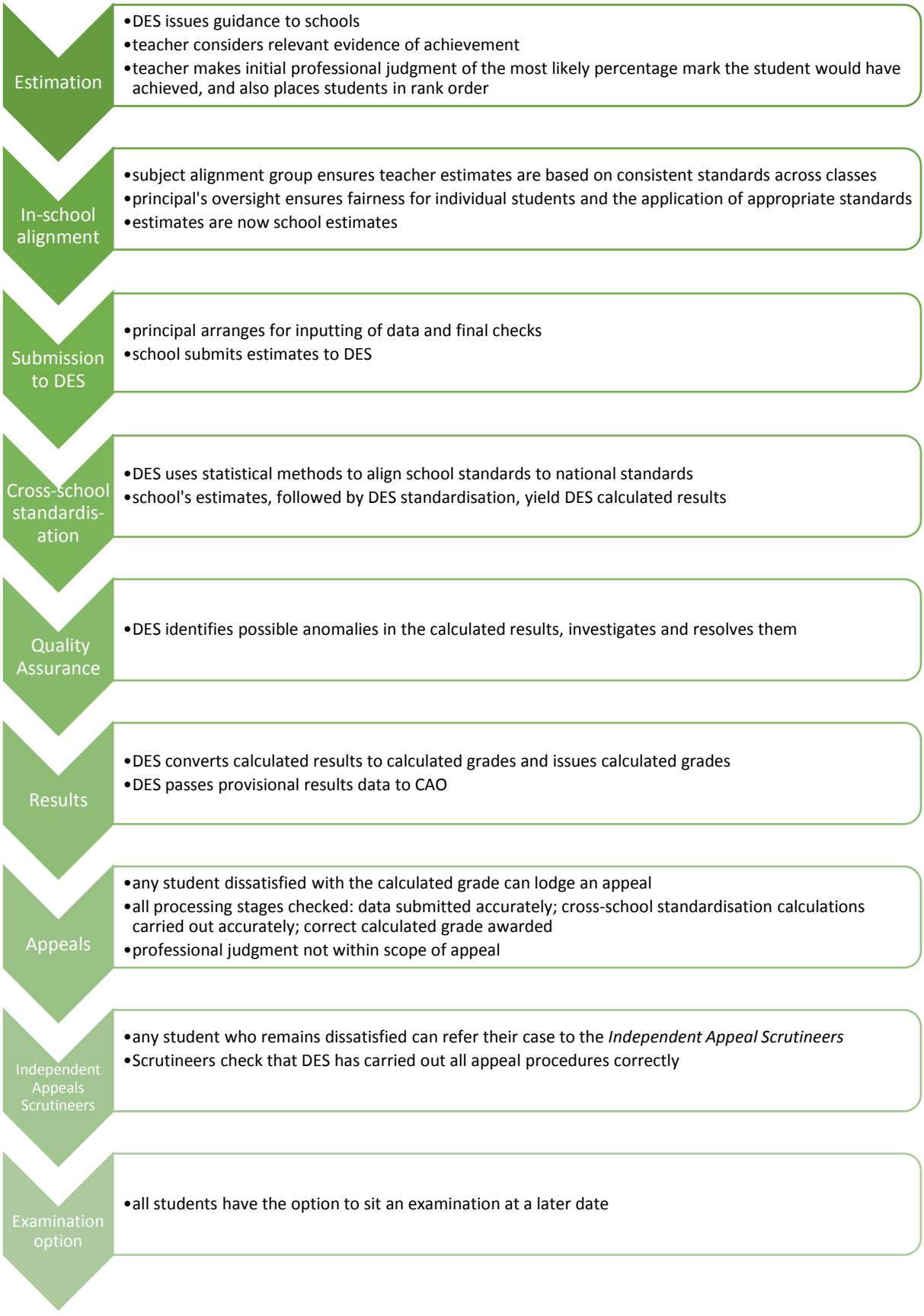
As teachers and school leaders will be implementing the calculated grades process in schools on behalf of the Minister, arrangements have been put in place to extend a State indemnity to them and to the boards of management of their schools. The indemnity could be invoked where someone is sued in their own capacity (*i.e.* named in civil proceedings as an individual teacher, principal or board of management/ETB).

This indemnity will be subject to conditions around notification and cooperation with the State in defending any legal cases should they arise and will only be capable of being invoked where a person has acted *bona fide*, i.e. has made every reasonable effort to carry out their role in accordance with the guidance provided in this *Guide* and the relevant circular of the Department of Education and Skills..

Appendices

- **Process for generating Calculated Grades in 2020**
- **Form A: Estimated Percentage Mark**
- **Form B: Rank Order Form**
- **Form C: School sign-off on estimated mark for a subject studied outside of school**
- **Form D: Subject entry for which the school cannot sign off on an estimated mark.**

Process for generating Calculated Grades in 2020



An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Form A

Leaving Certificate 2020 – Estimated percentage mark

Read the two documents *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020* and *Guide to Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Rank Orderings* before completing this form. Complete one copy for each student in the class.

Do not divulge the estimated marks or rank orders to the students or discuss your assessment of their likely performance with them in any way.

1. Student, subject and level details

Student's name:	
Student's examination number:	
Programme:	LCE/LCVP ☐ LCA ☐
Subject:	
Level, as confirmed to school by DES:	
Teacher's name:	
School roll number:	

2. Relevant information considered

I have taken account of all relevant information available to me about this student's achievement levels in the subject over senior cycle as follows

my experience of working with the student in class, and the quality of their assignments and key assignments (LCA)	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐
my own records of the student's work, level of achievement	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐
marks, grades, and other subject-specific information available on the school's centralised data system	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐
the quality of work demonstrated in any partially or fully completed Leaving Certificate examination coursework	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐

In addition, when determining the estimated percentage mark submitted,

I have taken account of any bonus marks that the student would have received for answering through Irish.	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐
I have based my estimate on the assumption that any approved reasonable accommodations would have been made available.	Yes ☐ not applicable ☐

3. Estimated percentage mark

Insert the overall percentage mark that you believe that this student would have achieved if the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 virus had never arisen. The estimate should reflect composite overall performance in the subject, with each component of the examination (written, practical, coursework, oral, aural) being considered in accordance with its proper weighting.

Estimated percentage mark:	%

Note: please sign overleaf ➔

4. Declaration regarding the school's estimated mark

I confirm that:

- I have made all reasonable efforts to assemble as much of the relevant information as possible
- I have given due consideration both to the data and to my experience of working with this student
- I have reflected on the degree to which previous groups of students I taught have achieved Leaving Certificate grades that met my expectations
- I have participated in the process to assure alignment of standards among teachers of the same subject in the school
- following these considerations, the estimate is the school's considered professional judgment as to the overall percentage mark that this student is most likely to have achieved if the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 virus had never arisen, school had proceeded as usual, and examinations had taken place as usual.

Signature:	Date:

The above declaration must be signed. If the form is completed digitally, then it must be printed out and signed.

5. Conflict of interest

This section should **only** be completed where a perceived or real conflict of interest has been identified in relation to giving an estimated mark.

I confirm that:

- Arrangements appropriate to the circumstances have been made, and
- I have provided additional oversight and approval on the estimated mark.

Signature:	Principal ☐ Deputy Principal ☐	Date:

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Form B

Leaving Certificate 2020 – Class rank order

Read the two documents *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020* and *Guide to Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Rank Orderings* before completing this form. This form is used to list, in order of expected level of examination performance, all of the students at the same level (Higher, Ordinary, Foundation, Common) within each class. A separate form should be completed for each level within each class. Class groups for the same subject should not be combined. This form should only be completed after an *estimated percentage mark* form (Form A) has been completed for each student.

1. Teacher, subject and level details

Programme:	LCE/LCVP ☐ LCA ☐
Subject:	
Level:	
Teacher's name:	
School roll number:	

2. Rank order

List the students in order of expected level of examination performance. The first student on the list should be the one the school expects to do best, and so on. Accordingly, the estimated percentage mark for any student on the list cannot be greater than the one above it, although it can be equal to it. The mark entered for each student must correspond to the estimated percentage mark on Form A for that student. Where two students have the same estimated percentage mark, a decision about what order to put them in must be made. This is dealt with in the *Guide to Schools.*

Rank	Name	Examination number	Estimated % mark	Rank
1				1
2				2
3				3
4				4
5				5
6				6
7				7
8				8
9				9
10				10
11				11
12				12
13				13

14				14
15				15
16				16
17				17
18				18
19				19
20				20
21				21
22				22
23				23
24				24
25				25
26				26
27				27
28				28
29				29
30				30

3. Declaration regarding the school's estimated marks and rank order

I confirm that:

- I have checked that each estimated percentage mark entered above is the same as the value entered on the corresponding Form A for the student
- I have checked that they are listed above in the correct order in accordance with the *Guide to Schools*
- the above list represents the school's considered professional judgment as to the overall order of expected level of achievement of the students if the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 virus had never arisen, school had proceeded as usual, and examinations had taken place as usual.

Signature:	Date:

The above declaration must be signed. If the form is completed digitally, then it must be printed out and signed.

4. Declaration of school management

I confirm that:

- I have checked the information in the above form and all associated Forms A
- the process of reviewing the data sets is concluded and I am satisfied that the process of alignment and, where applicable, the review has transacted in good faith in accordance with the *Guide to Schools*

Signature:	Principal ☐ Deputy Principal ☐	Date:

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Form C

Leaving Certificate 2020 – School sign-off on estimated mark for a subject studied outside of the school

The principal or deputy principal should complete this form in any case where:

- the school is providing an estimated mark for a student enrolled in the school but taking an additional subject outside of the school, and
- the school is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence available to them to stand over the estimated mark being provided.

If the second condition above is not met, complete Form D instead.

In order for the second condition above to be met, the student's learning has to have been guided by and overseen by a suitable tutor. This tutor will have completed Form A and, if they have been tutoring more than one student from the same school, Form B. The school principal or deputy principal will have liaised with the tutor both before the completion of those forms and after receiving them from the tutor and examining them. Read the two documents *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020* and *Guide to Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Rank Orderings* for further details before completing this form.

Do not divulge the estimated marks or rank orders to the students or discuss the assessment of their likely performance with them in any way.

Student, subject and level details

Student's name:	
Student's examination number:	
Subject:	
Level:	
School roll number:	
Tutor's name:	
Tutor registered with the Teaching Council? Note: This is not an essential requirement.	Yes ☐ No ☐

Basis for accepting estimated mark

Please outline the basis on which the validity and integrity of the estimated mark supplied has been established. This may include, for example, the discussions with the tutor concerned, information already known about the lessons concerned, and knowledge of the student concerned.

Estimated percentage mark

Insert the mark the school is submitting on behalf of the student. In any case where this mark differs from the one supplied by the tutor, the mark should only be amended after consulting with the tutor, and the reasons for the amendment should be given below.

Estimated percentage mark:	%

Is this the same as the mark supplied by the tutor?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
If 'No', give reasons:	

Declaration

I confirm that:

- I made contact with the tutor in advance, discussed with them what was involved, and ensured that they had a copy of the two documents *A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020* and *Guide to Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Rank Orderings*
- I have made all reasonable efforts to ensure the integrity of the information and estimate supplied
- in any case where the same subject is also available in the school, I am satisfied that the above estimated mark is based on the application of similar standards to those applied by the teacher(s) in the school.

Signature:	Principal ☐ Deputy Principal ☐	Date:

The above declaration must be signed. If the form is completed digitally, then it must be printed out and signed.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Form D

Leaving Certificate 2020 – subject entry for which the school cannot sign off on an estimated mark

The principal or deputy principal should complete this form in any case where:

- a student enrolled in the school is entered for an additional subject being studied outside of the school, and
- the student has not withdrawn from the subject, and
- the school is NOT satisfied that there is sufficient evidence available to them to stand over any estimated mark that could be provided.

If this form is completed, the student may not receive a result for this subject. If the school CAN stand over an estimated mark, complete Form C instead.

Note: These forms should be retained securely with the other documentation and may be requested from the schools later in the process.

Student, subject and level details

Student's name:	
Student's examination number:	
Subject:	
Level:	
School roll number:	
Tutor's name:	
Tutor registered with the Teaching Council? Note: This is not an essential requirement.	Yes ☐ No ☐

Reason for inability to sign off on an estimate

No tutor involved	Yes ☐ No ☐
Unable to establish necessary contact with tutor	Yes ☐ No ☐
Insufficient evidence on which to base an estimate	Yes ☐ No ☐
Other	Yes ☐ No ☐

Please provide additional details to elaborate on the reason(s) above, as appropriate. For example, note attempts to establish contact, or reasons for unavailability of sufficient evidence

Declaration

I confirm that:

- I have made all reasonable efforts to establish sufficient evidence on which to base an estimated mark.
- It has not proven possible to do so.

Signature:	Principal ☐ Deputy Principal ☐	Date:

The above declaration must be signed. If the form is completed digitally, then it must be printed out and signed.