



Press release 30 September, 2020

Statement from the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD and the Department of Education and Skills regarding Leaving Certificate 2020 Calculated Grades Process

The Department of Education and Skills has found two errors in the Leaving Certificate 2020 Calculated Grades process which mean that incorrect grades were issued to some students when they received their results on 7 September.

The errors are being rectified and the process is being re-checked with a series of independent checks now underway.

The Department's checks have indicated that this will impact on some of the Calculated Grades results that have already issued and some students will be receiving a higher Calculated Grade in one or more subjects than the grades they received on 7 September.

The precise number of students who will receive higher grades will not be available until the process is completed, but it is likely to be in the region of 6,500.

No student will receive a reduced grade in any subject as a result of this process.

The checks also indicate that the majority of the students who will be receiving an improved grade will receive an upgrade in one subject only, with a smaller number of students receiving an upgrade in more than one subject.

The Department of Education and Skills will contact students who will be receiving the improved grades as soon as all the checks are completed.

When the revised grades are issued the CAO and the Higher Education Institutions will establish which students receiving corrected results would have been eligible for a higher preference offer in previous rounds of the CAO process.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Skills will work with the CAO and the Higher Education Institutions to determine how those students who receive upgraded results can be facilitated to commence the course that they would, otherwise have been offered in an earlier CAO round.

Minister Foley said: "I want to say how sorry I am that this has happened.

"My immediate priority is to fix the errors and their consequences so that students get their correct grades.

"That is happening right now and the next steps will follow quickly.

“On my instruction, the Department of Education and Skills has commissioned independent international experts to examine aspects of the Calculated Grades System to provide further reassurances to me and to students.

“I will provide full detail on the errors, how they are being addressed and the grade upgrades as soon as I can.”

Information on what has happened:

Two errors have been discovered in the same part of the coding used to implement the standardisation process.

The first error was in a single line of code programmed by the Department’s external contractor Polymetrika International Inc.

The error affected the way in which candidates’ Junior Cycle results were included in the standardisation process.

It was intended that the students’ aggregate class level Junior Cycle results in Irish, English and Maths would be included in the data used by the national standardisation process, together with their best two other subjects. The error had the effect that the students’ results in Irish, English and Maths were put together with their weakest two other subjects in the standardisation process.

The effect of this error has been that, in some subjects, some candidates received Calculated Grades that were lower than they should have been and some received grades that were higher.

Polymetrika discovered the error and informed the Department about it immediately. They have since corrected the piece of code.

The Department of Education and Skills found the second error while performing checks related to rectifying the first error. This error was contained in the same section of the code programmed by the Department’s external contractor Polymetrika.

The second error, which also related to the way in which candidates’ Junior Cycle results were included in the national standardisation process, was that the results of the Junior Cycle subject Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) were included in the data being used by the model.

The Department of Education and Skills’ checks found that the subject’s results had been included in error. It was incorrect, as in line with the design of the Calculated Grades process, this subject should not have been included in the data used by the model.

How these are being addressed:

The coding errors have been corrected.

The Department has carried out a series of further checks and has identified no further errors in the coding. It has checked that the coding correctly implements all decisions of the National Standardisation Group about how data were to be combined and used in the standardisation process.

As a further reassurance, the Department has contracted ETS Educational Testing Service, the world-leading US-based non-profit organisation which specialises in educational measurement, to review essential aspects of the coding.

The results data have now been re-run through the corrected model. The review of relevant aspects of the code by ETS is expected to take a number of days. Once this is completed, the Department will have full information on which students will benefit from the improved grades and the specific subjects involved for each student.

The Department will then contact all students, advising whether they will receive a higher grade or grades, or that they are not impacted.

The Department will send a corrected file of student results to the CAO so that the CAO can work with higher education institutions to determine if a student is due a new offer and to do everything possible to facilitate their admission.

Any student who would have been entitled to a different offer in previous CAO rounds if they received the correct grade on 7 September will receive this offer or a deferred offer as soon as practicable after the updating of results.

This is in line with the practice that occurs in the appeals process every year.

When the results are published on the portal detailed information on this process will be available for students on gov.ie/LeavingCertificate.

The Department of Education and Skills has put in place a dedicated helpline and email address to answer queries from students. The helpline number is 01 8892199 and the email address is LC2020@education.gov.ie . The helpline will be open today from 4-7pm and tomorrow from 10am-5pm.