

# STANDARDISATION IN COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

## Standard Operating Procedure

# 9

### Administration of School Exams SECONDARY SECTOR

**This procedure needs to be revised at the end of August 2026**

**Department/Officer Responsible**

Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and  
Employability – Educational Assessment Unit



# General Procedures for National Annual Examinations (Secondary Sector)

The official Annual Examinations' Timetables are to be made available to all students and others who may need them.

## Distribution of Annual Examination Papers

The Educational Assessment Unit (EAU) will start the delivery of the annual examinations papers three to four weeks prior to the commencement of the examination session.

Schools will be informed by email about the delivery of the annual examination papers a week before the delivery commencement date.

## Arrival of Examination Papers in Schools

A member of the School Leadership Team (SLT) is to take responsibility to store the annual examination papers in a secure place. Prior to the arrival of the papers at the school, an e-delivery confirmation note will be sent to schools to be completed, rubber stamped and signed. A scanned copy of the delivery note is to be emailed to [eau@ilearn.edu.mt](mailto:eau@ilearn.edu.mt) within 24 hours of delivery.

**The examination papers are to be stored in a secure place.**

## Preparation before the Examination Session

1. SLT (Head of School, Assistant Heads or Heads of Department) are to **prepare the examination papers** received from the EAU for the different classes.

- **Boxes and packs are to be opened** ahead of the examination session to check that the required examinations have been delivered to the school. If any examination papers including marking schemes, are missing, the school is requested to phone the EAU immediately to report the missing papers so that they will be provided. If only a small number of copies of examination papers are missing, photocopies of the examination papers are to be made at school.
- **Examination papers are to be set in envelopes in the different classes:** Place the exact number of papers for each class, together with an attendance sheet of the class in a jacket sheet (Appendix 1) and then place in an envelope. On the front of the envelope (or on a label as in Appendix 2) write the:
  - examination subject;
  - number of students in the class;
  - date of the examination;
  - session (First, Second) of the examination.

If the invigilators' timetable has already been worked out, include the name of the invigilator.

Leave blank spaces on the front of the envelope where the invigilator can:

- sign;
- write the number of students who sat for the examination.

A comment box can also be included where the invigilator can write any comments about what happened during the session. Example: the use of the extra examination paper, reporting students arriving late for the examination, etc.

Make photocopies of any errata corrigé, highlight in fluorescent ink the part applicable to the particular examination being prepared and include the photocopied sheet on top of the examination papers inserted in the envelope.

**Subject teachers should for no reason be involved in the preparation of examination papers in envelopes at this stage.**

2. **Invigilators' timetable:** This is to be set, taking into consideration any dates that particular staff members will not be on the school premises. This can be due to:
- shared staff;
  - staff excused due to attending courses, conferences, etc;
  - staff members who have asked for time-off due to medical appointments;
  - class teachers/teachers of subjects being examined cannot invigilate their own class.

3. **Digital recordings:** A number of examinations have digital recordings as one of their components, example: listening comprehensions for languages, music extracts. These recordings will be uploaded on a OneDrive folder by the EAU. Heads of School are to nominate a member of the SLT to be responsible and to be given access to these digital recordings.

The email address of the nominated members is to be passed on to the EAU prior to the commencement of the examinations session, as indicated in the letter circular issued by the department related to the Annual Examination session of the particular year.

Heads of School are to ensure that All-In-One devices are in good working order (including sound transmission) as these will be required to play the digital recordings on.

Should a power-cut occur, the listening comprehensions will be read by the language teachers. Teachers' papers of the listening comprehension texts and questions will be provided by EAU with the examination papers. All instructions given on the teacher's paper are to be followed to the letter, including the time intervals indicated to ensure standardization for all students.

In the case of the music examinations this will not be possible, unless the teacher will be able to play the music extracts on a charged laptop.

The EAU is to be notified about the power-cut immediately so that arrangements will be made to set another day for these examinations.

4. **Make arrangements for students having access arrangements:** Access arrangements are to be provided only to those students who have professional reports that recommend such arrangements. Appendix 3 gives details of the access arrangements that are to be granted for the different examinations, as stipulated by the Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DCLE).

Ideally, these students are to be placed in a different room than those students without access arrangements. More than one student can be placed in the same room.

The examination assistant providing the access arrangement provision should not be the Learning Support Educator (LSE) of the student (even though there are some exceptional cases which EAU would have been consulted about). The examination assistant should be informed about the access arrangements provisions the student s/he is assisting has.

A card/label with the student's name and access arrangement provisions granted should be placed on the student's desk.

Invigilators should also be assigned for these rooms with students having access arrangements.

**Access Arrangements Providers must not:**

- **Give factual help nor offer any suggestions to the students.**
- **Explain, clarify or translate into Maltese or English, any part of the examination paper to the candidate.**
- **Advise the student regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, nor the order in which questions should be answered.**

5. **Set Timetable for Examination Rooms:** SLT need to set a timetable for the examination rooms for each day of the examination session. Rooms are to be set according to the number of students taking the examination. Rooms need to have the required number of students' desks and chairs. The seating layout will be done with the assistance of students on the last teaching day prior to the beginning of the examination session.

Students' desks should be a minimum of one metre apart, in all directions, from each other.

Each room should have a working clock showing the correct time of day.

Rooms should be well ventilated, well lit, and with minimal noise to accommodate the examination session.

6. **Establish a dispatching/returning of examination papers venue** and communicate this with invigilators.

Invigilators need to know at what time and from which office they are to collect examination papers for each session. Each school is to make its own arrangements.

In middle and secondary schools, it is suggested to have the examination papers of the different year groups dispatched from/returned to different offices so that papers are not mixed up and the dispatch/return of scripts will be more efficiently conducted.

## On Examinations Days

### 1. SLT roles:

- Take out the examination papers for the relative sessions from the secure place, and place in alphabetical order by subject for each year group.
- Another member conducts assembly and informs students about the examination venues, reminding them about the general rules to be observed during the examinations.
- Make necessary arrangements for absent invigilators to be substituted by other members of the teaching staff.
- Organise who will be taking the daily attendance:
  - Students who are absent are to present a medical certificate even if they are absent for only one day during examinations.
  - If a student suddenly falls sick during the first examination session, and leaves school thus not sitting for the next examination sessions on the day, s/he will not need to present a medical certificate for that particular day.
  - All medical certificates are to be kept at school.

### 2. Invigilators' roles:

- Invigilators are to be at school, at least ten (10) minutes prior to the assembly time.
- In case the invigilator needs to report sick, s/he is to phone the school as early as possible, so that the SLT can make the necessary arrangements to find a substitute who will take up their invigilation role.

- Invigilators should accompany students to the examination room. Instruct students to leave their bags and other belongings in a specific place in the examination room. Students are to take to their desks only the necessary writing material.
- Calculators, protractors, rulers and other mathematical instruments should not be allowed during the Mathematics: Non-Calculator Paper.
- Invigilators should:
  - Keep the examination room door open except during the listening comprehension recordings;
  - Ensure good lighting in the room. If necessary switch on the lights;
  - Ensure an appropriate room temperature. If the room is too warm, switch on the ceiling fans or air conditioners. If there is too much sunlight glare in the room, draw the curtains or set the blinds to make the room comfortable for the students to work in;
  - Check that there is a clock in the examination room/hall which is working and showing the correct time;
  - Ensure that the students are seated according to the class list or group list;
  - Distribute examination papers face down five (5) minutes before the start time of the examination;
  - For the Mathematics examination – first distribute the Non-Calculator paper and whilst the students are working this paper, distribute the Mathematics Main paper placing it under each student's desk. Students are to start working the latter paper as soon as the time for the Non-Calculator paper is up;
  - Remind students to write their names on the front page and their class name. Students should be told to:
    - Check that there are no missing pages and all pages are printed;
    - Write in blue or black ink;
    - Refrain from using erasable pens and erasing fluids/tape;
    - Use clear and legible handwriting.
  - Instruct students to write the name of their examination subject teacher on the front page;
  - Inform the students at the beginning of the examination about any errata corrige. This is to be written by the invigilator on the whiteboard or projection screen;
  - Write the names of students who are Absent or Exempted on the jacket and record the number of examination scripts to be collected;
  - Ensure that if rough paper is distributed, the date together with initials are written on it. All rough paper is to be collected at the end of the examination session;
  - Check that no rough paper or foolscaps are left in the examination room when the examination is over;
  - NOT leave the examination room at any point unless someone else substitutes him/her;

- Invigilate the students in the room by moving around the room without distracting the students;
- At no time use the mobile phone, laptop or other digital apparatus, engage in reading or do any marking of examination scripts, etc. Strict invigilation of the students is recommended;
- Not allow students to borrow items without the permission of the invigilator or speak to each other;
- Allow students to visit the bathroom, but remind them that no extra time will be given for time lost. Only one student may be excused at a given time. Draw the corridors invigilator's attention about the student visiting the bathroom;
- Not allow any student to leave the examination room if s/he has finished the examination paper. The invigilator may collect the examination script and the student may read or study for another subject. Examination papers may be collected by invigilators after an hour in the case of a 1½ hour exam, and 1½ hour in the case of a 2 hour exam. No exam paper will be collected 15 minutes to the finishing time of the examination;
- Inform students 10 minutes before the end of each examination that the examination will end in 10 minutes time;
- In the remaining 10 minutes of the examination, the invigilation should complete the front note on the envelope;
- Ensure that every student stops writing when the bell is heard indicating the end of the examination session. All students are to remain seated in their place with the examination script/booklet closed on their desk, with the front page on top.

**When the examination finishes, the invigilator should:**

- Collect the examination scripts according to the class list. Once all the scripts are collected, count the number of scripts and check that it tallies with the number of students present in class. Place scripts in envelope together with class list. Collect any rough paper and unused foolscaps;
- Dismiss students and direct them to go to the school yard for a short break before the next examination session, or to their dismissal point in case it is the end of the school day. No student should remain in the classroom;
- Return the examination scripts to the examination scripts return office established by SLT, together with the completed attendance sheet and information report on the front of the envelope;
- Return un/used rough paper and foolscaps to the office and place them in the designated boxes.
- In the presence of the person in charge of receiving examination scripts, count the number of examination scripts in the envelope and tally with the number of students marked as present on the attendance/class sheet. Once they tally, the invigilator is to sign the returning of the scripts.

### **3. Corridor Invigilators**

Corridor supervision is essential to control the flow of students entering and exiting the examination rooms.

Teachers who are given corridor invigilation should:

- Have available extra copies of the examination materials (students' papers, teachers' papers, etc.) of the examination taking place just in case they are needed;
- Have available rough paper and foolscaps to be distributed to class invigilators if required;
- Remain in the location indicated to them by the SLT;
- At the end of the examination, proceed to the office where the scripts are to be returned so that they can help out with the counting of examination scripts. This will hasten the process.

### **4. Subject teachers' whose examination is being conducted**

These teachers are to:

- collect a copy of the examination paper from the dispatching office and go through it;
- be on call in the staffroom so that if something happens and their assistance is needed, they would be easily reached and readily available;
- ensure that classes have been informed about any errata corriege and that it is clear to all;
- have the EAU, or Head of Department or subject Education Officer's telephone number readily available just in case something needs to be clarified within the examination paper.

## **Language Speaking/Oral Examinations**

Language speaking examination sessions should start as early as possible.

Examiners and Supervisors are to be in place at least five (5) minutes before starting time to get organised and avoid panic. A clock showing the correct time and that is working needs to be present in the room.

Examiners are to ensure that all the material required for the examination is available.

Examiners are to start the examination session as soon as the bell is heard so that all students have time to sit for the speaking examination preferably on the day. However, if the school year group population is too large, the SLT can either:

- ask for extra teachers' assistance by communicating with the Head College Network; or,
- spread the speaking examination over two/three days using the contingency days indicated on the official examinations' timetable issued by DCLE.

Students are to be in uniform for their speaking examinations. If students turn up not wearing their uniform, they will not be allowed to sit for the examination and are sent to the SLT offices. Students will be asked to phone their parents to bring them the school uniform and change. Once in uniform, students will proceed to the exam venue and sit for the speaking component.

## **After the Examination Session**

**Once examination is over, the marking and reporting of marks takes place.**

### **Markers' roles:**

Teachers marking the scripts are to:

- Collect scripts for marking from the designated office at the time given. All scripts are to be collected within 24 hours of the end of the examination;
- Ensure reliability of results. When possible, it is advisable that one teacher corrects, for instance, all comprehension exercises in a particular year, while another teacher corrects the controlled exercises or the composition. Heads of School are to ensure that teachers mark scripts of the students they teach ONLY in those cases where the same teacher teaches all the classes in the school.
- Ensure they have a copy of the marking scheme and the errata corrige. Marking schemes provided by the EAU are to be followed to ensure consistency among the different markers. Heads of Department or Education Officers are to be consulted where clarifications regarding the interpretation of marking schemes are required. Marking schemes should be discussed before the marking process to ensure that the markers share a common interpretation.
- Mark scripts within six working days of the end of the examinations' session and record the marks in the marksheets given.  
Remember to insert the Level or Track of the subject on the marksheet.  
Sign and date the marksheet.

When the marking process is completed, internal moderation meetings may be carried out to guarantee additional consistency. External moderation will be carried out by Education Officers and Heads of Department.

## **Inputting of Assessment and Examination Marks**

- Marks are to be inputted on MySchool portal once marks are thoroughly checked. No changing of marks will be allowed after the marks are inputted.
- Instructions on the inputting of marks is annually forwarded to schools via email by the Schools Information Systems Unit (SIS). Any difficulties are to be communicated to SIS or the EAU. It is very important that the right Track/Level of the students is selected before entering the score.



## **Student Malpractice**

### **In the case of a student observed looking at another student's work**

The invigilator is to draw the student's attention by calling her/his name so that the whole class can hear. The student should be told to look at her/his paper.

### **In the case of a student caught copying**

The invigilator is to retrieve the evidence (paper/book/mobile phone) the student was copying from, whilst the student is asked to continue the examination.

Immediately inform the SLT. Ask the Corridor Supervisor to call a member of the SLT to the class and the invigilator is to explain what happened passing over the evidence retrieved.

The SLT member should write a short report, stating the facts: date; time; subject of examination; invigilator's name; invigilator's statement of what happened; and the evidence. Head of School should be notified immediately.

Once the student finishes the examination, s/he is to be accompanied to the Head's office. In the meantime the Head of School is to phone the student's parents/guardians and inform them that their son/daughter was caught copying during the examination and therefore a zero (0) mark will be given.

## **General Notes**

During examinations, no one should visit classes to speak to students without permission first sought from the Head of School or representative.

Subject teachers of the examination being held, are to be on standby for the duration of the examination.

In case something needs to be communicated to students about the examination being held, permission is first sought from the Head of School and only one person is to go around the classes, so as to ensure standardisation of communication.

Teachers not invigilating, are to remain in the staffroom (or notify their whereabouts to the SLT or other staff members) so if the need arises they may be called to assist.

During the examinations' period, members of staff need to be present at school as requested by the school administration.

# General Procedures for National Annual Examinations (Secondary Sector)

## Process Map

