

Deferred Examinations – Information Guide for Candidates & Parents/Guardians

For the 2024 Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will provide a deferred examinations sitting with access strictly limited to candidates who experience:

- a. Close family bereavement – funeral preparation and attendance.
- b. Serious medical conditions – accident, injury or illness.

Introduction

Under an extension of the emergency provisions of the Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE Scheme), the SEC will, as in 2023, provide deferred examinations for candidates who experience a **close family bereavement** and who are unable to sit their examinations in the main sitting due to a **serious accident, injury or illness** at the time of the final written examinations.

The development of the RACE scheme to support students experiencing bereavement and serious accident, injury and illness at examinations time has been informed by academic research undertaken on behalf of the SEC.

It should be noted that the scheme itself is provided as set out in governing circular **SEC Circular S21/24** – Outlining the Deferred Examinations Sitting 2024. All decisions will be made by reference to the criteria, principles and requirements as set out in that circular. School authorities have been asked by the SEC to familiarise themselves with the content of Circular S21/24 in order to be able to advise candidates and parents/guardians about this extension of the RACE scheme and the limitations which apply. All applications for the deferred examinations sitting must come via the school.

The information here is provided as assistance to candidates and parents/guardians in understanding the Scheme of Deferred Examinations.

To safeguard integrity and maintain confidence in the Leaving Certificate, access to the deferred examinations will be strictly limited to those genuinely unable to sit their examinations in the main sitting for one of the specified reasons.

Supporting Candidates experiencing Illness or Bereavement

It is important to note at the outset that accessing the deferred examinations sitting in line with the arrangements and access criteria set out below is intended to be an action of last resort. Every effort will continue to be made by schools and by the SEC to facilitate and encourage candidates to take their examinations on the scheduled date in the main sitting.

Indeed, it is anticipated that many of candidates who would meet the eligibility requirements below will nonetheless take their examinations as scheduled, using, where required, the well-established support arrangements that can be put in place under the RACE scheme. The accommodations that can be made when unforeseen circumstances occur include sitting in an alternative location such as in hospital; access to an individual or shared examination centre; rest breaks; alterations to the standard timetable; and the taking of food, drinks or medicines in the centre.

Getting Help

As in all matters related to the certificate examinations, the first port of call for candidates and parents /guardians experiencing difficulties at examinations time should be their own school. School authorities are very experienced in dealing with such matters and can advise and support candidates and their parents/guardians.

Summary of the Scheme

Further details are set out in a question and answer format below. The following brief information may also be of assistance in providing details of this measure, including some of the limitations which apply.

Grounds for Access	Reason	Evidence	Duration of absence	Further Details
Bereavement	To provide for funeral preparation and attendance on the death of a close family member.	Death notice Required within 5 days of the initial application.	Candidates may be able to defer up to three days of examinations in the main sitting. These 3 days must fall between the date of death, and the day after the funeral.	SEC Circular S21/24
Serious Medical Conditions	To provide for instances where candidates experience serious accident, injury or illness which renders the candidate unable to sit their examinations as scheduled.	From a medical consultant or a hospital consultant with a Medical Council Registration Number (MCRN) - certification of the nature of the accident, injury or illness and the extent to which it impacts on the candidate's ability to attend their examinations on the dates in question. Required within 5 days of the initial application.	Subject to the medical evidence, candidate may be allowed to defer some or all of their examinations . Candidates will be expected to resume their examinations in the main sitting as soon as they are able.	SEC Circular S21/24

Application Process

The application process in all cases is school-based. Candidates or parents/guardians should contact the school to report an absence on or before the date and time of the first examinations from which the candidate is absent. The school is required to make an initial application to the SEC no later than the date of the first examination from which the candidate is absent. Evidence is required to be submitted to the SEC within 5 working days of the date of the initial application.

The deferred examinations will be held between Wednesday 26 June until Saturday 13 July, including all Saturdays in the period.

In making an application to access the deferred examinations for any of the specified reasons, candidates and parents/guardians should note the following limitations which apply;

- There is **no further contingency for the deferred examinations** sitting. If a candidate is considered eligible for the deferred examinations and remains, or becomes, unwell at the time of the deferred examinations, or experiences a bereavement, or is absent from their examinations for any other reason their next opportunity to sit the Leaving Certificate will be in June 2025. No alternative arrangements will be provided.

- The scheduling of the Link Modules, Computer Science and Leaving Certificate Applied ICT will be fixed on Wednesday 26 June.
- The scheduling of Leaving Certificate examinations is fixed from Thursday 27 June to Saturday 13 July.
- Examinations will be held on all weekdays and all Saturdays in the period of the deferred examinations.
- The deferred examinations will be held at a number of regional locations and candidates should opt to sit any deferred examinations in the host school location closest to them. Venues may be subject to consolidation depending on the number of candidates ultimately sitting the deferred examinations. Candidates must be aware that their **selected host school is subject to change**.
- Attendance at the deferred examinations is likely to involve travel to another location for the duration of each deferred examination they are due to sit. Candidates taking the deferred examinations will be responsible for their own transportation and accommodation expenses and must be able to make their own arrangements for attending the deferred sitting.
- No alternative dates, locations or arrangements will be provided at the request of candidates.
- Candidates will only be admitted to the deferred examinations on instruction from the SEC.
- Noting that the first examination of the main sitting is on Wednesday 5 June and the examinations scheduled on this date will take place on Thursday 27 June in the deferred sitting, very tight timelines will apply to the application, decision-making, and appeals processes. All of the deadlines will be strictly applied.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON DEFERRED EXAMINATIONS

ELIGIBILITY

Who can access deferred examinations?

The provision is intended for Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied candidates who;

- experience a close family bereavement very close to or during the examinations and need some time to prepare for and attend the funeral
OR
- experience a serious accident, injury or illness which renders them unable to attend for their examinations

BEREAVEMENT - FUNERAL PREPARATION AND ATTENDANCE

What supports will be available for Leaving Certificate candidates who experience a bereavement immediately prior to or during the examinations?

Eligible Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied candidates who experience a **close family bereavement** will be able to **defer up to three days of examinations to the deferred sitting**.

Those who experience bereavement of a close relative during examinations time, or five days prior to the examinations which commence on 5 June this year, will be able to defer some examinations. Therefore, the accommodation will be available in respect of the death of a close relative which occurs on any day in the period Friday 31 May to Tuesday 25 June inclusive.

The purpose of the accommodation is to provide candidates with some time away from their examinations to prepare for and attend the funeral of their loved one without having to contend with the added pressure of their full set of examinations at the same time.

The candidate will, at their discretion, be able to defer the examinations they were due to take on the day of the funeral, if that falls on a day on which they were scheduled to sit examinations, and two other days. Between the day that the close relative dies and the day after the date of the funeral, a candidate can decide to defer up to **three days of examinations**.

In all cases, the SEC must be satisfied as to the validity of the application and will reserve the right to seek independent proof of the bereavement.

Who is classified as a close relative?

For the purposes of deferred examinations close relatives are defined as one of the following: a father, step-father, mother, step-mother, legal guardian, brother, step-brother, half-brother, sister, step-sister, half-sister, grandfather or grandmother. The scheme also provides for the death of the child, spouse or civil partner of a Leaving Certificate candidate.

Why is the time limited to three days?

The purpose of this accommodation is to allow the bereaved candidate to have some time to prepare for and attend the funeral of their loved one without having to contend with the added pressure of their full set of examination at the same time. So, the measure is intended as a break from the examinations at what is a difficult time for the young person.

My close relative died before the 31 May 2024. Can I defer some of my examinations?

Unfortunately, as with any scheme with eligibility criteria there will always be those who meet the criteria and those who do not. The SEC took advice on determining the appropriate duration between the date of bereavement and the start of the examinations in order for the candidate to be eligible for this measure. This advice was that it should be limited to candidates experiencing a bereavement during the full period of the written examinations and in the five days immediately beforehand.

If I experience a close family bereavement, do I have to defer my examinations?

No. You can choose to proceed with your examinations in the main sitting. If you are bereaved and choose to sit the examinations at the normal time you will continue to receive the same supports provided to candidates suffering trauma and adversity during their examinations as in previous years. These include early or late sittings of an examination in order to attend a funeral, sitting examinations in a smaller examination centre, and providing students with supervised rest breaks during their examinations. However, if you decide to proceed with examinations in June you will not be permitted to access the deferred sitting.

SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITIONS – ACCIDENT, INJURY OR ILLNESS.

What supports are available to Leaving Certificate candidates who suffer serious accidents, injuries or illnesses immediately prior to or during the examinations?

Candidates who experience serious accident, injury or illness (either unexpectedly or a flare up of an existing condition) which render them unable to sit their examinations as scheduled may be able to defer some or all of their examinations depending on the timing, nature and severity of their condition.

For examinations integrity reasons, the threshold for evidence is high and **evidence will be required from a medical consultant or from a hospital consultant with a Medical Council Registration Number (MCRN)**. Other evidence, provided by a GP or other medical practitioner will not be considered.

The medical evidence must support both evidence of the condition and the degree to which it impacts on the candidate's ability to attend for their examinations, including the dates on which they are unable to attend. Candidates are expected to resume their examinations as soon as they are able. However, under the serious accident, injury or illness category the candidate may seek to defer all of their examinations.

Any candidate who suffers an accident, injury or illness during the examinations but who does not meet the eligibility criteria for access to the deferred examinations will be accommodated under the existing provisions of the RACE Scheme which provides a range of measures to support candidates experiencing challenging circumstances at examinations time.

What qualifies as serious accident, injury or illness?

To maintain robust examinations and certification procedures and standards, the threshold for access to the deferred Leaving Certificate examinations has been set at an appropriate level. The criteria for serious medical conditions have been informed by research into international best practice in other jurisdictions with similar examinations systems to Ireland.

It is not possible to be entirely prescriptive as to the range of conditions which might arise but the following are intended to exemplify the seriousness of the medical conditions and circumstances which will warrant consideration of an application for access to the deferred examinations sitting.

Type of Serious Accident, Injury or Illness	Examples of conditions which will be considered	Examples of conditions which will not be considered*
Serious illness.	Cancer, cardiac conditions.	Gastroenteritis, migraines.
Major surgery at or near the time of the examination.	Non-elective major surgery, Transplant, appendectomy.	Any elective surgery.
Severe disease or severe condition event /episode.	Sepsis, epilepsy, Crohn’s disease, severe asthma attack resulting in hospitalisation.	Bronchitis, mild Asthma, Hay-fever.
Severe or permanent injury occurring at the time of the examination.	Bones breaks requiring hospitalisation at the time of the examination, brain injury, amputation, spinal injury.	Sprains, minor burn injuries, tendon damage, bone breakages which can be accommodated within the existing provisions of the RACE Scheme (e.g. providing access to a recording device/scribe for a candidate with broken arm)**
Psychiatric illness.	Life threatening mental health episode; detention in a hospital.	Stress, Anxiety, Non-medical trauma.

*Unless any of these conditions result in a period of unexpected hospitalisation at the time of the examinations.

** See Section 6.B.4 from Circular S21/24 which is available [here](#) regarding an exception that might be considered in the event of a candidate granted emergency access to a scribe in certain examinations.

What supports are available for a candidate who suffers from a broken bone (e.g. broken arm or collar bone) affecting their writing hand?

Any candidate who suffers an accident or injury which has implications on their writing hand, will be accommodated under the existing provisions of the RACE scheme. The use of a scribe or recording device are examples of such accommodations available.

There are limitations on using a scribe in certain Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied subjects. In these exceptional cases, the SEC will consider an application for the deferred examinations sitting, noting that for reasons of examinations integrity, the threshold for evidence is high. Please see Sections 6.B.2 and 6.B.4 Circular S21/24 for further information, which is available [here](#).

How many examinations can be deferred on grounds of serious accident, injury or illness?

Eligible candidates will be able to defer some or all of their examinations depending on the timing, nature and severity of their condition. The medical evidence must support both evidence of the condition and the degree to which it impacts on the candidate’s ability to attend for their examinations, including the dates on which they are unable to attend. Candidates are expected to defer as few examinations as possible and to resume their examinations in the main examinations as soon as they are able.

What supports are available to Leaving Certificate candidates who suffer other less serious accidents, injuries or illness immediately prior to or during the examinations?

All candidates are encouraged to take their examinations as scheduled and every effort will continue to be made by the SEC and by schools to support candidates in taking their examinations in the main sitting.

There are arrangements that can be made between the SEC and the school in the best interests of the candidate to enable the candidate to proceed with their examination on the scheduled date.

Candidates who are ill or injured but who are not eligible for access to the deferred examinations will be able to avail of the longstanding supports available under the RACE Scheme. Candidates who experience bereavement or a serious accident, injury or illness but who decide to continue with their original schedule of examinations will, of course, be entitled to these support arrangements. These supports include;

- access to a shared or an individual special examination centre (depending on need);
- arranging for examination sittings in atypical venues such as in hospitals or at another location or another school;
- granting of supervised breaks or rest periods having regard to the physical, medical or emotional condition of the candidate;
- access to food, drink and medicine.
- Amendments to the published timetable provided the examinations take place on the day scheduled on the timetable and appropriate supervision arrangements are in place.

If you experience an emergency situation such as this, your school is best placed to assist you. If this happens to you please contact your school immediately.

Can I contact the SEC for advice on candidate eligibility?

The application process is school based and the SEC will engage with the school authority on all matters related to the application on behalf of an individual candidate. For candidates and parents/guardians, the first port of call in these matters should be the school authority.

Any candidate, parent or guardian intending to contact the SEC about the scheme and in particular in respect of a candidate's eligibility to sit the deferred examinations should keep the following information in mind;

- The conditions of eligibility are set out clearly in the governing Circular S21/24.
- The SEC cannot give an opinion on likely eligibility of a candidate over the phone or through email or otherwise.
- Candidates missing their examinations in the main sitting do so at risk. The SEC cannot provide any guarantees that a candidate will be deemed eligible for the deferred examinations sitting.
- Full application forms complete with supporting documentation and medical/bereavement evidence must be received by the SEC, within the timelines which apply, before an application will be considered.
- A decision on the eligibility of a candidate will only issue from the SEC when all the information (application form, supporting information and medical/bereavement evidence) has been provided and assessed.
- When making an application to sit a deferred examination the school authority should make candidates and their parents/guardians aware that they may not be eligible to sit the deferred examinations following the application process.

What if I am not sure that I am eligible?

Unless you are absolutely sure that you can meet the conditions of eligibility then you should attend for your examinations in June as normal noting that there are arrangements that can be made locally in the school to assist you in taking your examinations as originally scheduled. Candidates need to be aware that there is a risk that if they miss the main sitting, they may not be eligible to sit an examination at the deferred sitting and they will only be permitted to do so if their application is approved.

Applications will not be approved simply because the candidate has missed an examination in the main sitting in June.

If I become ill during my examination in June, can I resit the paper in the deferred sitting?

The deferred examinations are not second chance examinations and are not generally available once you have commenced an examination or completed an examination in the main sitting even if you were unwell while taking the examinations.

In extreme circumstances, the SEC may consider an application from a school on behalf of a candidate for the deferred examinations sitting where a medical event occurs after the examination has commenced which renders the candidate medically unable to complete the examination. Such circumstances are serious and life-threatening medical emergencies in the following specific situations:

1. Where the candidate has an acute episode of a pre-existing chronic condition¹ for which they have been under the care of a medical consultant, such as epilepsy, or
2. Where the candidate has a serious and life-threatening medical emergency, which results in hospitalisation on the day of the examination.

Eligibility for the deferred examinations sitting for those who have started an examination will be exceptional and not expected to occur often.

For these extreme circumstances, a letter or report with appropriate detail, from a hospital consultant or a medical consultant, will be required to support an application for access to the deferred examinations sitting. A letter with an account of the circumstances leading up to the emergency should also be submitted by the school as part of the application.

Applications under this provision will not be approved unless they meet all of the requirements for access including the detailed letter from a medical consultant and the support of the school authority. The bar for entry to the deferred examinations sitting for those who have already commenced an examination sitting in June is intentionally set at a high level in order to protect the integrity of the State examinations.

In such instances, if a candidate is approved to sit the deferred examinations sitting it will be considered that the main examination has not been sat and therefore any work from this examination will not be marked or considered by the SEC.

If I suffer a bereavement or serious illness but I am not available in July, can deferred arrangements be made?

Unfortunately, not. Candidates may experience bereavement or serious illness at the time of the main sitting but know they will not be available to sit the deferred examinations. Such candidate may be able to sit their examinations in the main sitting using the support arrangements that can be provided by schools. Otherwise, they will have the option of repeating their Leaving Certificate next year.

For candidates who are hospitalised during the period of the deferred examinations, it may be possible to arrange for them to sit their examinations in hospital on the day on which the examination is scheduled on the deferred examinations timetable.

APPLICATION PROCESS

I am attending school - How do I apply for the deferred examinations?

The application process is school-based and candidates, or their parents/guardians, should notify the school authority immediately if they are absent for an examination and believe that they meet the eligibility criteria for access to the deferred examinations sitting.

The school authority is required to make an initial application to the SEC on the candidate's behalf to access the deferred examinations sitting and has provided schools with an online application system via the Schools Portal. The initial application must be made before or on the first day on which the candidate is absent from the examination. At the very latest, the initial application must be made through the Schools Portal on the first day on which the candidate is absent from the main sitting.

Candidates, parents/guardians need to be aware of the published principles, requirements and criteria against which all applications will be considered and subject to formal decision. The application process will require confirmation from the candidate and parent/guardian of their understanding of the terms on which the application is made. The school will ask you and/or your parent guardian to complete the deferred examinations declaration form (**Form RA8/2024**). Section 2 should be completed by the school authority confirming the candidate meets the conditions of

¹ Candidates and Parents/Guardians should take note of the examples of the type of conditions which will and will not be considered as meeting the threshold of eligibility in the table provided in Paragraph 6.B.1 of Governing Circular S21/24.

eligibility and to support the application. Section 3 must be completed by the candidate (if over 18) or candidate and parent/guardian (if under 18).

Specific medical evidence, as defined in the governing circular S21/24, will be required to support an application on grounds of serious accidents, injury or illness. As set out, for reasons of examinations integrity, the threshold for evidence is high and evidence will be required from **a medical consultant or hospital consultant, with a Medical Council Registration Number (MCRN)**. Other evidence, provided by a GP or other medical practitioner will not be considered. The medical evidence must include both evidence of the condition and the degree to which it impacts on the candidate's ability to attend for their examinations, including the dates on which they are unable to attend.

While the required medical evidence or evidence of the bereavement may need to follow the initial application, there is a need for this evidence to be available and uploaded by the school to the Schools Portal within **5 working days** of the initial application.

The SEC has provided schools with details of the application process which will require them to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria.

In all cases, the SEC must be satisfied as to the validity of the application and will reserve the right to seek independent proof of the bereavement or serious accident, injury and illness.

Candidates may not know the decision on foot of their application at the time of the examination and therefore will need to be extremely sure that they are eligible before being absent from the examination.

Noting the first examination of the main sitting is on Wednesday 5 June and the examinations scheduled on this date will take place on Thursday 27 June in the deferred sitting, very tight timelines will apply to the application, decision-making, and appeals processes and all of the deadlines will be strictly applied.

I am an external candidate - How do I apply for the deferred examinations?

You should notify the school in which you were due to sit your examinations. Schools have been asked to put in place arrangements for any external candidates to apply through the school in which they are due to sit their examinations.

The SEC will not accept applications from candidates or parents/guardians other than in the case of a very small number of non-school affiliated external candidates who were due to sit examinations at one of two central Dublin locations. The SEC has contacted these candidates directly to set out a separate application process directly to the SEC.

Can I, or my parent/guardian, apply directly to the SEC?

The SEC will not accept applications from candidates or parents/guardians other than in the case of a very small number of non-school affiliated external candidates who were due to sit examinations at one of two central Dublin locations. The SEC has contacted these candidates directly to set out a separate application process directly to the SEC.

What if my application is refused? Is there an Appeals Process?

Yes. All applications will receive a formal decision from the SEC. In cases where a parent or candidate is dissatisfied with any aspect of the SEC's decision, they will have access to a Deferred Examination Independent Appeals Committee (IAC). All members of the IAC will be drawn from outside the SEC and include those with relevant medical expertise. The remit of the IAC covers appeals against the SEC's decisions on the deferred examinations. Appeals will be considered in light of the published principles, requirements and criteria as set out in the governing circular. Appeal applications must be submitted within a maximum of 4 working days of the formal decision from the SEC. Noting that there is a very short time window for the application, decision-making, and appeals processes for the deferred examinations to transact, for this reason, all deadlines will be strictly applied. Details of the appeals process, including all relevant deadlines, will be included with decisions on applications for access to the deferred examinations. The appeals application process will also be school based.

What will happen to a candidate who seeks to access the deferred examinations under false pretences?

A Breach of Examinations Regulations may be determined if a candidate claims relief under this provision and is found to have made a false claim. A person aiding a candidate to claim a relief under this provision to which the candidate

is not entitled may be guilty of an offence under Section 52 of the Education Act 1998 and/or under other legislative provisions.

DEFERRED EXAMINATIONS INFORMATION

Where are the deferred examinations taking place?

It is intended that the deferred examinations will be provided at a number of regionally located schools. In Dublin more than one school will provide the examinations. Details of the host schools will be provided to school authorities as part of the application process.

It is expected that candidates will sit any deferred examinations in the host school location closest to them. When making the online application on the Schools Portal, the school authority will be asked to indicate the candidate's preferred host school from the list of schools. It is important to note the selection of the host school is not a guarantee and may be subject to change depending on the number of candidates ultimately sitting in the deferred examinations. The SEC reserves the right to alter the host school locations depending on numbers presenting for the examinations.

Candidates must be able to make their own arrangements for attending the deferred sitting and will be responsible for their own transportation and accommodation expenses and the SEC will not entertain requests for sitting these examinations at alternative venues.

When are the Deferred Examinations taking place?

The Deferred Examinations will take place from Wednesday 26 June to Saturday 13 July and will be held on all Saturdays and weekdays in that period. The detailed timetables for Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied deferred examinations are available on the SEC website [here](#). The SEC will provide subject specific approval to defer examinations to eligible candidates on foot of the school-based application process. Candidates so permitted must be available on the dates of those examinations in the deferred examinations sitting. No alternative arrangements will be made.

What happens if I am unable to sit the deferred examinations?

There is **no further contingency for the deferred examinations sitting**. If a candidate is considered eligible for the deferred examinations and remains, or becomes, unwell at the time of the deferred examinations, or experiences a bereavement, or misses their examinations for any other reason, their next opportunity to sit the Leaving Certificate will be in June 2025. No alternative arrangements will be provided.

Is there any cost for the deferred examinations?

There is no fee for this service. However, candidates must be able to make their own arrangements for attending the deferred sitting and will be responsible for their own transportation and accommodation expenses. The SEC will not entertain requests for sitting these examinations at alternative venues.

OTHER INFORMATION

Is it the case that candidates who experience difficulties such as illness or bereavement at examination time get special consideration in the marking?

At the certificate examinations each candidate's work must be marked according to the agreed marking scheme for the subject concerned. This is to ensure equitable, consistent and fair treatment for all candidates. Examiners are confined to applying the agreed marking scheme to the work actually produced at the examination. An examiner has no scope to deviate from this marking scheme. There may be a misconception that examiners can allow in some subjective way for the life circumstances of individual students. But this is absolutely not the case.

If you have any queries contact:

Deferred Examinations Section

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