

# St. Oliver's Community College

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May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to give all third-year students and parents/guardians a clear picture of what will happen between now and the end of the school year as a result of the statement from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the Junior Cycle.

I have included a Q & A section with this letter that outlines how the new arrangements will operate in St. Oliver's Community College in detail. However, here is a summary of the key points:

- The Minister has confirmed that **Junior Cycle written examinations for 2020 have been cancelled**.
- Examinations **will not** be taking place in the Autumn.
- Students will receive a **State Certificate of Completion of Junior Cycle**, awarded by the Dept. of Education.
- Students will receive a **Record of Achievement**, awarded by St. Oliver's Community College.
- Subject grades for the Record of Achievement for each student will be compiled from:
  - On-line assessment (taking place between May 25<sup>th</sup> – May 28<sup>th</sup>).
  - Record of student learning (this will include coursework, completed Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs), tasks, tests, practical/project work and other work completed over the course of second year and third year).
- Teaching and online classes will end on Friday May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Online assessments will end on Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup>.

We have made this decision, as we believe this proposal has several benefits for students and families:

- Students now have a clear objective to work towards in the online assessments at the end of May.
- The timetable for assessments means students have a shorter period (three weeks) on which to focus on their revision and engagement with their teachers.
- The combination of a record of student learning over the past two years and the short online assessment will provide a true picture of the student's performance at Junior Cycle.
- The stress of having a period of examination in the Autumn has been removed, for the benefit of students' and families' well-being.
- Students can enjoy their summer holidays without having to continue revision for exams in Autumn.
- On returning to school in the Autumn, students can begin their senior cycle programme immediately – either Transition Year, Leaving Cert or Leaving Cert Applied – without further disruption.

Third year teachers will continue to be in contact with their classes and over the coming days we will outline the format of the online assessment and how it will operate directly to students. We will also send students an example of an online assessment next week. This will allow them to practice and make themselves familiar with the types of questions they will answer on the online assessments.

The year heads for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students – Mr. Sheelan and Mr. Gates – also remain available to answer any questions or queries you may have.

We have made this decision in the best interests of students and families and we believe it provides an appropriate balance between ongoing revision and study, recognising student achievement and maintaining student well-being.

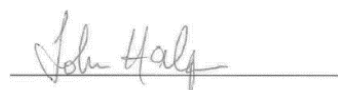
We are asking for your support in relation to the online assessment. While we are not asking for strict supervision of the tests, we would be grateful if you could ensure that assessments are completed in a quiet area and that students complete all of the required assessments for each of the days outlined on the timetable. We feel this will give students the opportunity to perform at their best and have their achievements recognised.

We understand that work commitments may not make this feasible but we have provided a long window for students to complete the assessment on each day and we are sure students will give these assessments their best effort.

I include the timetable for the online assessments. The Q & A document below gives detail on how these assessments will operate. It also answers questions in relation to the certification of subjects, Junior Cycle examinations fees and other matters. Please take time to read this document and share with your son/daughter. We will also contact each student via his or her school email.

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with the school should you have any questions or queries on this matter. Although the school office is closed, you can still contact the school via email at [socc@lmetb.ie](mailto:socc@lmetb.ie).

Regards,



John Halpin  
Principal

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### Junior Cycle Online Assessment Timetable

Day/Date	Examinations					
Mon May 25 <sup>th</sup>	English	Maths	Business	Home Economics		
Tues May 26 <sup>th</sup>	Geography	Gaeilge				
Wed May 27 <sup>th</sup>	Spanish	French	Technology	Woodwork	Metalwork	Music
Thurs May 28 <sup>th</sup>	Science	History				
Fri May 29 <sup>th</sup>	School closed – Summer holidays					

\*Students of Art and Technical Graphics will be assessed on project work and course work.

\*Students will be sitting a number of assessments on each day. It is recommended that they highlight their subjects on the timetable so they are clear on what assessments have to be completed on each day.

## FAQS ON JUNIOR CYCLE 2020

### **Is the Junior Cycle going ahead?**

No. The Junior Cycle written examinations have been cancelled and will not proceed this year.

### **I had heard that some exams are taking place in September. Is this still the case?**

No. Students will not be sitting any examinations in September.

## **Junior Cycle Certificates and Grades**

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### **Will my son/daughter receive a certificate for their Junior Cycle?**

Yes. Students will receive two certificates – one issued by the Department of Education and Skills and the other issued by St. Oliver's Community College.

### **What will be included on the certificate issued by the Department of Education?**

A State Certificate of Completion of the Junior Cycle will be issued to all students by the Department of Education and Skills. It will include a record of the subjects that students have studied for their Junior Cycle.

### **What will be included on the certificate issued by the school?**

St. Oliver's Community College (SOCC) will issue a record of achievement for each student on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject and/or short course at the end of Junior Cycle. The SOCC Record of Achievement will report on three main elements:

- A student's achievements in the subject assessments.
- A student's achievements in the Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) undertaken in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year, where relevant.
- A student's achievements in the Other Areas of Learning (OALs) that were submitted earlier this year.

### **What will the grade for the subject assessments be based upon?**

Grades for the subject assessments for each student will be compiled from:

- On-line assessments for most subjects\* that will take place between Monday May 25<sup>th</sup> and Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Record of student learning (this will include coursework, completed Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs), tasks, tests, practical/project work and other work completed)

Evidence available from assignments, tests, tasks journals, projects, practical and other work completed over the course of second year and third year may be used.

(\* Students of Art and Technical Graphics will not complete an online assessment. Their grade descriptor will be assessed on project work, course work, tests and other work completed.)

### **When will my son/daughter receive their certificates?**

Both of the certificates – the State certificate and the school certificate – will be issued to students during Term 1 of the school year 2020/2021.

## **Online assessments**

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### **What is an online assessment?**

An online assessment is a short, multiple-choice test that students will complete during the period, Monday May 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup>. Students complete the test online, either via a PC, Laptop, Tablet PC/iPad or mobile phone.

**How will my son/daughter access the online assessment?**

Students will log on to the school website [socc.ie](http://socc.ie) on each day of the assessment. A link to summer assessments will be on the website and students will click on the link for the subjects they are doing.

Students then must enter their school email log on details and password to access the test.

(If your son/daughter does not have access to their school email, please click on the link to request a password reset. Click [here](#).)

**There are no start times given on the assessment timetable. What time do the online tests start?**

To allow for the different circumstances of individual students, assessments will remain open for the day. Tests will go live at 930am and will remain open until 9pm. Students can complete the assessments at any time during that window.

Exams can be started at any time in the window listed above. We recommend that if students are working in the evening, they start their final assessment at 8pm, to allow them time to complete the assessment before it closes at 9pm.

**How long will it take to finish an online test?**

Online tests should take approximately 40 minutes to complete.

**How many online assessments will my son/daughter have to do in a day?**

That depends. On most days, students will have two assessments to complete. However, depending on the option subjects a student has selected they may have one exam on one day and three on another.

Given that test should take approximately 40 mins, students should need a maximum of three hours (including breaks) to complete three assessments.

**Do all of the online assessments have to be completed one after another?**

No. Students can take a break between exams. Breaks can be as long as a student requires.

**My son/daughter does not have a laptop. Can they still do the online assessments?**

Yes. All online assessments can be completed on a mobile phone.

If possible, 3<sup>rd</sup> year students might be given priority to working on a laptop/PC/tablet PC for their assessments as many of the questions will include graphics which are better seen on a larger screen.

Students in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year will have completed their assessments by May 23<sup>rd</sup> and so will not need access to IT devices in the week of 3<sup>rd</sup> year assessments.

**Does my son/daughter only need the IT device for the test?**

No. We recommend that for all online assessments, students have a pen and paper to take notes or make calculations before submitting an answer.

For other exams, students may need to have other resources at hand like calculators, rulers, etc. We will let students know directly what they need for each exam.

**My son/daughter has never done an online test before. Can they see what a test looks like?**

Yes. We will email all students with a sample test that they can use to practice on and get familiar with the types of questions asked.

**My son/daughter had qualified for RACE for the Junior Cycle. Do they get more time in the exam?**

The time to do the exam is unlimited so students can take as long as they need to complete the test. They must complete the exam in one sitting as they cannot save answers and return to the test. The suggested time of 40 minutes is an approximate time and students might take shorter or longer to complete the assessment. The time taken to complete the assessment has no impact on the grade.

**Do I have to supervise my son/daughter taking the online assessments?**

While we are not asking for strict supervision of the tests, we would be grateful if you could ensure that assessments are completed in a quiet area and that students complete all of the required assessments for each of the days outlined on the timetable.

We understand that work commitments may not make this feasible but we have provided a long window for students to complete the assessment (930am – 9pm) on each day. We feel this will give students the opportunity to perform at their best and have their achievements recognised.

**What if my son/daughter has a technical issue when they are doing the test?**

If an IT problem causes a student to lose access, they can re-enter and resubmit their answers.

If there is a more significant problem, your son/daughter should email their teacher about the issue. We will find a solution for them to complete the assessment. This process should not be a source of stress for any student.

**Junior Cycle Examination Fees**

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**Do I have to pay my fees for the Junior Cycle examinations?**

No. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) have confirmed that students will not be required to pay any examination fees in relation to the 2020 Junior Cycle examinations.

**I have already paid my fees for the Junior Cycle. Will I get a refund?**

Yes. The SEC will be issuing a refund to all students who have already paid. There is no need to contact the State Examinations Commission or the school as refunds will be made automatically.

**Student Well-being/School supports**

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**My son/daughter is going through a difficult time at the moment. Is there anyone I can contact?**

Absolutely. If your son/daughter is having difficulties with their studies, they should contact their teacher(s) and explain the situation. Alternatively, they may feel more comfortable contacting their tutor who will have a broader understanding of issues across different subjects.

If there are particular issues in relation to your son/daughter's well-being, our Guidance & Counselling Department are available for contact.

**Guidance Counsellors**

Ms. G. Byrne – [gbyrne.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:gbyrne.soc@lmetb.ie)

Mr. J. Farrelly – [jfarrelly.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:jfarrelly.soc@lmetb.ie)

Ms. F. Dunne – [fdunne.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:fdunne.soc@lmetb.ie)

Ms. T. McConnell – [tmccconnell.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:tmccconnell.soc@lmetb.ie)

If your son/daughter has been working with the School Completion Programme, the SCP staff are also available for contact.

**School Completion Programme**

Chris Menary – [cmenary.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:cmenary.soc@lmetb.ie)

Aisling Pierce – [apierce.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:apierce.soc@lmetb.ie)

Katie Donagh – [kdonagh.soc@lmetb.ie](mailto:kdonagh.soc@lmetb.ie)