



**NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL**  
**Post Primary**  
COMHAIRLE NÁISIÚNTA TUISMITHOIRÍ  
Iarbhunoideachas

The National Parents Council Post Primary CLG,  
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## **Statement regarding COVID-19 and Leaving Certificate 2020**

**05 May 2020**

*The National Parents Council post primary (NPCPP) is the voice of, and advocate for, all parents and guardians of young people in post-primary education in Ireland and ensures that our parents' voice is represented at the national level.*

The arrival of COVID-19 in Ireland instigated changes in our society that no one could have envisaged. The necessity for social restrictions has and continues to be challenging across many spheres of our lives, no more so evident than in our educational system and in efforts to ensure that our young people continue their education while schools are closed.

NPCPP continues to offer support to parents and students through our website [www.npcpp.ie](http://www.npcpp.ie), online and through proactive participation in the Department of Education and Skills Advisory group established in order to inform and assist decision making in education during this unprecedented time.

NPCPP's primary concerns are for the mental wellbeing of our students and their families as we endeavor to cope with the difficulties presented by COVID-19. Students must not be penalized as a result of this pandemic. Fairness, equity and equality must also be achieved, and all efforts and arrangements must be put in place promptly to ensure that no student is disadvantaged due to the inadequacies of alternatives to their normal schooling and educational supports.

Flexibility is the key to solving many unusual and unprecedented difficulties.

NPCPP welcomes the recent announcements, following our representations, to ensure that all Junior Cycle students will receive state certification and that their exams or assessments do not overlap into the next academic year. These measures assist towards relieving some of the stress faced by these students and their families through clarity, timely completion of their Junior Cycle and, hopefully, a reasonable return to normality in their school-life.

Students who were due to sit their Leaving Certificate Exams, in all forms, in June, continue to face uncertainty. The increasing level of stress and pressures on Leaving Certificate students and their families grows daily and is unacceptable. The disparity of facilities and support for Leaving Certificate students across the country is clear. One solution cannot and will not offer fairness and equity to all students.

It is now very obvious that students and parents alike, need clarity and prompt action regarding the Leaving Certificate Examinations and clear alternative options to be made available to them.

The level of stress and resulting negative affect on students' wellbeing is clearly evident and well reported through recent surveys undertaken by both NPCPP and the ISSU, from messages and communications received to our national offices as well as through press and media.

The announcements by An Taoiseach, on Friday, of plans towards exiting the lockdown demonstrate the reality that life in Ireland will not be normal for several months at the earliest.

NPCPP were disappointed to hear no mention of Leaving Certificate Exams included in this announcement.

**President: M. Fanning, Company Secretary: Michael Mulry, Treasurer M. O'Shea**

**Directors: V-President: N. Keenan, PRO: P. Rolston, N. Bannister, N. Mishra, R. Matthews, M. Martin, S. O'Riordan, R. Hemeryck, F. Walshe**

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Ongoing government pronouncements and commentary from informed experts indicate that Ireland will be living with COVID-19 for many months to come - possibly into 2020.

These conditions will remain in the coming months and create predicaments which make it impossible to categorically state that exams will take place from 29th July as suggested.

Students and parents continue to express concern and nervousness about congregations involved to facilitate seated exams and are seeking alternative plans which take account of other potential scenarios and that will offer alternative routes to completion and a definitive conclusion date for students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary difficulties for everyone.

Leaving Certificate students and their families face many additional demands and pressures.

Teachers, students and families have stepped up to the mark as best they can to cope with these extraordinary conditions. Normal parameters do not exist in education today.

Extraordinary measures have had to be taken by all concerned and extraordinary, creative solutions are now required from all involved in education.

Considerations and decisions regarding the Leaving Certificate must be cognisant of this unparalleled situation in which COVID-19 has placed us, as a nation.

A number of possible options have been put forward for consideration by NPCPP, ISSU and others.

Most alternatives suggested would utilise or adapt options already in place to manage difficulties or particular needs experienced in previous years.

Plans must be put in place which take account of the extraordinary conditions under which our students face their final senior cycle assessment.

Having raised the issue of significant disparity of access to IT hardware, facilities and broadband across the country, NPCPP welcomed the announcement of €10million towards addressing some of the inequalities identified.

NPCPP also welcome the decisions, following representations, which demonstrated the ability to adjust and see alternative options implemented to facilitate prompt and broadly satisfactory closure on Junior Cycle matters.

The flexibility required to address extraordinary circumstances has therefore been positively demonstrated.

Flexibility has been asked of and delivered by students in the final year of their Post Primary education. They deserve flexibility in assessment for their Leaving Certificate Exam in return.

Fairness and equality must govern all considerations. 2020 Leaving Certificate students and parents must not feel penalised as a result of COVID-19 or disparity of access and must be supported to return as quickly as possible to a 'normal' education or career pathway.

Clear routes and options towards completion must be issued to cover all likely scenarios and a definitive conclusion date is required urgently.

The Advisory Group, the Department of Education and Skills and the Minister must urgently recognise and consider the issues identified, bring forward options to address them equitably and offer clarity of the processes and timelines involved to indicate a definitive conclusion date for all concerned.

## **ENDS**

### **Note to Editors**

*The National Parents Council Post Primary (NPCpp) is a voluntary group that gives national voice to parents of students in post primary schools in Ireland. We work as an umbrella group for parent associations in the secondary sector of the Irish education system. We unite parents and ensure their participation and inclusion at all levels of the post primary education system. The National Parents Council Post Primary has a Board of ten members who work without remuneration on behalf of parents and children.*

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