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St Colman's College,
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Principal
Mr Jimmy Finn

Deputy Principal
Mr. Roy Hession

7th May, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians of Third Year Students,

On Wednesday 29th April the Minister for Education and Skills announced revised arrangements for this year's Junior Cycle. This announcement provided clarity for Junior Cycle students and their parents and has relieved much of the consequent stresses that lay on students in particular.

Third Year students will finish the Junior Certificate programme on May 29th. There will be no Junior Cycle Examinations in September and students should progress into their chosen programmes without the consequent stresses.

The Minister also published Guidelines which set out alternative arrangements for the assessment and reporting on the learning achievements of students who are concluding Junior Cycle in May.

The Key element of these Guidelines are:

In 2020, the Junior Cycle learning achievement of students will be recognised through a specific form of certification designed to meet the current, exceptional circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For each student, certification will involve two elements:

A State Certificate of completion of Junior Cycle from the Department of Education and Skills. Students should receive a State Certification that they have completed three years of Junior Cycle education in a number of subjects/priority learning units. This certification will be provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

A School Report setting out the learning achievements of students in Junior Cycle. Students should receive a written report on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject at the end of Junior Cycle. This assessment of their learning will be provided by their teachers. Schools will have autonomy in how this assessment is to be arrived at and the format in which the report is provided.

The assessment of students' learning achievements in each subject will take place at school level and will be based on the teacher's professional knowledge of each student's learning. Schools have been given autonomy to choose the most appropriate form of school-based assessments to put in place for the third-year cohort of 2019/20.

According to the Guidelines, schools may use a range of evidence to inform this assessment of students' achievements which may include:

- Evidence available from assignments, tests, tasks journals, projects, practical and other work completed over the course of second year and third year
- Classroom-Based Assessments completed in second year and third year
- School-designed examinations, tasks, projects, assignments, essay style questions, presentations, or other tasks chosen by the teacher from the range of approaches agreed at school level.

The St. Colman's College School Report:

3rd Year students will receive a Junior Cycle School Report from St. Colman's College outlining their Learning Achievements over the 3 years of Junior Cycle. 80% of the Grade in each subject will be comprise of the following:

Evidence from results received by students in House Tests, Class Tests, Mock Exam Results and Practical Work (where appropriate) over 2nd Year and 3rd Year. These results will be used to determine the student's average result.

The final 20% of the Grade in each subject will be made up of an element for an End of Term Test, which will be completed at home and returned to the teacher online, and a portion for online engagement.

House/Class Tests; Mock Exams; Practical Projects	80%
Engagement with Online Learning/End of Year Test	20%

- Within the general constraints of the marking criteria above a certain amount of flexibility/discretion will be given to subject departments and teachers in the allocation of marks to each of the above elements to take account of specific requirements in certain subjects, particularly practical subjects
- Subject departments and teachers will make known to students, through their Microsoft "Teams", the material that will need to be studied and revised for the End of Year Test/Project

- In devising the above marking criteria we are taking cognisance of the disrupted learning that students have experienced in 2020, and recognise that some students may be unable to undertake such additional assessments because of issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the weighting for work done, in the form of average marking from historic tests, prior to March 12th is substantially greater than that for online engagement and End of Term tests and projects.
- The End of Year Test/Project will be devised and marked by the class teachers. The method or format of assessment used (for example, written or electronic format) should take cognisance of students' accessibility to the mode chosen. The assessment format chosen should be accessible, as far as is possible, to all students in the class.
- The End of Year Test will be an "Open Book" test, meaning that students may use their books, notes or other materials to assist them in answering questions.
- The End of Year Test should be administered by Friday 22nd May. The intervening period, from today, should be used by teachers and students for revision purposes. Teachers and subject departments will have discretion to hold the test later than 22nd May in the interests of ensuring that students have adequate revision time. Students will be notified through their "Teams" of the date and time that tests are to be administered.
- We will make every effort to ensure that the method or format of assessment will be inclusive of students with special educational needs (SEN) and provide differentiated approaches to allow students with SEN to access the appropriate assessment mode and be adaptable to their particular context.
- Parents of students with special educational needs may act as readers/scribes during the administration of the test, where this has been sanctioned by the State Examinations Commission.
- Through their "Teams" classes students will be provided with details of the material to be covered in the End of Year test, the mode of assessment and the timeframe for administration and completion of same.
- Because of the nature of this year's Junior Cycle reporting the report sent home may not include comments on "Workrate", "Behaviour" and Free Text Comments.

Providing the report to students and their parents:

- The School report will be shared with students and parents in early June.
- All Subjects will be reported on in the School report using the Junior Cycle Descriptors: Distinction; Higher Merit; Merit; Achieved; Partially Achieved; Not Graded.

- It may also detail separately the following descriptors awarded to classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in 2nd Year and 3rd Year: Exceptional; Above Expectations; In Line With Expectations; Yet to Meet Expectations.
- The following subjects will not be reported on: CSPE; SPHE; P.E. and Religion.

Providing State Certification

- The Department of Education and Skills will provide each student with a certificate indicating the completion of the Junior Cycle programme of study, including the list of subjects, short courses and/or priority learning units studied and the level at which the subject was studied.
- This data will be drawn from the Department's Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) and will not exceed the 10 subject limit on subjects for certification set out in Circular Letter 0055/2019 (or lower where the student has studied short courses).
- This certificate will be provided early in the school year 2020/21.

As the school year does not finish until May 29th, third Year students are expected to continue to engage with their teachers online and submit work as requested. This work will be taken into account in the results they will receive in their school reports in June.

I wish all of our students and their families well in these unprecedented times.

Yours faithfully,

Jimmy Finn

Principal