

Procedures for the Exemption from the Study of Irish and Modern Languages



Procedures

Testing

Certificates

v1/2024

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[Criteria for the Exemption from the Study of Irish](#)

The following criteria for granting an Irish exemption are set out in Circular 0055/2022 and are quoted below. In granting an exemption in our school, the school must be satisfied that the criteria are met and the process has been followed correctly.

2. Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

2.1 An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances

Exempting a student from the study of Irish will be considered only in those exceptional circumstances set out in section 2.2 of this Circular. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher/s, special education teachers⁵ and the student. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2 below.

2.2 The circumstances in which a student may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish

An exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following circumstances, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4 only:

2.2.1 A student moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish

AND either (a) or (b)

(a) who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment

OR

(b) who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.

2.2.2 A student who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student:

(i) who presents with significant literacy difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and over time. Documentary evidence to this effect, held by the school, should include Student Support Plans detailing:

- regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment
- target-setting
- evidence-informed intervention and review, including test scores (Word Reading, Reading Comprehension, Spelling, other scores of language/literacy) at key points of review

AND

(ii) who, at the time of the application for exemption presents with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.

2.2.3 A student who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the student's participation and engagement in their learning and school life

It is recognised that there is a small cohort of students who have a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to their participation and engagement in their learning and school life. In the case of these students, consideration may need to be given to adjusting the range of learning experiences to ensure that their needs are met and that they may engage purposefully in their learning in school. In very exceptional circumstances, this means that consideration may need to be given to exempting them from the study of Irish.

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student:

(i) who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a very significant and continuing barrier to his/her participation and engagement in his/her learning and school life

AND

(ii) whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs

AND

(iii) whose school has substantial written evidence that these individualised Student Support Plans have been implemented over not less than two school years, and have been monitored and reviewed by the school in collaboration with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student

AND

(iv) who has been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach to language skills development and the communicative approach underpinning the Specification for Junior Cycle Irish (L2) and the Leaving Certificate Syllabuses for Irish.

AND

(v) the principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the student concerned.

2.2.4 A student in a recognised⁷ special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation⁸ and has been deemed eligible⁹ for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school

(i) Where a student is currently enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school or who has previously been enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school and who is transitioning to mainstream provision, that student is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.

OR

(ii) Where a student has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school, an application for an exemption from the study of Irish will be required.

Process for Consideration

The decision to consider an exemption for any student in our school should only be entered in exceptional circumstances and where due consideration has been given to the future implications of the decision.

(a) Steps required for a valid application for an exemption from the study of Irish

1. A parent/guardian on behalf of a student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.

2. The school staff shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student as relevant, upon receipt of the application.

3. At the earliest opportunity a school official should contact the applicant(s) and:

- discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 above) N.B. If a parent/guardian, or the student where he/she is the applicant, does not confirm the sub-paragraph under which the application is based then the application is null and void and no further processing of the application will take place. Only criteria contained in this Circular can be considered as grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish and no other exceptional circumstances can be considered.

- advise the applicant(s) of the steps involved in processing the application.

- inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf an application is made of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.

4. The application should be fully processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.

5. Where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted a signed Certificate of Exemption will be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and a copy will be held by the school in the student's file. The record keeping requirements are outlined further at 2.3(c) below.

6. Where an application is refused, the principal must inform the applicant(s) in writing outlining the reasons for refusal and notifying the applicant(s) that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days of the date of the written decision.
7. In circumstances where an assessment has been carried out with the pupil, and an alternative discrete test as recommended in circular 52/2019 has been conducted, the results of this test will be considered in granting the exemption.
8. Should a further attainment at/below the 10th percentile be attained in Word Reading, Comprehension or Spelling, then an exemption from the study of Irish can be granted.
9. A Certificate of Exemption from the Study of Irish shall be granted by the school Principal. Appendix 3

(b) Considering an application for exemption

In considering an application for exemption from the study of Irish the principal will

1. review the application and any documentation provided by the applicant(s);
2. consult with the student's class teacher/s;
3. consult with the special education teacher and the assigned teacher from the Visiting Teacher Service where relevant;
4. review school documentation for the evidence outlined in subsection 2.2;
5. consult the following as appropriate;
 - *Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* and the supporting documents maintained by the Department on the Government webpage on exemptions from the study of Irish: www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/
 - *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* developed by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), the Inspectorate and Special Education Section, DES (2017):

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/56c43-supporting-pupils-and-students-with-special-educational-needs-guidelines-for-schools/>

- *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support*, NEPS (2007): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/dca316-special-education-needs-a-continuum-of-support/>

- *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools: A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team*, NEPS (2021): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

- Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools: gov.ie - [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)

- *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines*, NCCA (2021): https://ncca.ie/media/5062/updated-guidelines-2021_en.pdf

(c) Recording the decision

The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school in writing to the applicant.

Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued.

i. The Certificate of Exemption will state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the student's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted. A Certificate of Exemption is hyperlinked in the checklists within the Guidelines accompanying this Circular, published by the Department on the government website.

ii. The arrangements for the student's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.

iii. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

iv. The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation and

will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian consent for the retention and use of such records.

v. In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school should update the student's record on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) as soon as possible to include the reason for that exemption.

(a) Steps required for a valid application for an exemption from the study of Irish

1. A parent/guardian on behalf of a student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish.

2. The school staff shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student as relevant, upon receipt of the application.

3. At the earliest opportunity a school official should contact the applicant(s) and:

- discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 above) N.B. If a parent/guardian, or the student where he/she is the applicant, does not confirm the sub-paragraph under which the application is based then the application is null and void and no further processing of the application will take place. Only criteria contained in this Circular can be considered as grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish and no other exceptional circumstances can be considered.

- advise the applicant(s) of the steps involved in processing the application.

- inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf an application is made of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.

4. The application should be fully processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.

5. Where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted a signed Certificate of Exemption will be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and a copy will be held by the school in the student's file. The record keeping requirements are outlined further at 2.3(c) below.

6. Where an application is refused, the principal must inform the applicant(s) in writing outlining the reasons for refusal and notifying the applicant(s) that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days of the date of the written decision.

(b) Considering an application for exemption

In considering an application for exemption from the study of Irish the principal will

1. review the application and any documentation provided by the applicant(s);
2. consult with the student's class teacher/s;
3. consult with the special education teacher and the assigned teacher from the Visiting Teacher Service where relevant;
4. review school documentation for the evidence outlined in subsection 2.2;
5. consult the following as appropriate;
 - *Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* and the supporting documents maintained by the Department on the Government webpage on exemptions from the study of Irish: www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/
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 - *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support*, NEPS (2007): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/dca316-special-education-needs-a-continuum-of-support/>

- *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools: A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team*, NEPS (2021): <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>
- Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools: gov.ie - [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
- *Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines*, NCCA (2021): https://ncca.ie/media/5062/updated-guidelines-2021_en.pdf

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- The Certificate of Exemption will state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the student's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted. A Certificate of Exemption is hyperlinked in the checklists within the Guidelines accompanying this Circular, published by the Department on the government website.
- The arrangements for the student's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.
- The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian consent for the retention and use of such records.
- In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school should update the student's record on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) as soon as possible to include the reason for that exemption.

Exemption from the Study of Modern Languages

Exempting a student from the study of Modern Languages will be considered only in those exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Modern Languages is an important decision that has implications for his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher/s, special education teachers and the student.

The existence of an exemption from the study of Irish does not guarantee an exemption from the study of Modern Languages.

The following are the procedures for an exemption from the study of modern languages:

1. The student/parent raise any concerns about the study of a modern language with the language teacher.
2. The student is given access to a differentiated approach to language learning for an agreed period. Documentary evidence to this effect, must be held by the language teacher
3. Regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment must be carried out and documented.
4. Target-setting must be used to monitor the progress of the student in the modern language.
5. If the student continues to have difficulties despite the differentiated approach, an evidence-informed intervention will be put in place to support the student with their language learning for the course of 8 weeks after which a review will take place.

An application for an exemption will be considered if:

- A. The student continues to present with significant literacy difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language learning and targeted intervention **over time**.

AND

- B. The student must present with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.

The decision to grant an exemption is made by the principal and they communicate the decision to student/parent, teacher and SEN Coordinator.