



S13/21

State Examinations Commission

Leaving Certificate Oral Language Examinations 2021

Guidance to School Management

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to school management and teachers for the planning, organising, carrying out and recording of the 2021 Leaving Certificate oral interviews. In addition to this school guidance document, there are language-specific sets of instructions for the teachers who will carry out the interviews, which will issue separately.

The procedures to be followed include those detailed in the body of this Guidance document and in the Appendices. Particular attention is drawn to Appendix 1 - *Technical information in relation to the recording of the interviews*.

The documentation and materials referred to in this document, to facilitate the conduct of the 2021 orals, will issue to schools in advance of the commencement of the oral interview window on 26 March.

1. Introduction

On 17 February Government announced that the written Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations will be held in June with related components also proceeding as far as possible subject to public health advice. A corresponding process of grades accredited by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will also be available to students who opt to receive them.

As part of the examination process it has been agreed that the oral examinations in Gaelic and the modern foreign languages will be organised by the schools and will take place between 26 March and 15 April. While in a normal year an external examiner appointed by the SEC both carries out the oral language interviews with the candidates and assesses them, this year these two roles will be separate. The interviewing will be carried out by a teacher appointed by the school and will be audio-recorded. This teacher will not award marks. The recordings will be forwarded to the SEC and then, SEC-appointed examiners will award marks based on these recordings.

Note that in all of the SEC documentation about this process for 2021, the term *interviewer* refers to the person who carries out the interview with the candidate, while the term *examiner* refers to the SEC-appointed external examiner who will later listen to the

recording and award the marks to the candidate. Likewise, to reflect the fact that the interviewer is not 'examining' the candidate, the activity that is being carried out in the school is referred to in the documentation as an *oral language interview* or *interview*, rather than an examination, a term that will refer to the process as a whole.

The interviews will be conducted outside of tuition time and subject to public health advice. The following are the subjects with oral components for examination: Gaeilge, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Japanese. The oral examinations for Leaving Certificate Applied (Year 1 and Year 2) languages will be carried out under similar arrangements in May.

All those involved in the process are expected to carry out the work with professionalism and integrity.

2. Roles and responsibilities of school personnel

Role of the School Principal

While some of the actions mentioned in this section will be carried out by other school personnel, the school principal retains oversight of and overall responsibility for ensuring that they are all carried out in accordance with this guidance document and the *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers*.

This will ensure that each candidate is given the opportunity to demonstrate the relevant oral proficiency skills in a manner that allows an SEC examiner to credit those skills on the basis of the evidence in the recording. If, for example, the interviewer does not give enough time to the interview or omits to cover certain areas of questioning that are required to be covered, then the SEC examiner who subsequently listens to the recording will not be able to compensate for this or give the candidate credit for any aspect of proficiency that they were not given the opportunity to demonstrate. Such a candidate might then receive a lower mark than they would have if the interview had been carried out in full accordance with the guidance. Schools must make every effort to ensure that the interviews are carried out properly in the first place.

Likewise, it is the school's responsibility to ensure the adequacy of the quality of the audio-recordings, the appropriate saving of the recordings in the correct format, the creation of back-ups, the checking of recordings as described in **Appendix 1 (Technical information in relation to the recording of the interviews)** and submission of the recordings to the SEC. The SEC examiner will award marks on the sole basis of the level of oral proficiency demonstrated by the candidate clearly and audibly on the recording. The SEC will not be in a position to provide an oral component mark to any candidate where a recording has not been submitted, or has inadequate clarity, or where it has become corrupted and the school has not retained a usable back-up. Note that, in 2021, there is no need for schools to complete an Order of Merit form (ML10 / BT10) for the oral examinations.

School principals will be required to sign off on all of the above. (See Appendix 2)

Data Privacy and GDPR

The conduct of the interviews, the management of the recordings and any work associated with this process must be conducted in full adherence with all requirements associated with the school's Acceptable Usage Policy, data protection protocols and GDPR. Other than the recordings themselves and the associated documentation, neither the interviewers nor anyone else involved should gather, store, or distribute any information on candidates or their performance. All involved must take every precaution to ensure that no unauthorised person gains access to the interview recordings.

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, there are restrictions on rights of access to examination scripts (including audio recordings) in advance of the issue date of the examination results and/or the appeal results date. If a school receives a data access request from a candidate for their oral recording before the issue of results they can respond to this effect.

Following the issue of the results (or the appeal results if a candidate appeals), candidates will be able to make a Subject Access Request to the SEC for a copy of the recording of their oral interview. If they make such a request, they will be provided with their own voice on the recording. They will not be provided with the Interviewer's voice and will not be provided with the questions they were asked in the test. Unlike the candidate's answers, the questions are not their personal data and the questions asked in oral interviews are not published. In light of the complexity of the task, the timeline for arranging these edited recordings can be protracted.

Appointment of teachers to conduct the oral language interviews

The oral language interviews should be undertaken in school by a teacher of the school wherever possible. There is also flexibility to source a teacher locally, should the need arise. Every effort should be made to source a teacher in the school or locally to conduct the interviews.

The person engaged by the school, to carry out the interview should be a currently or formerly registered teacher. It is not essential that the registration be for teaching the particular language concerned, provided that the school management is satisfied that the person has sufficient proficiency in the relevant language to carry out the interviews properly. No interviewer should carry out an interview with a close relative.

In the case of Russian, Japanese and Italian, which are frequently studied independently by candidates, and for which there may therefore be no teacher in the school, then even after exploring all potential avenues to identify an interviewer to conduct the oral interviews, a school may not have been successful. In such cases, Post Primary Language Ireland (PPLI)¹

¹ Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) is a DoE funded project of the Curriculum and Assessment policy unit in the Department of Education. It is a dedicated unit providing expertise and support for foreign languages

may be able to provide assistance to schools in relation to the identification of teachers or tutors of these subjects (Russian, Japanese and Italian) to carry out the oral interviews. In some cases, students may already be engaged in the study of languages with teachers and tutors provided by the PPLI. Schools should contact the PPLI directly at info@ppli.ie by 12 noon on Tuesday 23 March to discuss the assistance that may be available.

Garda Vetting

In cases where an individual engaged to conduct the oral interviews is not Garda vetted the school should make contact with the vetting administrator in the relevant management body (JMB, ACCS or individual ETBs) and a fast-track vetting process will be put in place.

Role of the Examination Aide – logistical support role

The Examination Aide(s) will be the school's appointed person, responsible for:

- assisting, supporting and liaising with the interviewers (the teachers conducting the oral interviews in the school) including the scheduling of the interviews. There should be no more than three interviews scheduled in one hour and no more than two in the first hour of a session, noting that the recording for the first interview in any session must be checked for quality.
- planning, preparing and testing the technology for the delivery of the interviews in accordance with the technical procedures for the recording and managing of the recordings set out in Appendix 1.
- briefing the interviewer in relation to all aspects of these technical procedures
- ensuring the proper conduct of the oral interviews over the course of the schedule
- ensuring that the interviewers and candidates have all of the materials and documentation necessary to carry out the interviews in each subject, including such materials as role-plays, picture sequences, etc.
- where there is more than one interviewer involved for a particular language, arranging the allocation of candidates to interviewers in whatever manner is considered appropriate by school management.

While school management has discretion to appoint more than one person to the Examination Aide role as the schedule is rolled out, the number of people appointed should be kept to a minimum.

The need to make available the necessary equipment, to support and assist the interviewers with making and saving the audio recordings, and the need to collate, check, duplicate and back up the recordings should be borne in mind when selecting the person or people who will act as Examination Aide. (See Appendix 1.)

The school should also arrange to have a list of stand-by Examination Aides for this role, to be called upon in the event that the appointed Examination Aide is unavailable to attend due to illness or for any other reason.

education in Ireland, predominantly at post-primary level. Its focus is on enhancing and broadening the opportunities available to students for learning foreign languages.

Role of the Interviewer (the teacher carrying out the interview)

The interviewer is responsible for

- carrying out the interviews with the candidates in full accordance with all instructions and guidance that are provided
- ensuring that the interview is recorded to an appropriate quality and that the recording is saved with the correct filename
- ensuring that all associated administrative work is completed
- liaising with the Examination Aide and school management as necessary to ensure that any difficulties that arise are dealt with appropriately at school level and reported upon.

It is imperative that the interviewers read their instructions very carefully and subsequently carry out all instructions correctly and diligently. They must be clear about what is required of them, so that appropriate evidence of each candidate's level of achievement is elicited and recorded in accordance with the instructions. This will ensure that all candidates' work can be assessed accurately and fairly. Failure to do this could mean that candidates' work cannot be assessed fairly and in line with the work of other candidates. SEC examiners will only be able to credit candidates for evidence of language proficiency demonstrated by them during the interview, as elicited by the interviewer.

The *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers* is to be treated as confidential and should not be circulated to candidates or to anyone who is not an interviewer or not otherwise involved in making arrangements for the conduct of the interviews.

3. Public Health

The oral language interviews must be arranged having regard to the public health controls required, and it is important that the schools have the following logistical arrangements in place to ensure they adhere to the health and safety guidance when facilitating the face-to-face oral language interviews:

- The interviewer remains in the same room for the duration of the work
- Candidates use their own pens to sign the *Candidate Entry Roll* and the *Interviewer's Sign-off Record*
- No sharing of documents unless they can be sanitized between use – a fresh set for each candidate of the picture sequences, topic cards and role plays (as appropriate) is required, or else, for example, a laminated set should be provided by the school which can be sanitised between candidates
- Adequate space to provide for at least two metres between the candidate and the interviewer (and any other person who may need to be present in the room)
- Attention to hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Perspex screens to be used between the candidate and the interviewer. Note that the wearing of masks is not appropriate for either the interviewer or the candidate, as this would interfere with proper and clear communication and with the creation

of a clear recording that properly shows the candidate's level of communicative proficiency

- Cleaning of all surfaces and the digital recording equipment between interviews
- Rooms to be adequately ventilated, even when taking account of the need to ensure that external noise does not interfere with the interview or its recording
- Desk or table to be clear of any documentation other than that required for the conduct of the interview.

4. Candidates

Identifying which candidates are taking the oral examinations

Following the closure of the Candidate Self Service Portal and the validation of the data, the SEC will provide schools with details of candidates who have indicated that they will be sitting the examinations in subjects with oral components (see p.9). However, the timing of the availability of this data is such that schools should engage with their own students about their intentions in order to plan for the oral interviews.

External candidates

External candidates who have entered to sit an examination in Gaeilge or a modern foreign language will have been in contact with the school in advance of registering as an external candidate and obtained the permission of the principal to nominate that school as their school for the purposes of the oral language examinations. The SEC will notify these candidates that if they wish to proceed with taking their oral examinations, they should make contact with the school they have nominated to confirm that they will require an oral interview in the subject(s) for which they are entered. The list of candidates provided by the SEC will include both school-based and external candidates.

The Examination Aide should notify the relevant interviewer of any external candidates on their list of candidates, and in consultation with the interviewer, arrange a date and time for that candidate's interview to be carried out. The Examination Aide then contacts the external candidate to notify them of the date and time of their interview.

External candidates will be required to comply with the school's COVID-19 visitor policy. The SEC will provide external candidates with a COVID-19 declaration form which these candidates will complete, and present when attending for interview.

External candidates will be required to present proof of identity to school management on their arrival at the school and again to the Interviewer before the interview begins. Any one of the following forms of identification is acceptable:

- Driving Licence
- Passport
- Garda I.D. (for over 18s)
- USIT Student Identity Card
- Public Service Card.

Candidates with Adapted Education Provision

Alternative arrangements can be made for a candidate who has been unable to attend the school physically and is following a remote programme of Adapted Education Provision authorised by the school in accordance with the guidelines *Continuity of Schooling: Supporting post-primary students who are at very high risk to COVID-19*, (Department of Education and Skills, September 2020). This document is available here: <https://assets.gov.ie/86732/17f3cc49-72ad-4986-98fc-51037d93369e.pdf>.

In these cases, arrangements can be made for the interview to be carried out remotely. While the interview should be carried out over a suitable video-conferencing platform, (*Teams, Zoom, etc.*), the school will need to ensure that an appropriate procedure is in place to make an **audio-only** recording of it in one of the approved audio file formats (see Appendix 1). Schools must **not** submit video recordings. The school and the interviewer will also need to make suitable arrangements to check that the candidate does not have access during the interview to materials other than those required for the interview, or access to any other person who might prompt or assist them. This can be achieved by arranging for the candidate to show the interviewer the full surroundings of the room and the desk or table they are at, following which the camera should be arranged in such a way that the door of the room is visible, and the candidate remains within shot. If the presence of another person in the room during the interview is necessary for medical or other support reasons, then they should remain behind the candidate and visible.

The school can make similar remote interview arrangements for other candidates who are unable to attend for interview on the school premises for COVID-19-related or otherwise medically certified reasons, although every effort should be made to arrange the interview on site. In particular, a remote interview should not be made available to a candidate simply as a matter of preference. The school must be satisfied that there is no safe and feasible way to carry out an on-site interview.

Candidates with approved Reasonable Accommodations (RACE Scheme)

Schools will be aware that the reasonable accommodations made for candidates at the state examinations should be reflective of each student's normal way of working in class.

When preparing to conduct the oral language interviews, schools must ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place for candidates with additional needs in the context of the interviews. For example, students who are anxious, or have a speech difficulty, must be given every opportunity to nevertheless demonstrate their oral language proficiency as effectively as possible in the interview.

In the case of students with identified additional needs, schools will have received notification from the Reasonable Accommodations Section in the SEC with regard to the accommodations being put in place for the examinations, including the oral components.

Since these accommodations should reflect the candidate's normal way of working, the candidate's teacher will already be aware of what is involved. If this is not the person carrying out the interview, the interviewer should be briefed by the candidate's teacher in advance.

Absence of a candidate through illness

If a candidate is unable to attend for interview on the appointed day, every effort should be made to facilitate this candidate during the period 26 March to 15 April. If physical attendance is not possible during this period, the possibility of mirroring the above arrangement for students on adapted education provision should also be explored. If, however, it is not possible to arrange an interview of either kind during this period, then the candidate must make an application for a late oral interview to school management by **15 April** and this must be supported by relevant medical documentation. The application form requesting a late oral interview is attached at Appendix 3.

No late applications should be accepted after 15 April. The completed form and supporting relevant medical documentation must be held in the school and may be requested by the SEC for verification purposes. The interviews for any such candidates should be arranged by the school between 19 April and 30 April. Note that the return of the main batch of interview recordings should **not** be delayed because of any such late cases. The recordings from any late interviews should be returned as a separate batch as soon as all of them are completed.

Given the revised arrangements for the oral language examinations for 2021, marking of these tests will start in May. For this reason, in the interest of equity and fairness to all candidates, the rescheduled oral interview will have to take place on or before 30 April. In the event that the candidate is unable to present for interview before then, a later arrangement will not be possible. However, it should be noted that they will nonetheless have the opportunity to sit the written examination (forfeiting the mark for the oral component) and will also have the opportunity to receive an Accredited Grade in this subject.

The Candidate Entry Roll and Interviewer's Sign-off Record

The SEC will be issuing the following to schools in advance of the start of the oral interview window on 26 March:

1. A pre-printed, *Candidate Entry Roll* for each language subject for which there are entries in your school for the oral examinations, with the candidate's examination number, name and date of birth.

This roll for each subject must be checked by the Examination Aide to confirm that all the candidates listed are taking the oral examination. If a candidate is presenting for interview they must sign this roll opposite their pre-printed name, in the presence of the Examination Aide, before going to the interview room. If a candidate withdraws, this needs to be written in beside the candidate's name to say they have 'withdrawn'. In all such cases the school must have received and retain written confirmation from the candidate of their withdrawal.

If a candidate has not withdrawn, but fails to turn up for interview, they should be recorded as 'did not attend' on the roll. If there are candidates who want to present for interview and who are not listed on the roll, the Examination Aide must write in their name, examination number and date of birth on the blank page of the roll.

The *Candidate Entry Roll* must be cross-checked against the *Interviewers Sign-off Record* returned by the interviewers (Appendix 4). This check is necessary to confirm that there is an exact match between the information on the roll and the candidates who have attended for interview and had their interviews recorded. This roll must also be signed by the principal and the Examination Aide(s) and the *Principal sign-off* form must be attached to this roll before it is returned to the SEC.

2. An *Interviewer's Sign-off Record* (not pre-printed with candidate names, Appendix 4) for the interviewer to complete and the candidates to sign at the start of each interview where the following information is to be recorded:

- School Name
- School Roll Number
- Subject (language)
- For each candidate:
 - Candidate's Examination Number
 - Candidate's Name
 - Date of the oral interview recording
 - Start and end time of recording
 - Signature of candidate attending the oral interview

The interviewer must complete the details for each candidate as they present for the oral interview, and the candidate must sign it. It will be necessary to print multiple copies of this sheet.

When the interviews have been completed, the details of the candidates must be verified against the Examination Aide's overall entries roll, and this *Interviewer's Sign-off Record* must be signed by the interviewer and the Examination Aide or principal to confirm that the interviews and recordings have been completed for all of the candidates listed on the roll, and in accordance with this guidance document and the *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers*.

5. Conducting the Interviews

There is a separate set of *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers* that describes how the interviews are to be conducted in each language. These instructions have a section common to all languages, followed by a section specific to the language in question. The interviews are to be carried out in accordance with those instructions.

6. If something goes wrong

It would be unreasonable to expect all interviews to transact perfectly every time. Minor issues or interruptions should be dealt with by the interviewer at the time they arise in a manner that the interviewer considers fair to the candidate. However, despite all best efforts, some major problem might conceivably arise, such as that a recording fails to get made at all, or is subsequently deleted or corrupted. In the case of such a major difficulty, the school should arrange for the interview to be conducted again. Such occurrences should be rare. In all such cases, only **one** recording should be submitted for each candidate in a given subject. If the initial interview or its recording has gone wrong to the extent that justifies the interview being carried out again, then the second one is the truer reflection of the candidate's level of oral proficiency and is the only one that should be submitted.

Examples of such exceptional circumstances are:

- (i) The interviewer fails to make a recording of a candidate's interview
- (ii) The recording is deleted or becomes corrupted
- (iii) The recording is inaudible
- (iv) The interviewer has omitted an entire section of the interview.

In such exceptional circumstances, following consultation between the interviewer and school management, the interviewer arranges to re-interview the candidate as soon as possible. This interview must be recorded and submitted to the SEC with all other recordings. Only this second recording should be submitted. Thus, for example, the first recording or any partially recovered data from it should **not** be submitted. Since only one recording is being submitted, the filename of the recording should be the same as it would have been for the original interview (see Appendix 1).

In the case where an access arrangement was not provided to a candidate who was approved for such an arrangement under the RACE scheme, every reasonable attempt should be made to offer the candidate the opportunity for the interview to be carried out again with the access arrangement in place. Just as for the other exceptional circumstances above, only one recording is to be submitted.

In all of the above cases, the interviewer must provide a full report. The report should include a full description of the incident and the action taken. It should be signed by both the interviewer and either the Examination Aide or the school principal and should be submitted to the SEC with the recordings.

The school principal will be expected to confirm, that the interviews and recordings were carried out in accordance with this guidance document and the *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers*, and that all procedural and other checks have been carried out, and that all problems that arose were dealt with adequately and appropriately by the school (Appendix 3).

7. Returning the recordings and documentation to the SEC

Schools will be asked to arrange for the return of the material for each language to the SEC by registered post, following the specific directions of the SEC, as soon as the oral language interviews for that language have been completed in the school. This may be on 15 April, or earlier if completed before that date. If different languages finish on different dates, do not delay the return of one in order to await another. The language recordings should be returned by subject as soon as each subject is completed. It is essential that all recordings are backed up in advance of the recordings being submitted to the SEC (Appendix 1).

Directions for the return arrangements through An Post's registered post system will be provided with the posting and packaging materials which the SEC will issue. These material will include:

- special white padded envelopes for the USB Flash Drives that the recordings are to be returned on
- an orange and white plastic outer envelope
- prepaid registered barcode labels for each language
- a record of posting form for confirming the return of the recordings and the associated documentation

The USB Flash Drives and the *Interviewer's Sign-off Record(s)* should be placed into the white padded envelope. The subject and school roll number must be recorded on the front of this envelope. The white padded envelope should then be placed into the pre-addressed orange and white plastic envelope and the prepaid registered label attached. The *Candidate Entry Roll* with the *Principal's Sign off* form attached securely should also be placed into this outer envelope. The process will also require schools to obtain a record of posting at the post office when the material is being returned to the SEC. The proof of posting must be retained in the school in the event that the SEC require confirmation of the return of the oral recordings.

Schools will receive the posting and packaging materials and associated documentation in the week beginning 22 March.

8. Appeals

Candidates will have the opportunity to appeal after receiving their provisional results from the examinations and the Accredited Grades processes. As part of the appeal process in the case of Gaeilge and the modern foreign languages, the oral recording will be marked again. The scope of the appeal will not extend beyond the marking by the original SEC examiner of the oral proficiency demonstrated by the candidate on the recording. The appeal process will not encompass any aspects of the delivery and conduct of the oral interview or its recording in the school. For this reason, as outlined previously, it is essential that school management ensure that the oral interviews are conducted in line with the guidance provided by the SEC and any issues with the transaction of the tests are dealt with in the school in advance of the submission of the material to the SEC for marking. The SEC will only be in a position to mark the material as submitted by the school to the SEC.

9. Payment of school-appointed personnel

The SEC funds the appointment of school appointed personnel involved in the delivery of the examinations through a funding model. This includes locally appointed superintendents, special centre superintendents and Examination Aides. A separate SEC Finance Circular on Locally Appointed Personnel will issue in due course. Schools should retain records of those appointed to these roles and of the work completed to facilitate the completion of the claim form which will be provided.

Reasonable additional costs specifically incurred in relation to light, heat, cleaning, caretaking and PPE, within schools, associated with the oral interviews taking place in the evenings, weekends and Easter holidays will be reimbursed by SEC.

Oral Interviewers

For 2021, Oral Interviewers will be added to the approved list of school appointed personnel whose costs of employment (including employer's PRSI at the appropriate rate related to the role) will be refunded by the SEC. Schools should note the following rates for the oral interviews:

Leaving Certificate Irish Foundation Level	€14.60 per candidate
All other interviews	€19.56 per candidate

These rates reflect the timing of the interviews which are taking place when formal examination activities are not normally arranged.

The payment for the SEC oral examiners will be based on the above amounts and will also reflect the additional duties that examiners carry out during the marking.

Travel and Subsistence is not payable to oral interviewers. If school selects a teacher from outside the school, any travel and related expenses must be borne by the school.

Leaving Certificate Aides

The full range of Leaving Certificate Aide supports (including Examinations and Accredited Grades) for the delivery of the 2021 Leaving Certificate will be advised to schools in the SEC Finance circular referred to above. Schools should note the following in relation to the Oral Interviews.

Schools have discretion to appoint an Examination Aide for the Orals as follows;

Schools with up to 120 Leaving Certificate Candidates	8 Days
Schools with 120 or more Leaving Certificate Candidates	10 Days

The Leaving Certificate Aide rate (which takes account of recent public sector pay increases) is €146.19 per day.

10. Contact Details

Queries related to this guidance document should be directed by email to orals@examinations.ie or by phone to 090 644 2741/ 2745.

Appendix 1 Technical information in relation to the recording of the interviews

Schools will need to prepare in advance of conducting the interviews. This will involve:

- deciding on appropriate equipment and software for recording the interviews
- saving recordings in the appropriate manner and
- testing the procedures in advance of the interviews.

Equipment for recording

Devices

Schools may use any suitable equipment for recording provided that the quality of the recording is such that it can be heard clearly by an examiner and that the files are saved as the appropriate file types described below. The following is a list of some examples of the equipment that could be used to record the interviews:

- A laptop or desktop computer with an in-built microphone
- A laptop or desktop computer with an external USB microphone attached
- A tablet

It should be noted that it can be difficult to copy files from a tablet, unless the school has experience of doing so.

Mobile phones should not be used as recording devices.

USB Flash drives

The recordings will need to be saved onto USB Flash Drives, (**Figure 1**), provided by the school. This will generally be done by saving in the first instance to the hard drive of the laptop or PC and then copying the files to the USB Flash Drive. It is essential that the saved files can be moved onto USB Flash Drives, regardless of the method that was used to record them. Schools will need to have **three** USB Flash Drives for each language, in addition to the back-up arrangements noted below. The complete set of recordings for each language should be replicated on each of these three drives. Each Flash Drive should be labelled with the school roll number and the language.



Figure 1

Before acquiring the USB Flash Drives, you will need to check what capacity is needed to ensure that each can readily store **all** of the recordings for the language concerned. The size of each recording will depend on the equipment and software you use and on which of the permitted audio file formats you choose. After making a test recording of the required duration and checking its file size, it will then be possible to determine the required capacity of the USB Flash Drives. You should make allowance for the possibility that the actual recordings may turn out to be somewhat larger than anticipated on the basis of the sample recording. It is recommended that you use new drives that have not previously been used for any other purpose, but in any event you must ensure that no material other than the recordings is present on the drives when they are submitted.

Software

Any software can be used to record the interviews provided that it can save the recordings with any one of the following file type extensions:

- **mp3**
- **wav**
- **aiff**
- **m4a**

Most voice recording applications on Windows or MacOS will have the capability to record in at least one of the formats listed above. If the recording is in a different format, which may happen if less common devices are used, then the files **must** be converted to one of the file types listed above. This may require specialised software and is only recommended if a school has experience of doing so previously.

Some options for recording the interviews using a Windows or MacOS device are listed below:

Windows

- Voice Recorder application – available on all Windows 10 devices
- Sound Recorder application – available on all Windows 8 devices
- A free third-party application such as Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org/download/>)

MacOS

- Voice Memos application
- QuickTime Player application
- A free third-party application such as Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org/download/>)

Tablet device

- In-built apps for recording voice – Voice Memos (IOS), Voice Recorder (Android)
- Third-party apps

File naming convention

Each interview should be saved using a separate file. Recordings must be stopped and saved rather than being paused between each candidate, as pausing would result in all interviews being recorded in a single file. This individual candidate file should be saved using the appropriate naming convention as described below after each interview and before starting the interview with the next candidate.

Note: The first recording of each session should be tested for quality to ensure that the candidate can be heard.

The recording should be saved in the format **ExaminationNumber + LanguageCode**. In other words, a candidate with the Examination Number 123456, taking a French oral interview, would have their interview saved with the file name: **123456FRE**. This file should have any

one of the file extensions listed above (corresponding to the format in which it has been saved). In this example, only the following file names would be acceptable:

- **123456FRE.mp3**
- **123456FRE.wav**
- **123456FRE.aiff**
- **123456FRE.m4a**

Please note that, if the file has not been saved in one of these formats, specialised software will be needed to convert it. You cannot change the file format by just changing the filename extension. If your recordings are not automatically being made in one of the required formats, you will need to ensure that the Examination Aide has made appropriate arrangements for file format conversion.

Note: it is critical that each filename be carefully checked to ensure that the candidate number is correct, as this is the unique identifier that links each recording to the correct candidate.

The table below can be used to determine the correct language code to be used. Further information on the LCA orals will issue later.

Language	Code
Gaeilge	GAE
French	FRE
German	GER
Spanish	SPN
Italian	ITA
Japanese	JPN
Russian	RUS

Testing the procedures in advance

A full test of the procedures and the equipment should be carried out in advance of conducting the interviews. This should include conducting a recording in the room(s) in which the interviews are to take place, with the people and equipment in the positions they will be in, and saving the file using the proper naming convention and using the appropriate file type extension. This recording should then be listened to for quality purposes.

Collating the interviews

When the interviews for each language are complete, **all** of the recordings must be collated into a single folder. There may have been different interviewers and different devices used to record the interviews, but at the end of the process all of the interviews for a specific language must be saved into one folder by the Examination Aide.

Testing the recordings before submission

The school is responsible for ensuring the quality of recordings for examination purposes. A minimum of **three** interviews should be selected at random from the folder and listened to

in order to quality assure the files. If the sound quality is not satisfactory, then the quality of all remaining recordings must be checked. In the case of any recordings for which the quality is inadequate, the school will need to arrange for the interviews to be carried out again. The sign-off on the entire process by the school principal incorporates a declaration that these checks have been carried out and that the recordings are of sufficient sound quality.

Organising the recordings for return to the SEC

The following instructions must be followed.

1. The full set of recordings for a specific language must be copied and the full set placed onto each of three USB Flash Drives, so that each drive has a complete set.
2. The three USB Flash Drives for that language should each be labelled with a sticker showing the school roll number and the language and be put inside the white padded envelope provided to you by the SEC for this purpose. The school roll number and the subject should be written into the spaces provided on the envelope.
3. The *Interviewer's Sign-Off Record(s)* for the subject should also be placed inside this envelope. This envelope along with the candidate entry roll should then be placed into the pre-addressed orange and white plastic envelope which has a prepaid registered barcode.
4. The recordings for each subject should be kept in separate envelopes, as they will be returned separately.

By way of example, a school that has candidates in Irish, French and Spanish will need to have **nine** USB Flash Drives. An exact copy of all Irish interviews undertaken in the school will be placed onto **three** different USB Flash Drives, labelled with a sticker showing the school roll number and the language, and all three of these will be placed inside the Irish envelope. The same will be done for French and Spanish. There will be three envelopes, one for each language.

Retaining a backup

The school must retain a copy of all recordings until such a point that the 2021 appeals process has been completed or until instructed otherwise by the SEC. The files should be stored either on a password-protected USB Flash Drive, kept in a physically secure location, or hard drive in a secure location or on a secure, password-protected location on the school's network. Any additional measures required by the school's own data security policy should be implemented.

Once all three sets have been placed on the USB Flash Drives and the backup set has been created, all files should be fully deleted from the devices on which they were originally recorded.

Appendix 2

Leaving Certificate Oral Language Examinations 2021

Principal's Sign-Off

School Name: _____

School Roll Number: _____

Subject: _____

1. The number of recordings being submitted has been reconciled against the number of candidates confirmed on the candidate entry roll to have undertaken an oral language interview in this subject as follows:

Number of recordings on each USB Flash Drive:

Number of candidates confirmed on entry roll:

Note: these two numbers should be equal.

2. I confirm that:
 - suitable personnel were appointed as the interviewer(s)
 - all relevant documentation and materials were supplied to them
 - the interviews were carried out, and the recordings made, in accordance with the *Instructions for Oral language Interviewers* for this subject
 - all required checks and administrative tasks as described in the *Guidance to School Management* were carried out
 - all approved and relevant reasonable accommodations were put in place
 - any and all difficulties that arose were dealt with appropriately and adequately by the school as described in the *Guidance to School Management*
 - the oral language interview process has been carried out fairly and with integrity.
3. I understand that the SEC-appointed examiners will mark the candidates solely on the basis of the evidence of oral language proficiency demonstrated by them clearly and audibly on the recordings submitted.

Signature of Principal: _____ Date: _____

This form should be securely attached to the *Candidate Entry Roll* for submitting to the SEC

APPENDIX 4**Leaving Certificate Oral Language Examinations 2021
Interviewer's Sign-Off Record**

School Name: _____

School Roll Number: _____

Subject _____

Please record the following information for each of the candidates presenting for the oral language interview.

	<i>Examination Number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of recording</i>	<i>Start time of recording</i>	<i>End time of recording</i>	<i>Signature of Candidate</i>
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						
13.						
14.						
15.						
16.						

I confirm that I have conducted the interviews in accordance with the *Instructions for Oral Language Interviewers* for this subject and recorded them as detailed above, and that I have carried out all required checks and administrative tasks in cooperation with the Examination Aide/Principal.

Signature of Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Examination Aide/Principal: _____ Date: _____