



## Circular M02/95

### To the Authorities of Post-Primary schools

### Repeat of a year of Post-Primary Level

#### 1. Repeat Years - General Position

- 1.1 The circumstances in which an individual pupil may repeat a year at post-primary level, and the detailed arrangements for assessing, deciding, recording and reporting individual cases, have been set out in a number of Circulars — M57/87, M33/89 and M47/93.

In certain instances, delegated authority within defined limits has been given to schools to permit students to repeat a year. In other instances, individual applications have to be referred to the Department for decision.

Pupils permitted to repeat a year in accordance with the terms of these circulars are reckoned for the purposes of staffing and grant allocations.

The purpose of this circular is to clarify and consolidate these arrangements in the light of the extension and restructuring of the Senior Cycle. The arrangements set out in this Circular will apply for the 1995/96 and subsequent school years.

As indicated in paragraph 5 of Circular Letter M47/93, schools will require specific Departmental approval to provide a repeat Leaving Certificate Year 2 class in the 1996/97 and subsequent school years. Approval will be given only where there are compelling educational reasons for so doing, account being taken of the availability of this option in neighbouring post-primary schools. A separate Circular on this matter will issue shortly.

- 1.2 The following are the grounds on which consideration of requests or proposals for individual pupils repeating a year at post-primary level will be based:

- (i) **Prolonged absence** from school for a valid reason such as ill-health. Prolonged absence may be taken as either

(a) a continuous absence for at least eight weeks in the preceding school-year, or

(b) intermittent absences over a period of at least 16 weeks, and for an average of 2½ days per week during that period, in the preceding school-year.

The absence and the reason for it must be certified by the school authority. If the reason is related to health, that reason must also be certified by a doctor.

- (ii) **Serious illness** which does not necessitate prolonged absence from school but which has a seriously damaging effect on the pupil's academic performance at school. The illness and its effect must be certified by a doctor and by the school authorities.

- (iii) **Serious family trauma** (e.g. death of a parent, separation of the parents, violence in the home etc.) which the school authorities can show has had a seriously damaging effect on the pupil's academic performance.

- (iv) **Very poor academic record** which requires regular remedial treatment where there is sufficient evidence to establish that (a) the pupil's academic record is very poor (b) that the pupil is in real need of regular remedial treatment and (c) **that the pupil can benefit from the extra year.**
  - (v) **Change of school** in the following circumstances:-
    - (a) when necessitated by change of residence, provided that it is established that the pupil could not reasonably be expected to follow the curriculum in the new school without repeating a year of the post-primary course there;
    - (b) for the purpose of taking up a revised course of study, provided that (i) the course in question is not available in the pupil's former school, (ii) the pupil has a valid reason for taking up the revised course at this stage, (iii) the pupil has a reasonable prospect of completing the revised course of study satisfactorily, (iv) fulfilment of these conditions is certified by the school authority in the pupil's new school;
    - (c) for reasons other than (a) and (b) above, provided that there are valid reasons why the pupil might have been permitted to repeat the year in his/her former school. Details should be entered in the pupil's record.
- 1.3 For pupils entering post-primary cycle in or after September 1991, the standard maximum period of second-level education is six years. Except in very exceptional circumstances, a pupil will not be permitted to repeat more than one year of the post-primary cycle prior to first sitting the Leaving Certificate examination.
- 2. Junior Cycle**
- 2.1 Authority will continue to be delegated on the following conditions to school authorities to permit a pupil to repeat a year of the Junior Cycle.
- 2.2 Permission to repeat may be granted only on the grounds set out in paragraph 1.2 above.
- 2.3 Documentary evidence bearing on the consideration of all requests or proposals for the repeat of a year of the Junior Cycle Programme must be retained in the school records and made available for examination by officers of the Department if required.
- 2.4 Such documentation would include:-
- (i) medical or other certification, as appropriate;
  - (ii) school attendance records for the year prior to the proposed repeat year;
  - (iii) all school examination results, results of psychological tests (if any) and public examination results (if any), which are relevant to the case in question;
  - (iv) the school authority's own evaluation of the case.
- 2.5 Medical certificates should clearly state:-
- (a) the nature of the pupil's illness;
  - (b) the length of time which the pupil must be absent from school as a result of the illness;
  - (c) the presumed effects of the illness upon the pupil's capacity for study;
  - (d) the likelihood of future absences from school as a result of the illness.
- 2.6 Requests or proposals for repeating a year should normally be made and adjudicated on before the end of the previous school year but not, in any event, after the 29th September of the school year in question.
- 2.7 Where it has been decided to permit a student to repeat a year, this fact should be noted on the return for the purposes of the Post-Primary School Database.

- 2.8 In the case of permissions granted, a return certifying the fact of the permissions and the specific grounds on which they were granted must be forwarded to the Department. Form M02/95A is attached for the purpose and must be returned not later than the 29th September of the school year in which the repeats are taking place.

The incidence and circumstances of permissions granted will be monitored by the Department both from the Pupil Database data and from the Forms M02/95A.

- 2.9 The Minister reserves the right:-

- (a) to review any case and to obtain further information or clarification, including the production of documentation when appropriate, on decisions of school authorities;
- (b) to withdraw the delegated authority in the case of any individual school or schools if this is considered warranted;
- (c) to exclude from reckoning as a recognised pupil, for the purposes of staffing and grant allocations, pupils permitted to repeat other than in accordance with the terms of this circular.

### **3. Senior Cycle – General**

- 3.1 All pupils entering Senior Cycle in September 1994 and after may spend up to three years in Senior Cycle in accordance with the structures outlined in Circular M47/93. The time spent in Senior Cycle will normally be comprised of:-

- a two-year Leaving Certificate programme immediately after Junior Certificate or
- a Transition Year Programme followed by a two-year Leaving Certificate course.

- 3.2 From September 1995, the structure of the Leaving Certificate programme will have three main orientations viz.

- the established Leaving Certificate programme,
- the Leaving Certificate Applied,
- the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

**Schools are not permitted to offer a three-year Leaving Certificate programme, i.e. a Leaving Certificate programme extending to three years.**

- 3.3 The standard maximum period at Senior Cycle is three years for all pupils entering Senior Cycle in or after September 1994 and for those pupils who entered Senior Cycle prior to September 1994 in schools which had an approved six-year post-primary cycle of which they availed. For pupils who entered Senior Cycle prior to September 1994 in schools which did not have an approved six-year post-primary cycle, the standard maximum period at Senior Cycle is two years.

### **4. Transition Year Programme**

Authority will continue to be delegated to school authorities to permit a pupil to repeat a Transition Year Programme in accordance with the same criteria, conditions and procedures set out for Junior Cycle pupils (paragraph 2 of this Circular). Details of permissions granted should be returned to the Department on Form M02/95A.

## 5. Leaving Certificate Programme – Year 1 and Year 2

- 5.1 Subject to the terms of paragraph 5.2, authority will continue to be delegated to school authorities to permit a pupil to repeat a year of the Leaving Certificate Programme **(prior to first sitting the Leaving Certificate Examination)** in accordance with the same criteria, conditions and procedures set out for Junior Cycle pupils (paragraph 2 of this Circular). Details of permissions granted should be returned to the Department on Form M02/95A.
- 5.2 Where a school proposes to allow **more than 5% of a Leaving Certificate year-group (Year 1 or Year 2)** to repeat, the prior approval of the Department must be obtained in the case of each individual pupil. In such a situation, permission for a pupil to repeat must be sought by the school on the formal application form attached, Form M02/95B, by the 31st of May preceding the school-year in which it is intended to repeat. The application form will set out particulars of the pupil in question and the circumstances in which the application to repeat is being made and will be accompanied by supporting documentation.

It is intended that decisions on the applications will be conveyed to schools without delay.

## 6. Repeat of Leaving Certificate

- 6.1 Pupils who have sat the Leaving Certificate Examination may be enrolled as recognised pupils to repeat Leaving Certificate Year 2 and the appropriate Leaving Certificate Examination on payment of the appropriate course and examination fees. **The Repeat Course Fee is €126.97 per pupil.** Pupils whose parents or guardians are the **holders of current medical cards will be exempted from the payment** of the course fee on production of the medical card for noting by the school authorities. In addition, only the ordinary examination fee will apply to these pupils. The current Repeat Examination fee is available from the State Examinations Commission on 09064-42700.

In respect of the 1995/96 and subsequent school years, school authorities should inform prospective repeat Leaving Certificate pupils accordingly, and arrange for the collection and transmission (where appropriate) to the Department of the course fee involved. Form M02/95C is attached for this purpose and should be forwarded to the Department not later than the 7th October of the school-year in which the pupils are repeating. (School authorities will be advised of future changes in fee rates).

**Pupils in respect of whom the course fee is due but not received will not be reckoned as recognised pupils for the purposes of staffing and grant allocations.**

Repeat Leaving Certificate course **fees collected from pupils in voluntary Secondary schools and Community and Comprehensive schools must be returned to the Department.** Course fees collected from pupils attending Vocational schools and Community Colleges are retained by the relevant Vocational Education Committee and a corresponding amount is deducted from the Department's grant to that VEC.

Don Thornhill,  
Secretary  
16 May, 1995