

Guide to the Leaving Certificate Exam

From: State Examinations Commission *Advice for Teachers*.

This article provides information on the general examination, the documents-based topic question, and the Research Study Report.

A. Assessment Components:

<i>There will be two assessment components at both Ordinary Level and Higher Level:</i>

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| 1. A report on the research study, with a mark allocation of 20%. |
| 2. A terminal examination, with a mark allocation of 80%. |

B. Terminal Exam Information:

At both Higher Level and Ordinary Level the written examination in June will be of 2½ hours' duration. There is currently no proposal to discontinue the allowance of an additional 20 minutes for exam candidates. In effect students will have 2 hours 50 minutes to complete the exam.

Questions will be offered on each of the twelve topics in the chosen Field of Study: either Early Modern or Later Modern.

As well as answering the compulsory documents-based question on a topic nominated by the State Examinations Commission, candidates should answer on three of the topics in their chosen Field of Study.

The SEC wishes to encourage genuine engagement with history. Essay questions at higher level would be more analytical. Teachers should be aware of the following comment on the higher level general questions, contained in the [Guidelines](#):

"Insofar as is practicable, and in line with the focus on enquiry in the syllabus, the questions will be framed as questions (i.e. the mode of questioning will be interrogative) and the use of instructions such as 'discuss' or 'evaluate' will be avoided." (Guidelines, p61)

The marking scheme would reflect as far as possible the learning outcomes outlined in the syllabus.

C. Documents-Based Topic

(i) The <i>State Examinations Commission</i> has prescribed the following topics for documents-based assessment for the following years:
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2010 - 2011

Early Modern Field of Study:

Early Modern Ireland, Topic 1: Reform and Reformation in Tudor Ireland, 1494 - 1558

OR

Later Modern Field of Study

Later Modern Ireland, Topic 5: Politics and society in Northern Ireland, 1949 - 1993

2012 - 2013

Early modern field of study

Europe and the wider world, Topic 2 – Religion and power: politics in the later 16th century, 1567-1609

OR

Later modern field of study

Europe and the wider world, Topic 5 – European retreat from empire and the aftermath, 1945-1990

(ii) Documents-based Topic, allocation of marks, Ordinary Level:

Comprehension	40
Comparison	20
Criticism	20

Contextualisation	20
(iii) Documents-based Topic, allocation of marks, Higher Level:	
Comprehension	20
Comparison	20
Criticism	20
Contextualisation	40

D. Ordinary Level: Questions Types, Allocation of marks, Timing:

Stimulus	4 or 5 short questions on stimulus:	30 marks	10 mins
Paragraph	elements (may be linked to key personalities or case studies)	30 marks	10 mins
Longer Paragraph	key personalities / case studies:	40 marks	15 mins

E. Recommended time allocation, Higher Level:

Document Based Topic	45 mins
General Questions	35 mins each

F. The Research Study:

The Research Study is an important part of the new syllabus involves the “study of a subject of historical significance” chosen by the student, under the direction of the teacher. The Syllabus states the following:

“The Research Study aims to develop in students a spirit of inquiry about the past and a range of skills that will facilitate the conduct of the inquiry. It allows students to engage in a measure of self-directed learning that is grounded in the procedural values of the historian.” (Syllabus, p8)

(i) Choice of Subject for Research Study:

The SEC recommends that candidates select their Research Study Report within their chosen Field of Study - Early Modern or Later Modern. However, the SEC will also make clear that material outside the Field of Study will be acceptable, once it is of historical significance or relevance. This is mainly so as not to discourage local studies.

Students should not choose topics that are after 1993 for Irish History or 1992 for European History.

(ii) Booklet for the presentation of Research Study Report (RSR):

The Research Study Report will be presented in a pro-forma booklet(click [here](#) to view sample). No additional pages or materials can be appended. The material will be filled in under the general supervision of the class teacher.

Teachers are reminded that each student’s RSR should be unique. Teachers should be familiar with the SEC’s two circulars on the Research Study Report [[S60/05](#) and [S90/06](#)].

(iv) Validation of sources for oral history projects:

A transcript of any *oral history* interview cited in the Research Study Report should be available for authentication. A transcript may be placed on the web site of a school, a library, or any other public repository.

(v) Research Study Report: Mark Allocation, Content and Length

Outline plan	15 marks
Evaluation of sources	25 marks
Extended essay	60 marks

Outline Plan (15 marks)	
1.	Defines and justifies the proposed subject
2.	Identifies the aims
3.	Indicates the intended approach
4.	Cites the sources to be consulted
Evaluation Of Sources (25 marks)	
1.	Indicates the relevance of the sources to the subject
2.	Comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the sources
Extended Essay (60 marks)	
50 marks for Extended Essay	
10 marks for Review of the Research Process	
1.	Clearly presents the main findings and conclusions
2.	Proceeds coherently from introduction to conclusion
3.	Reviews the research process, with reference to the outline plan
Length of Extended Essay in Research Study Report:	
Higher Level, in the range of 1200 to 1500.	
Ordinary Level, in the range of 600 to 800.	

(vi) Date of Submission for Research Study Report:

The RSR stationery booklet will be issued to schools in January of Sixth Year.

The completed RSR booklet will be submitted by the end of April of the examination year (date to be confirmed each year by the [SEC](#)).