



# NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

## Grading in the Leaving Certificate Direction and scenarios

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# The current system


Grade	Grade	Percentage
Higher Level (14)	A1	90 – 100%
	A2	85 – 89%
	B1	80 – 84%
	B2	75 – 79%
B3	Ordinary Level (14)	70 – 74%
C1		65 – 69%
C2		60 – 64%
C3		55 – 59%
D1	D1	50 – 54%
D2	D2	45 – 49%
D3	D3	40 – 44%
E	E	25 – 39%
F	F	10 – 24%
NG	NG	0 – 9%

**28 grade bands**

# Practices in other countries



**Netherlands**  
10 grades  
(N)




**Int Bacc**  
7 grades  
(N)



**UK**  
6 grades  
(L)



**Finland**  
7 grades  
(N)



**Scotland**  
5 grades  
(L)



**New Zealand**  
4 grades  
(Descriptive)

# Teachers' grading practices



B3

73% C  
B  
E A A1

How can you improve this answer?

**How do you mark and grade the work of Leaving Certificate students?**

Here at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, we are interested in hearing about how you mark and grade the work of your Leaving Certificate students in the classroom and in-school tests and in pre-Leaving Certificate examinations, where these are organised. The results of the survey will contribute to ongoing discussions about the impact of the current Leaving Certificate grading system on teaching and learning in senior cycle.

The survey will be available until Friday 18th January. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

**1. Please tick the appropriate box or boxes.**

- I am a subject teacher.
- I mark/assess Junior Certificate examinations for the State Examinations Commission.
- I mark/assess Leaving Certificate examinations for the State Examinations Commission.
- I mark/assess Leaving Certificate Applied examinations for the State Examinations Commission.

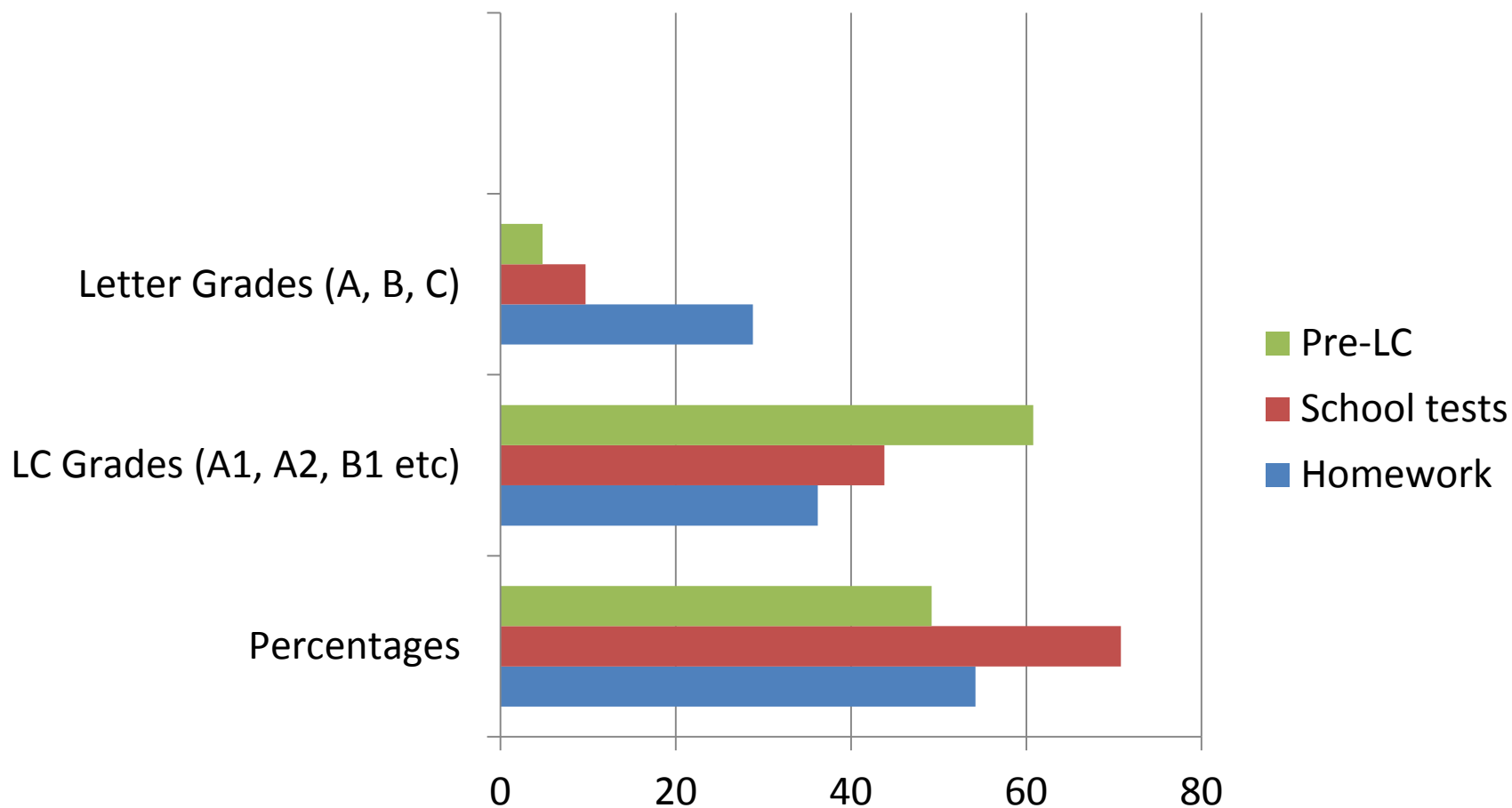
My subjects are

**2. When assessing your Leaving Certificate students' homework do you use**

- Percentage marks?
- Percentage marks and a comment?
- The Leaving Certificate grading system (A1, A2, B1, B2, B3 etc)?
- The Leaving Certificate grading system and a comment?
- Broad letter grades (A, B, C etc)?
- Broad letter grades and a comment?

Is this your preferred approach?

# Teachers' use of grades



# Teachers' perspectives on LC grades

- Generally positive about the informative value of using the LC grades
- Strong rationale for methods of feedback
- They mirror the Leaving Certificate
- External pressures to 'teach to the exams'
  - Students, parents and school management

# Why teachers use the LC grading

*It gives feedback to the student on how the answer would score in the LC examination*

*Trying to get the students to see the value of their answers in terms of what is required for the exam*

*Parents have demanded that this approach to marking be adopted within the school and it was supported by management*

# Perceptions of good teaching

*... good teaching constituted practising exam papers and focusing precisely on the kinds of knowledge and skills needed to do well in the exam. In this context, an emphasis on broader educational development or on life skills was seen as irrelevant. Indeed, some students negatively contrasted teaching at school with the more narrowly focused approach to exam preparation characteristic of private tuition ('grinds') (Smyth, Banks and Calvert, 2011, p225).*



# Modelling of potential new systems

Modelling of potential 'new' grading systems using the results of the 2012 LC cohort on

- 8-point scale
- 11-point scale

ERC and SEC

# Direction for change



Reduce the number of grading bands

# But before making any changes

Any new system must be

- fair to students
- clear
- easily explained and understood
- based on evidence
- combined with changes in HE selection
- motivating for students
- Supportive of teaching and learning

# Exploring some scenarios

- Scenario 1: 8-point scale
- Scenario 2: 11-point scale

Scenario 3: 10% scale (8 points)

Modelling  
exercise by  
ERC

Further work  
needed

# Scenario 1: 8-point scale

'5  
Points-  
scoring'  
bands

% Awarded	8-point scale	Grade boundaries
90 – 100	A1	10
85 – 89	A2	5
70 – 84	B	15
55 – 69	C	15
40 – 54	D	15
25 – 39	E	15
10 – 24	F	15
0 - 9	NG	10

# Scenario 2: an 11 point scale

% Awarded	11-point scale	Grade boundaries
90 – 100	A1	10
85 – 89	A2	5
78 – 84	B1	7
70 -77	B2	8
63 – 69	C1	7
55 – 62	C2	8
48 – 54	D1	7
40 – 47	D2	8
25 – 39	E	15
10 – 24	F	15
0 - 9	NG	10

8  
'Points-  
scoring'  
bands

# Scenario 3: 8-point scale based on 10% bands

% Awarded	8-point scale (10%)	Grade boundaries	Alternative
90 – 100	H1 / O1	10	H7 / O7
80 – 89	H2 / O2	10	H6 / O6
70 -79	H3 / O3	10	H5 / O5
60 – 69	H4 / O4	10	H4 / O4
50 – 59	H5 / O5	10	H3 / O3
40 – 49	H6 / O6	10	H2 / O2
30 -39	H7 / O7	10	H1 / O1
0 - 29	Not achieved	30	Not achieved

6/7  
'Points-scoring' bands

# Relating higher and ordinary levels

Points awarded	Higher (%)	Ordinary (%)	Ord - currently
100	H1 (90 – 100)		
90	H2 (80 – 89)		
80	H3 (70 – 79)		
70	H4 (60 – 69)		
60	H5 (50 – 59)		A1
50	H6 (40 -49)	O1 (90 – 100)	A2
40	H7 ( 30 – 39)	O2 (80 – 89)	
30		O3 (70 – 79)	
20		O4 (60 – 69)	
10		O5 (50 – 59)	D2
0		O6 (40 – 49)	



# To sum up

- Moving away from the 14 point grade scale can help change expectations
- Reduction on number of grades awarded – more students on same CAO points
- Broadening grading must be accompanied to broader entry routes to HE
- Relative weightings of levels and grades merits further discussion
- Broadening the grade bands results in some loss of examination data - may need to consider other data-collection strategies

# Acknowledgements

- State Examinations Commission
- Educational Research Centre
  - Modelling the scenarios
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  - Analysis of the teacher consultation

# Questions

- What effect would a broadening of the grading bands have on learners' experience in senior cycle?
- Which scenario has more potential for change and why?
- Should the lower grades be combined, for example 0-29% = not achieved?