



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Exemptions from the Study of Irish:

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (English-medium)

August 2022

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools on the practices and procedures involved in processing applications for exemption from the study of Irish in post-primary schools. This guidance on exemptions from the study of Irish is provided in the context of a revised Circular which has been introduced by the Department of Education with effect from September 2022. Circular 0055/2022 is a revision of Circular 0053/2019. These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Circular and the [frequently asked questions](#) on exemptions from the study of Irish which are available on the [website](#).

Circular 0055/2022 sets out the exceptional circumstances in which consideration may be given to granting a student an exemption from the study of Irish. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her learning now and into the future. Detailed guidance on processing applications in the case of each of the exceptional circumstances presented in the Circular is provided in these Guidelines. The Guidelines provide schools with a glossary (Appendix 1), [an exemplar to guide consideration of applications based on the grounds outlined in Section 2.2.3 \(Appendix 2\)](#), an application form (Appendix 3) and checklists (Appendix 4) to guide the processing of applications. A Certificate of Exemption (hyperlink within the checklists), recording keeping and reporting details and information about the appeal procedure is also provided.

These Guidelines have been updated as part of the initial review of the implementation of Circular 0053/2019 and reflect good practice in identifying and addressing students' individual literacy and learning needs and the principles of equity and inclusion. The Guidelines are also informed by the principles underpinning the *Primary Language Curriculum* (PLC), the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015), the Syllabuses for Irish in Senior Cycle and the benefits of bilingualism to be accrued by all learners engaging in the study of both Irish and English.

1.1 The principles underpinning the Circular

Irish and English have been fundamental blocks in the curricula in Irish schools since the foundation of the State. This stems from the position of both as official languages as set out in the Constitution and the explicit aim of successive Governments to develop a bilingual society. The inclusion of both languages in national curricula gives language learning and the advantages of bilingualism a particular status in the learning experience of students. Developing lifelong language skills from an early age through engagement with both languages has the potential to prepare children well for learning additional languages as they journey through education and participate in a global society.

Languages are for everyone. The PLC makes language learning accessible to all pupils at primary level and the specification for Junior Cycle Irish builds and deepens students' Irish language skills and competences as they move towards senior cycle. The teaching of Irish and English in our primary schools means that our children become familiar with

bilingualism from an early age.¹ Schools also include new Irish who bring with them their own languages from almost two hundred countries around the world.

The advantages associated with learning two languages simultaneously include improvements in cognitive and linguistic functioning, creativity and problem-solving by enhancing their communicative and thinking skills, as well as their participation in society. The principles of inclusion and differentiation are to the fore in current curricular provision and developments. Learning two languages develops students' linguistic functioning through the development of a deeper understanding of how language works and can be used to communicate. It enhances their ability to analyse how language works, to compare languages, and to reflect on how they learn languages in addition to advantages in other curricular areas.

1.2 Irish language at post-primary

Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools (2004) and the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) set out the list of subjects to be studied by students in junior cycle and in senior cycle. Building on students' language learning experience as provided for in the *Primary Language Curriculum*, the specification for *Junior Cycle Irish (L2)* which is targeted at students in English-medium schools² aims to consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding, values and language skills supporting their personal, cognitive and social development. The learning outcomes presented in the specification apply to all students. Students should be encouraged to study the language and achieve a level of personal proficiency that is appropriate to their individual language learning needs.

As students progress along their language learning journey into senior cycle, they are provided with opportunities to engage further with Irish at a level appropriate to their needs through a variety of programmes offered.

These Guidelines aim to support schools in addressing a wide diversity of needs by providing a differentiated learning experience for students in an inclusive school environment. They guide schools in considering each application for exemption from the study of Irish while recognising and supporting students in maximising their potential for engagement with Irish and English at different rates along their language-learning journey.

The Circular and these Guidelines are also set in the context of the Special Education Teaching Allocation³ model that allows mainstream schools to provide additional teaching support for all students who require such support in their schools based on

¹ Department of Education and Skills (2017) *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*

² An English-medium school is a school where English (L1) is the primary language of instruction, except in the case of Irish. In English-medium schools, Irish is taught as a second language (L2). (*Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011- 2020*, DES (2011))

³ Circular 0014/2017 and Circular 0008/2019 (Special Education Teaching Allocation)

their identified learning needs in school, as opposed to being based primarily upon a diagnosis of a particular disability.

1.3 Why is it considered necessary to allow students in certain circumstances be exempt from the study of Irish?

It is acknowledged that, despite support and access to targeted intervention over time from a school's SET team at primary and/or post-primary level, there may be exceptional circumstances in which a student continues to struggle to make adequate progress in acquiring the language of instruction of the school (English as L1).

Some students will already hold a Certificate of Exemption when transferring to post-primary school. However, there may be other students whose exceptional needs are identified at post-primary level. The process for exempting these students from the study of Irish should be considered in the context of the Department's Continuum of Support framework. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs.

These Guidelines aim to support schools in addressing a wide diversity of students' learning needs by

- providing a differentiated learning experience for students in an inclusive school environment
- guiding schools in considering each application for exemption from the study of Irish, while recognising and supporting students in maximising their potential for engagement with Irish and experiencing the advantages of bilingualism, thus preparing them for learning additional languages as they journey through education and participate in a global society
- recognising the autonomy of mainstream schools to provide additional teaching support for all students who require such support based on their identified learning needs in school, as opposed to being based primarily upon a diagnosis of a particular disability (Special Education Teaching Allocation model)
- recognising that decisions need to be based on students' responses to targeted intervention over time.

1.4 Preserving a student's right to study Irish

An exemption from the study of Irish once granted may be operative throughout the pupil/student's enrolment in primary and post-primary school as set out in Section 5 of the Circulars on Exemptions from the study of Irish (Circulars 0054/2022 and 0055/2022).

In line with Department policy, schools are expected and encouraged to provide all students, to the greatest extent possible and in a meaningful way, with opportunities to participate in Irish language and cultural activities at a level appropriate to their learning needs. Section 2.3 of the Circulars on Exemptions from the Study of Irish further state

that Parents/guardians and students 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.

Therefore, should a particular pupil/student, in consultation with their parents and school management choose to study Irish at primary or post-primary level, subsequent to being granted an exemption, the exemption will not exclude the child from the study of or participating in examinations in Irish.

2. What are the key considerations in applying the terms of the Circular?

This section outlines the elements retained from 2019 Circular and revisions introduced in the 2022 Circular.

2.1 The elements retained from the 2019 Circular

- *Consideration of the language of instruction in the school.*

The Circular and these Guidelines are for implementation in English-medium post-primary schools only.

- *Consideration of the most appropriate stage at which to grant an exemption from the study of Irish*

Reflecting the principles underpinning the *Primary Language Curriculum* and the Continuum of Support, the 2019 Circular set 12 years of age (or up to and including the final year of primary education) as the most appropriate time to consider an application for an exemption from the study of Irish where pupils:

- may have received their primary education outside the state or
 - are re-enrolling following a period abroad.
- *Moving away from diagnosis towards the identification of students' learning needs*

In line with Department policies in the area of special educational needs, the 2019 Circular moved away from a diagnostic categorical model to a needs-based model.

- *Psychological assessments and cognitive ability scores*

Psychological assessments and cognitive ability scores are not necessary to process applications for exemption from the study of Irish.

- *Literacy attainment scores as criteria*

In the case of students with significant literacy difficulties, the criteria for exemption include only one literacy attainment score in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at or below the 10th percentile.

2.2 Key changes in Circular 0055/2022

- The criteria and circumstances of students moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language has been clarified
- There is a new circumstance recognising that some students experience a high level of [multiple and persistent needs](#). The term multiple and persistent needs recognises that students may experience significant difficulties outside of, or in addition to, those related to literacy that impact on their learning and participation at school. Multiple and persistent needs are those that are enduring and severe in nature and that significantly impact on the student's functioning at school on a day to day basis, and are a cause of significant distress to the student in the school environment, despite the implementation of a highly individualised, intensive and evidence-based programme of support, that has been developed, implemented and monitored by the school, in collaboration with the student, parents and other relevant agencies involved in providing support.
- A student who has a recommendation⁴ and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school
- Revisions to the appeals mechanism. The new circulars make provision for a more substantive role for the Irish Exemption Appeals Committee (IEAC).
- There are other changes to clarify provisions including changes of headings.

3. The process of considering an application for exemption from the study of Irish

Exempting a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that should be considered only in the circumstances set out in Circular 0055/2022 as it has implications for a student's future learning. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish also needs to be considered in the context of the school's own policy, if any, on exemption from the study of Irish. Parents or guardians or the student where he/she has reached 18 years may request the exemption from the study of Irish process to be initiated.

Once it is clear that the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student intend(s) to apply for a Certificate of Exemption, the principal should ensure that each step of the process, including all necessary documentation, is clearly explained (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3).

3.1 The grounds for making an application for exemption from the study of Irish

Section 2.2 of Circular 0055/2022 sets out the only circumstances in which consideration may be given to granting a student an exemption from the study of Irish:

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

⁴ The recommendation for the student to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

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 enrolment⁵ 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 test⁶ 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

⁵ For the purposes of this Circular where students enrol in the final 2 months of an academic year, their enrolment/re-enrolment will be considered to take place on the first day of the following academic year.

⁶ See Exemption from the Study of Irish - Guidance on Test Selection <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/38348/8b0a46b54daa4011992192b26edb2749.pdf#page=1>

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 parents/guardians 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 recognised special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation⁷ and has been deemed [eligible](#) 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

⁷ The recommendation for the student to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

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.

3.2 What are the procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish?

In the case of each of the exceptional circumstances set out in Section 2.2 of the Circular, the parent(s)/guardian(s), on behalf of the student, or the student where he/she has reached 18 years, must make a formal written application (Appendix 3) to the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish. In reaching a decision on whether to grant or refuse an exemption, the principal will, as appropriate, consult with the parent(s)/guardian(s), the student on whose behalf the application is being made, or the student where he/she is the applicant, and relevant school personnel to satisfy himself/herself that all key evidence has been accessed.

3.3 Processing an application for exemption from the study of Irish

The school principal, on behalf of the school's board of management, processes applications received by the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish. The formal written application submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student (applicant) must indicate the exceptional circumstance that forms the basis for the application in accordance with sub-paragraphs 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4 of Circular 0055/2022.

In considering the application the principal will:

- Ensure that the date of receipt of the application by the school is recorded on the form.
- Acknowledge receipt of the application for exemption from the study of Irish in writing.
- Discuss the written application with the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 or 2.2.4) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
- Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student of the next steps in processing the application.
- Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.
- Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student that the application will be processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.
- Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student that that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.

- Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student that, where an application is refused, the reason(s) as to why it was refused; and the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.
- Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student, and the student on whose behalf the application has been made, the arrangements for the student's learning in the case of an exemption being granted.
- Use the provided Checklists (Appendix 4) to guide the processing of applications in the case of the relevant sub-paragraph in Section 2.2 of the Circular.
- Convey the outcome of the application in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student.
- Make arrangements for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and the Checklist in accordance with data protection law.
- In the case that an Exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the student's record on the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) should be updated with details of the date and grounds on which it has been granted.

3.4 What are the implications for a student not studying Irish?

Irish language requirements for entry to third level courses/programmes of study are at the discretion of the relevant colleges and universities. These requirements may be subject to change and it is therefore important that students/parents are aware of such requirements. Information on third level entry requirements can be accessed on relevant college/university websites. Typically, at post-primary level, guidance teachers have access to this information.

It is important that parents/guardians and students are made aware that Irish is an entry requirement for access to programmes for initial teacher education (primary) offered in the four state funded higher education institutions.

Information on entry requirements to these primary teacher education courses is available [here](#).

3.5 What is the appeals procedure?

The new Circulars make provision for a more substantive role for the Irish Exemption Appeals Committee (IEAC). The 2019 circulars introduced for the first time a formal appeals mechanism that focused solely on the process engaged in by the school when considering applications for exemption. The new circulars set out that the IEAC will be appointed by the Minister, but will act independently of the Department. The IEAC will comprise of an Inspector, an educational psychologist and a school principal.

The IEAC will make a decision on whether the exemption should be granted or not, inform the school of the decision and require the school to give effect to their decision. The parent(s)/guardian(s) or the student where he/she is the applicant, may appeal the school's decision not to grant an exemption to the IEAC within 30 calendar days from

the date on which the school's decision was notified in writing. The appeal form is available on the Department's [website](#). This written appeal should outline the specific grounds on which the decision is being appealed by the applicant.

A parent/guardian/student who is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal to the IEAC will have recourse to the offices of the Ombudsman for Children if the student on whose behalf the application is made is under 18 years of age, or to the Ombudsman.

4. What are the record keeping requirements?

All documentation concerning the application and processing procedure, including detail of the determination/copy of the Certificate of Exemption, should be maintained in the Student Support File/Exemption File in accordance with the school's data retention policy, and be available for review by authorised Department officials.

5. What are the reporting requirements?

School management will be required to provide statistical information to the Department relating to the number and the grounds on which exemptions were granted under the terms of Circular 0055/2022, on a monthly basis, within the academic year in which they are granted using the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD).

All students who have been granted an exemption from the Study of Irish should be recorded on the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) system including those who have opted not to exercise the exemption granted in a given school year (see section 2.3(c) of Circular 0055/2022).

In the case of students in examination classes who are not exercising the exemption granted and wish to sit the State Examination in Irish, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) should be contacted by email on entries@examinations.ie and advised that a particular candidate has an exemption from the study of Irish that he/she is not exercising but that they wish to sit the State Examination in Irish. The school must also ensure that Irish is added to this candidate's E8 form in advance of the submission deadline required by the SEC.

6. What are the arrangements for students who are exempt from the study of Irish?

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of students who are exempt from the study of Irish, including their English as an Additional Language needs, when deploying available special education teaching resources. Students who are exempt from the study of Irish may also be allowed to substitute another subject, short course or area of learning for Irish.

7. What are the arrangements for students who do not meet the criteria for an exemption from the study of Irish?

Where an application for an exemption is refused, the school should review how a differentiated learning approach can be provided to best assist the student to engage in

their learning to the greatest extent possible and at a level appropriate to their needs. Students with Special Educational needs who do not meet the criteria for an exemption from the study of Irish should be provided with a differentiated approach to language learning and any other supports in accordance with *Guidelines for supporting students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* and with *Special Educational Needs: A continuum of Support*.

If a principal continues to have concerns about the needs of an individual student they may consider prioritising a consultation with a psychologist from the National Educational Psychological Service.

8. How should information about a student's Certificate of Exemption be shared between schools?

Where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted to a student in a mainstream school, a Certificate of Exemption (an accessible hyperlink is contained within the checklists) should be completed and issued to the parent(s)/ guardian(s)/student (applicant).

[In the case of a student transitioning to a mainstream school/class from a special school/class, in order to assist transition, the principal of the special school/ class should provide the student with a Certificate of Exemption to which the student was entitled in accordance with Section 2.2.4\(i\) of the Circular. The student's Student Support File should be up-to-date and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption included.](#)

It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the student (where he/she is the applicant) to ensure that a copy of the student's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.

9. What is meant by a recommendation and eligibility for placement in a recognised special school and/or class?

The recommendation for the student to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the student has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

A parent/guardian/student who has reached 18 years with such a recommendation may apply for an exemption and where it is granted a Certificate of Exemption should issue.

10. What are the recommended assessment tests?

The Department of Education and Skills has published a short note of Guidance on Test Selection on the website. This can be accessed here:

www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/. Guidance for assessment and intervention can also be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>. Advice on the appropriate tests to use for a particular purpose and details regarding their administration is also available from National Educational Psychological Service

(NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the test publishers themselves.

11. Enquiries on the Irish Exemption Circulars

E-mail: CAP_Helpdesk@education.gov.ie
Address: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit
Department of Education
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1.
D01 RC96
Phone: 01-889 2257 / 2384

12. Enquiries on the Irish Exemption Appeals Process

E-mail: irishexemptionappeal@education.gov.ie
Address: Schools Financial and Database Section
Department of Education
Cornamaddy
Athlone
Co. Westmeath.
N37 X659
Phone: (090) 648 3896 / 4269 /

Appendix 1: Glossary

Differentiated Learning Experience

Differentiation is a framework for effective teaching that involves providing different students with different avenues to learning. It is a process within which differences between learners are accommodated, so that all students or pupils in a group have meaningful access to the curriculum and can participate in their learning. It ensures that what a student learns, how he/she learns and how that learning is demonstrated is a match for the readiness level, interest and preferred mode of learning for each individual. Differentiation is a proactive way of adjusting teaching and learning methods that involves planning at an individual teacher and whole-school level.

English-medium school

An English-medium school is a school where English (L1) is the primary language of instruction, except in the case of Irish.

Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools

These guidelines support schools in the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching resources. Effective provision for students with special educational needs is situated within an inclusive whole-school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all and good collaboration and engagement between schools, parents/guardians and students.

[gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Supporting Pupils and Students with Special Educational Needs - Guidelines for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Inclusive Education

The NCSE (2011) described inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling. www.ncse.ie/inclusive-education-framework and [CPD Audit Tools | National Council for Special Education - CPD and In-School Support \(sess.ie\)](http://www.ncse.ie/cpd-audit-tools)

Multiple and Persistent Needs

Multiple and persistent needs are those that are enduring and severe in nature and that significantly impact on the student's functioning at school on a day to day basis, and are a cause of significant distress to the student in the school environment, despite the implementation of a highly individualised, intensive and evidence-based programme of support, that has been developed, implemented and monitored by the school, in collaboration with the student, parents and other relevant agencies involved in providing support.

Primary Language Curriculum

The *Primary Language Curriculum* is for teachers of children of all abilities, in all school contexts. The integrated curriculum provides support to teachers to help each child to achieve the learning for oral language, reading and writing. This policy is in keeping with the *20 year Strategy for the Irish Language* (2010).

<http://www.curriculumonline.ie/primary>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/2ea63-20-year-strategy-for-the-irish-language/>

Significant literacy difficulties

Significant literacy difficulties despite access to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other children, whatever the reason.

Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support

The Department of Education has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/dca316-special-education-needs-a-continuum-of-support/>

Special Education Teacher Allocation

Under the revised model, the Department provides special education teaching supports directly to schools based on their educational profiles (including a baseline component). It offers schools greater autonomy to allocate teaching resources flexibly, based on students' needs, without the requirement for a diagnosis of disability. A key principle underpinning this model is that all students, irrespective of special educational needs, are welcomed and enabled to enrol in their local schools.

Student Support File

A Student Support File has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. The Student Support File keeps together all the information about the support of the student: information gathered, plans, interventions and review, informed by consultations with other professionals where relevant.

[gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Supporting Pupils and Students with Special Educational Needs - Guidelines for Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

[gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Special Education Needs a Continuum of Support \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Student Support Plan(s)

Provision for students with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. Details are recorded in the Student Support File.

Appendix 2: Exemplar

Exemplar Post-Primary: Ann 2nd Year

NOTE: This exemplar is designed to guide the consideration of applications received citing a high level of multiple and persistent needs as set out in Section 2.2.3 of the Circular.

Relevant Background Information from Student Support File

- Ann is a 14 year old girl in 2nd Year in a mainstream post-primary school. Her parents reported that she could spend hours at homework in the evenings. Her parents described her as a very anxious girl, who was prone to frequent emotional outbursts and upset at home, especially in relation to language-based homework.
- Ann was reported to have difficulties with coordination, and was described by her parents as clumsy and as regularly tripping over things. Her parents said that she seemed to find it difficult to organise her belongings, and was always losing or forgetting items she needed for school.
- Ann's parents reported that incidents of self-harm began when Ann was in 1st Year at post-primary, and that she was subsequently supported by Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.
- Ann's teachers recorded her needs in her Student Support File. These included:
 - Ann was described as refusing to attend Irish classes. Ann's Irish teacher reported that Ann often complained of not feeling well and asked to be sent home during classes. It was reported that she sometimes cried during classes, and seemed to be very confused when presented with written tasks in Irish. It was reported that she studied French for a term when in 1st Year, but had asked to drop this subject and took up Art instead.
 - Her teachers noted that she generally offered one word responses or just shook her head when asked a question in class, and that it seemed to take her a while to process what she had been asked.
 - Her teachers also noted that she actively avoided participating in PE or sports, and that she seemed to struggle with written work, despite having age-appropriate reading and spelling skills on standardised assessments.
- Interventions recorded in Student Support File:
 - Support has been provided at School Support Plus, since 1st Year.
 - Ann's Support Plan has contained priority targets and interventions to support her participation in language-based subjects, organisation and

- social skills. These were reviewed at regular intervals, in collaboration with Ann and her parents.
 - The school’s Student Support Team was also instrumental in facilitating a whole-school approach to supporting Ann’s needs.
- Review of Ann’s response to interventions recorded in Student Support Plan (2nd Year)
 - Ann’s Support Plan was reviewed at regular intervals, in collaboration with Ann and her parents.
 - Despite school-based interventions, Ann’s parents expressed concern in relation to an increase in incidents of self-harm as she was getting older, and her anxiety around her performance at school, as she approached the final year of the Junior Cycle.
 - Ann told her teachers and parents and that she wanted to leave school because it was too hard and that she felt stupid.

Process for Application

- Ann’s parents applied to the school for an exemption using the application form in Appendix 3 of the Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools. An application was submitted under grounds for an exemption outlined in section 2.2.3 of Circular 0055/2022: *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.* The exemption was granted based on fulfilment of the criteria outlined in the Circular, and illustrated below.

Summary of Relevant Information from Student Support File
Ann’s needs were identified as multiple and persistent, and as impacting on her participation and engagement with learning and school life over time
Ann’s Student Support Plan, since 1 st Year, provided evidence that her needs have persisted, despite targeted and individualised support and intervention.
Ann’s Student Support Plans provided evidence that an individualised programme of support had been implemented over a period of not less than two years, and had been reviewed in collaboration with Ann and her parents.
Ann’s Student Support Plan provided evidence of interventions to differentiate and support her participation and engagement in the learning of Irish, in keeping with the integrated approach to language skills development and the communicative approach underpinning the specification for Junior Cycle Irish (L2)

The supporting evidence included above shows how Ann’s needs may be considered enduring and severe in nature, and impact on her functioning at school on a day to day basis. Her needs may be considered a cause of significant distress in the school environment despite the implementation of a

Appendix 2: Exemplar

highly individualised, intensive and evidence-based programme of support that was developed, implemented and monitored by the school in collaboration with Ann, her parents and other relevant agencies involved in providing support for Ann ([Appendix 1: Glossary](#)).

Following completion of the Checklist for Processing Applications for Exemption from the Study of Irish, in Accordance with Circular 0055/2022 2.2.3 (Appendix 4 of Guidelines), the Exemption from the Study of Irish was granted.

Appendix 3: Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish

<p style="text-align: center;">Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish Post-Primary Schools</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For completion by the parent(s)/guardian(s) on behalf of a student (or by a student who has reached 18 years of age)</p>		
Name of Student		
Date of Birth		
Class		
Name of School		
<p>I/We wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of _____</p> <p>I _____ (student who has reached 18 years) wish to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish.</p> <p>Please indicate (✓) the grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 0055/2022</p>		
2.2.1(a)	<p><u>The student is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she did not have the opportunity to engage in the study of Irish.</u></p>	
2.2.1(b)	<p><u>The student's 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 who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.</u></p>	
2.2.2	<p><u>The student experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum and which are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and over time and presents with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.</u></p>	

Appendix 3: Application for Exemption from the Study of Irish

2.2.3	<p><u>The student experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs, that persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs (over not less than two years) and which are a significant barrier to the student's participation and engagement in their learning and school life and who been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible and the Principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the student concerned.</u></p>	
2.2.4(ii)	<p><u>The 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</u></p>	
<p>Please provide detail of any supporting documentation being submitted to the school</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>For the purpose of this application the documentation provided will be assessed, by relevant school personnel and other professionals where necessary, to determine whether there is grounds to grant an exemption from the study of Irish. Tick the box if you wish to proceed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p>		
<p><u>For school use only</u></p> <p>Date of receipt of application: _____</p> <p>Principal: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>School roll number: _____</p>		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR 0055/2022 2.2.1a			
<p>A student moving from a different country, who is re-enrolling following a period spent abroad, provided at least three consecutive years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment</p>			
Name of school			
School roll number			
Name of student			
Date of birth			
Student PPSN			
1.	RECEIVING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The date on which the school received the application is recorded on the form.		
b)	Receipt of the application has been acknowledged in writing and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that the application will be processed within 21 school days of date of receipt.		
2.	CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The written application and supporting documentation have been discussed with parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
b)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been advised of the next steps in processing the application.		
c)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed of any		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.1a

	implications of an exemption from the study of Irish now and into the future.		
d)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption will be granted.		
e)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that where an application is refused that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date the decision of the school is notified in writing.		
f)	The arrangements (as per Section 6 of the Guidelines), in the case of an exemption being granted, have been explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
g)	Relevant evidence about the student's previous enrolment and attendance at a school(s) outside the State provided at least three consecutive years have elapsed, since the previous enrolment in the State, and who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment has been examined.		
h)	The student's educational experience and/or progress has been considered.		
3.	CONFIRMING A DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	The above named student is not less than 12 years of age.		
b)	At least three consecutive years have elapsed since the above named student was last enrolled in a school in this State.		
c)	<p>An exemption from the study of Irish <u>is granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>or</p> <p>An exemption from the study of Irish is <u>not granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p>		
<p>Where an application for exemption is refused, please note reason(s).</p>			

4.	COMMUNICATING AND RECORDING THE DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	The outcome of the application has been confirmed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the reason(s) for not granting an exemption where relevant.		
b)	Arrangements have been made for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a Copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and this checklist, in accordance with data protection law.		
Principal: _____ Date: _____			

<p align="center">CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR 0055/2022 2.2.1b</p> <p align="center">A student whose education was received outside the State for a minimum period of three consecutive years and who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state, where they did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish</p>			
Name of school			
School roll number			
Name of student			
Date of birth			
Student PPSN			
1.	RECEIVING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The date on which the school received the application is recorded on the form.		
b)	Receipt of the application has been acknowledged in writing and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that the application will be processed within 21 school days of date of receipt.		
2.	CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The written application and supporting documentation have been discussed with parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
b)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been advised of the next steps in processing the application.		
c)	The parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed of any implications of an exemption from the study of Irish now and into the future.		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.1b.

d)	The parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption will be granted.		
e)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that where an application is refused that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date the decision of the school is notified in writing.		
f)	The arrangements (as per Section 6 of the Guidelines), in the case of an exemption being granted, have been explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
g)	Evidence of the student's attendance at a school(s) outside the state for a minimum period of three consecutive years (or up to and including the final year of his/her primary education) and where he/she did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish has been examined.		
h)	The student's educational experience and/or progress has been considered.		
3.	CONFIRMING A DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	The above named received his/her education outside the State for a minimum period of three consecutive years and completed the full course of primary education recognised by another state.		
c)	<p>An exemption from the study of Irish <u>is granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>or</p> <p>An exemption from the study of Irish is <u>not granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p>		
<p>Where an application for exemption is refused, please note reason(s).</p>			

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.1b.

4. COMMUNICATING AND RECORDING THE DECISION		Yes	No
a)	The outcome of the application has been confirmed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the reason(s) for not granting an exemption where relevant.		
b)	Arrangements have been made for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a Copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and this checklist, in accordance with data protection law.		
Principal: _____ Date: _____			

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR 0055/2022 2.2.2			
A student who presents with significant and persistent literacy difficulties <u>and</u> presents with a standardised score in a discrete test at/below the 10th percentile in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling.			
Name of school			
School roll number			
Name of student			
Date of birth			
Student PPSN			
1.	RECEIVING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The date on which the school received the application is recorded on the form.		
b)	Receipt of the application has been acknowledged in writing and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that the application will be processed within 21 school days of date of receipt.		
2.	CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The written application and supporting documentation have been discussed with parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
b)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been advised of the next steps in processing the application.		
c)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed of any implications of an exemption from the study of Irish now and into the future.		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.2

d)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption will be granted.		
e)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that where an application is refused that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date the decision of the school is notified in writing.		
f)	The arrangements (as per Section 6 of the Guidelines), in the case of an exemption being granted, have been explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
g)	The student's Student Support File has been reviewed.		
h)	The student's class teachers and SET team has been consulted.		
3.	CONFIRMING A DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	<p>The above named student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. presents with significant literacy difficulties that are persistent despite having access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy in both Irish and English over time as evidenced in the Student Support File including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. at the time of application for exemption presents with a Standardised Score on a discrete test in either Word Reading or Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile 		
b)	<p>An exemption from the study of Irish <u>is granted</u></p> <p>or</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	An exemption from the study of Irish is <u>not granted</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Where an application for exemption is refused, please note reason(s).</p> 		
4.	COMMUNICATING AND RECORDING THE DECISION	
		Yes
		No
a)	The outcome of the application has been confirmed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the reason(s) for not granting an exemption where relevant.	
b)	Arrangements have been made for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a Copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and this checklist, in accordance with data protection law.	
Principal: _____		
Date: _____		

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR 0055/2022 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.			
Name of school			
School roll number			
Name of student			
Date of birth			
Student PPSN			
1.	RECEIVING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The date on which the school received the application is recorded on the form.		
b)	Receipt of the application has been acknowledged in writing and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that the application will be processed within 21 school days of date of receipt.		
2.	CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The written application and supporting documentation have been discussed with parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
b)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been advised of the next steps in processing the application.		
c)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed of any implications of an exemption from the study of Irish now and into the future.		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.3

d)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption will be granted.		
e)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that where an application is refused that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date the decision of the school is notified in writing.		
f)	The arrangements (as per Section 6 of the Guidelines), in the case of an exemption being granted, have been explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
g)	The student's Student Support File has been reviewed.		
h)	The student's class teachers and SET team has been consulted.		
3.	CONFIRMING A DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	<p>The above named student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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 <p>and</p>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs <p>and</p>		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. 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 <p>and</p>		

	4. 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		
	5. the Principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the student <i>concerned</i>		
b)	An exemption from the study of Irish <u>is granted</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	or		
	An exemption from the study of Irish is <u>not granted</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Where an application for exemption is refused, please note reason(s).			
4. COMMUNICATING AND RECORDING THE DECISION			
		Yes	No
a)	The outcome of the application has been confirmed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the reason(s) for not granting an exemption where relevant.		
b)	Arrangements have been made for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a Copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and this checklist, in accordance with data protection law.		
Principal: _____			
Date: _____			

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications - 2.2.3



CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR EXEMPTION FROM THE STUDY OF IRISH IN ACCORDANCE WITH CIRCULAR 0055/2022 2.2.4(ii)			
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			
Name of school			
School roll number			
Name of student			
Date of birth			
Student PPSN			
1.	RECEIVING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The date on which the school received the application is recorded on the form.		
b)	Receipt of the application has been acknowledged in writing and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that the application will be processed within 21 school days of date of receipt.		
2.	CONSIDERING THE APPLICATION		
		Yes	No
a)	The written application and supporting documentation have been discussed with parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
b)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been advised of the next steps in processing the application.		
c)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made have been informed of any implications of an exemption from the study of Irish now and into the future.		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications – 2.2.4(ii)

d)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption will be granted.		
e)	The parent(s)/guardian(s)/student have been informed that where an application is refused that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date the decision of the school is notified in writing.		
f)	The arrangements (as per Section 6 of the Guidelines), in the case of an exemption being granted, have been explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the student on whose behalf the application is made.		
3.	CONFIRMING A DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	The above named 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.		
b)	<p>An exemption from the study of Irish <u>is granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>or</p> <p>An exemption from the study of Irish is <u>not granted</u> <input type="checkbox"/></p>		
Where an application for exemption is refused, please note reason(s).			
4.	COMMUNICATING AND RECORDING THE DECISION		
		Yes	No
a)	The outcome of the application has been confirmed in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student and the reason(s) for not granting an exemption where relevant.		

Appendix 4: Checklists for processing applications – 2.2.4(ii)

b)	Arrangements have been made for the retention of the application form and all supporting documentation, including a Copy of the Certificate of Exemption where applicable, and this checklist, in accordance with data protection law.		
Principal: _____ Date: _____			

