



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2004/2005

LINK MODULES

**CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
COMMON LEVEL**

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LINK MODULES 2004/2005.

1. Introduction

History: The two year Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) was introduced by the Department of Education in 1987 to promote the development of enterprise, IT and vocational skills at senior cycle.

It is confined to students who are taking particular combinations of Leaving Certificate (established) subjects (termed Vocational Subject Groupings (VSGs)). Such students, in participating schools, can take this additional programme, to be taught and assessed separately and differently from their established Leaving Certificate subjects. It includes compulsory work preparation/experience, together with extensive provision for IT tuition and practice. The title Link Modules reflects the programme's complementary and supplementary nature *vis-à-vis* the 'traditional' academic focus and subjects in schools.

Assessment: Evaluation of the Link Modules comprises a centrally set written examination combined with a Portfolio of Coursework. The written examination is taken by students in early May at the end of their second year and carries 160 marks. The Portfolio of coursework, prepared mainly during class time over the two years, carries a maximum mark of 240. Both components are assessed and marked by external examiners and the total combined marks per candidate are converted into grades as follows:

Marks	Grade
320 to 400	Distinction (80-100%)
260 to 319	Merit (65-79%)
200 to 259	Pass (50-64%)
0 to 199	Ungraded (less than 50%)

For CAO purposes, both the Universities and the Institutes of Technology award 70 points for a Distinction, 50 points for a Merit and 30 points for a Pass. Seventy points is equivalent to a C1 grade in a Higher Level paper in the Leaving Certificate (established).

New Programme: In September 2001 a revised *Programme Statement* was issued for the subject for introduction in the schools in September, 2002. Updated, and updated, *Link Modules Assessment Guidelines* were published in Autumn 2002 to assist teachers and co-ordinators to interpret and apply the changes to be examined for the first time in Summer 2004. These publications were extensively used by the Second Level Support Service in their subsequent in-career national, regional and cluster group seminars. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) has continued to issue its annual December circulars/guidelines to inform and help schools prepare students for the Link Module assessment.

The principal changes made in the revision of the Link Modules programme were:

- The modules, Preparation for Work and Work Experience, were merged into a single module entitled Preparation for the World of Work.
- The career investigation, an activity central to the LCVP in many schools, is now included in the link module, Preparation for the World of Work.
- The link module, Enterprise Education, has been redrafted to distinguish more clearly between personal, community and business enterprise.
- An option to submit the career investigation on audio tape has been added.
- The requirements for a Formal Letter and the completion of a Form have been taken out of the portfolio core, though they are examinable within the written examination.
- Specific learning outcomes in each module have been edited to reduce overlap and to remove unnecessary activities.
- Cross-curricular learning has been more clearly defined in terms of learning outcomes.

- Assessment criteria have been modified to take into account the above changes.

These changes have emphasised the vocational, career guidance and enterprise areas of the programme and its interface with the established Leaving Certificate. There is an increased focus on the critical evaluation by the students of their learning and experience.

Assessment changes: The format and syllabus of the written examination, taken at the end of the second year of the programme, remains essentially unchanged. The examination paper consists of a two and a half hour examination with three sections:

- Section A (30 marks): Video sequence profiling a business or community enterprise. The six minute video is shown to candidates at the start of the examination who are required to answer eight compulsory questions.
- Section B (30 marks): Case Study covering topics such as profile of an entrepreneur; a business/community/voluntary organisation; an overview of a local area; a social or economic issue. The Case Study is sent to participating schools (590 schools in 2005) a month before the date of the examination: Section B of the written examination paper comprises three questions based on this Case Study.
- Section C (100 marks): Choice of any four multi-part general questions from six covering the full range of the syllabus.

The Portfolio still consists of two sections but with some changes to the topics and weightings: These now are as follows:

Section 1: Core Items (compulsory)

- Curriculum vitae (25 marks)
- Career investigation (40 marks)

- Summary report (40 marks)
- Enterprise/action plan (35 marks)

Section 2: Optional Items (any two from four)

- Diary of work experience (50 marks)
- Enterprise report (50 marks)
- Recorded interview/presentation (50 marks)
- Report on '*My Own Place*' (50 marks)

Candidates achieve the learning outcomes by engaging in classroom, school and community based activities through which they learn skills such as planning, organisation, presentation, problem solving and teamwork. Concurrently, they must evaluate and document their experiences. Each portfolio item must be the student's original work. The inclusion of material directly downloaded from websites or copied from other sources is not acceptable. However, within the *Career Investigation* component **only**, information and other requirements about entry requirements etc. culled from specialised websites or publications are acceptable and valid. This is because such information is of a specific, semi-legal and technical nature and not amenable to personal adaptation.

The Recorded interview/presentation component is now also acceptable on DVD as well as in the established VHS videotape format.

2. Performance of Candidates.

The number of candidates who were awarded grades in the Link Modules in 2004 was **13654**. This represents a reduction of 368 (-2.6%) on the total who took the complete examination in 2003.

The following is a summary of the percentage of grades overall and of the results in the Written examination and the Portfolio awarded to candidates in 2004:

Year	Nos.	Written Examination				Portfolio				Overall			
		+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	Dist.	Merit	Pass	Un.
2004	13654	5	31	39	25	24	44	22	10	11	48	31	10

The number of candidates who earned grades in the Link Modules in 2005 was **14281**. This represents an increase of 627(+4.6%) on the total who took the examination in 2004.

The following is a summary of the percentage of grades overall and of the results in the Written examination and the Portfolio awarded to candidates in 2005:

Year	Nos.	Written Examination				Portfolio				Overall			
		+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	Dist.	Merit	Pass	Un.
2005	14281	6	28	37	29	26	47	20	7	11	47	32	10

The percentage results and numbers of candidates over the past 4 years are as follows:

Year	Nos.	Written Examination				Portfolio				Overall			
		+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	+80%	65-79	50-64	0-49	Dist.	Merit	Pass	Un.
2005	14281	6	28	37	29	26	47	20	7	11	47	32	10
2004	13654	5	31	39	25	24	44	22	10	11	48	31	10
2003	14022	5	27	36	32	40	44	12	4	14	53	27	6
2002	12954	16	34	29	21	32	49	14	5	19	50	23	8

Over this four year period the numbers taking the subject increased by 1327 candidates, a percentage improvement of 10.2%.

3. Analysis of Candidate Performance 2004/2005

This is a composite report on the Link Modules assessment over the two years of the revised programme, 2004 and 2005. As the written examination has different questions in each year the detailed results and comments are set down for both years. However, because the requirements in the Portfolio in both of these years were the same, detailed statistical results are given for 2005 only with commentary based on observations by the examiners on the Portfolio items submitted in both 2004 and 2005.

3.1 Written Examination 2004

The following is a summary of the performance of candidates in the written part of the examination in 2004.

2004 Written Examination (160 marks): The order of *popularity in answering and *percentage marks and rankings per question were as follows:

Question	Topic	% Uptake	Popularity	Earned	Ranking
Section A (30)	Audio Visual				
Q1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.	Video based on Keogh Software	100%	Comp.	57%	2
Section B (30)	Case Study				
Q1, 2 and 3.	European Special Games	100%	Comp.	40%	6
Section C (100)	General Questions				
Q1 (25 marks)	Career choice	86%	1	56%	3
Q2 (25 marks)	Voluntary body	54%	4	48%	4
Q3 (25 marks)	Business enterprise	40%	6	60%	1
Q4 (25 marks)	Job specifications	66%	3	44%	5
Q5 (25 marks)	Work placement	71%	2	40%	7
Q6 (25 marks)	Community research	52%	5	32%	8

* This information is based on an analysis of the Sample 20 returns (9.3% of cohort)

3.2 Overview of 2004 Examination

The performance of the candidates in the written examination in 2004 was slightly better than the previous year with the same percentage gaining a Distinction (5%), more candidates obtaining a Merit (+4%) and less candidates' scripts being Ungraded (-7%). A high proportion of candidates (22%) attempted extra questions in Section C of the written examination, which would imply that there is little problem with the time allocated to the examination.

Six exemplar questions had been included in the published *Assessment Guidelines*, half of which were reflected in the questions posed in the examination paper in 2004.

The 2004 examination paper was well received by teachers. Marks were lost by candidates for not reading the question correctly (or misinterpreting the requirements), not giving the required number of points, and for repetition in the answers given. Candidates displayed a limited understanding of the concept of evaluation.

3.3 Comments on Specific Areas

Section A: The Video in 2004 was considered more straightforward and 'candidate friendly' than in 2003. Candidates found the questions posed to be more accessible and their answers produced the second best overall average return of 57%.

Problems mainly related to the more difficult Part 3, Questions 7 and 8, where candidates lost marks through not giving enough points and failing to expand on the ones they had.

Section B: The Case Study was built around a topical 'European Special Games' project to be organised in Ireland. It was generally not that well answered. The average mark gained was 40% which seems on the low side, given that they had already seen the case study and had prepared answers to likely questions in their schools.

In answering the question, many candidates concentrated their answers on one narrow category, say, Finance, and did not demonstrate a wider perspective.

Question 3 (i) produced low marks as most candidates failed to cover the recommended 3 year time span.

Section C. General Questions: The questions posed in this section cover the full range of the syllabus.

Question 1: Career Choice. This question was first in popularity and third in average percentage of marks awarded on the paper. It closely reflected a question on the sample paper in the *Assessment Guidelines* and was the best rewarded optional question for most candidates.

Candidates lost marks mostly in Part (c) where the Link Modules programme itself was not regarded as a valid answer. The information sought in this answer was in relation to other Leaving Certificate subjects (established) being taken.

Question 2: Voluntary Bodies. This was the fourth most popular written question and was also similar to a question which appeared in the *Assessment Guidelines*. The marks awarded were also fourth highest.

Candidates often failed to mention fundraising in Part (b). They lost marks in the Letter in Part (c) due to poor layout, lack of address/date, poor punctuation and mistakes in spelling and grammar. They achieved low marks in Part (d) where they often evaluated the talk rather than giving two ways to evaluate the visit as required.

Question 3: Business Enterprise. This was the least popular question but yielded the highest overall percentage of marks for the minority who attempted it.

Difficulties were mainly associated with Part (b) where some candidates were unable to offer suggestions as to the training/study required by the owner/manager.

Question 4: Job Specifications. This was the third most popular question on the paper and fourth in terms of percentage of marks earned.

In Part (a) some candidates did not understand enterprising characteristics and some just described the business. In Part (b) candidates often presented brief answers which they did not elaborate on or they failed to describe the required three ways in detail as set out in the examination question. Some candidates completely misinterpreted this section and described how to demonstrate communication skills in the job.

Question 5: Work Placement. While this was the second most popular question in the paper it yielded the second lowest average return of marks.

Many candidates misinterpreted Part (b) and evaluated work experience carried out instead of stating what methods should be used to evaluate it. Part (c) required three specific legal obligations of an employer but many failed to concentrate on health and safety regulations as required but dealt with labour and pay laws instead.

Question 6: Community Research. This was taken by just half the candidates and yielded the lowest average marks in the paper.

Most candidates made an attempt to draw up a questionnaire in Part (b) but few mentioned any instructions on how to fill it in. Only a minority posed more than three relevant questions in the questionnaire. The same questions were sometimes repeated in different ways e.g. 'how can local facilities for young people be improved' followed by 'what additional local facilities would you suggest?' In Part (d) many candidates seemed not to have understood the question and often tried to examine/evaluate the information gained from the questionnaire.

3.4 Written Examination 2005

The following is a summary of the performance of candidates in the written examination in 2005.

2005 Written Examination (160 marks): The order of *popularity in answering and *percentage marks and rankings per question were as follows:

Question	Topic	% Uptake	Popularity	Earned	Ranking
Section A (30)	Audio Visual				
Q1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.	Video based on Aer Arann	100%	Comp.	67%	1
Section B (30)	Case Study				
Q1, 2 and 3.	Community Develop.	100%	Comp.	43%	6
Section C (100)	General Questions				
Q1 (25 marks)	Career Investigation	95%	1	56%	2
Q2 (25 marks)	Enterprise	62%	4	48%	4
Q3 (25 marks)	Disco Fundraiser	55%	6	28%	8
Q4 (25 marks)	Idea Generation	56%	5	44%	5
Q5 (25 marks)	Diary/Log	88%	2	36%	7
Q6 (25 marks)	Community Visit	73%	3	56%	3

* This information is based on an analysis of the Sample 20 returns (9.7% of cohort)

3.5 Overview of 2005 Examination

The performance of the candidates in the written examination in 2005 was similar to the previous year with a slightly higher percentage gaining a Distinction (+1%) but a lower percentage earning a Merit (-3%) and more candidates' scripts being Ungraded (+4%). The level of these latest results closely matches those recorded in 2003.

A high number of candidates (24%) attempted extra questions in Section C of the written examination which would indicate that there is little problem with time allocation in this examination.

Six sample questions had been included in the published *Assessment Guidelines*, half of which were reflected in the questions posed in the examination paper in 2005.

The examination offered a reasonable choice to candidates who were generally able to pick four areas that suited them.

3.6 Comments on Specific Areas

Section A: The Video was regarded by teachers and examiners as straightforward and accessible and candidates were rewarded accordingly with an average percentage earned at 67%, 10% higher than in 2004.

Section B: The Case study centred on a 'Community Development' scenario and the average marks at 43% were 3% higher than in 2004. It ranked sixth in the ranking of marks awarded.

It was generally not well answered given that the text is sent to schools in advance and possible questions can be prepared in class.

Question 2 on 'Downsizing' was perceived as difficult. Marks were lost for repeating points within the answers.

Section C. General Questions: Given that the performance of candidates in both previous Sections showed improvement on 2004, the marks gained in Section C were a little disappointing.

Marks were lost for not supporting answers with examples and for failing to expand sufficiently on the answers given. Candidates tended to repeat points within their answers. Candidates, surprisingly, did not excel in the questions directly relating to

their portfolios, particularly in the evaluation section of the ‘Work experience /shadowing diary /log’ or the ‘Disco fundraising’. Evaluation as a concept continues to pose some difficulties for candidates and some showed limited understanding of what was required when the question required them to ‘discuss’ or ‘describe’.

Question 1: Career Investigation. This was by far the most popular question (95%) in this Section yielding the highest average percentage of marks (56%) for candidates.

In answer to Part (c) candidates sometimes described steps in the career investigation process rather than describing the steps required to achieve the candidate’s goal. Part (d) on evaluation tended to cause difficulty as it required evaluation of the career investigation process: some candidates described the process instead.

Question 2: Enterprise. This question was chosen by 62% of candidates and yielded an average return of 48%. It was fourth choice and fourth also in the ranking of marks awarded.

Many candidates failed to give an adequate definition of enterprise and sometimes gave correct and relevant points but failed to expand on them. Evaluation in Part (d) tended to cause difficulties for some candidates.

Question 3: Disco Fundraiser. This question was the least popular one (55%) and produced the worst average marks (28%).

Some candidates did not layout the Agenda correctly. Marks were lost for omitting compulsory points or for providing less than the required number of points. The structure of a business plan caused difficulty for some candidates. Evaluation again tended to pose some problems.

Question 4: Idea Generation. This question was marginally more popular (56%) than Question 3 and the marks gained averaged 44% (5th in ranking).

Some candidates demonstrated limited understanding of the concept of 'idea generation'. Similarly, candidates lacked knowledge and precision on even one of the 'four P's' of marketing.

Question 5: Record/Log/Diary. This was the second most popular question (88%) but produced the second worst average mark (36%) within the paper.

As the area of 'Work experience/shadowing' is obligatory for all candidates this result is disappointing. Four personal goals were required in Part (b) and candidates tended to repeat goals rather than giving the range of goals required. Evaluation in Part (d) again caused difficulties, maybe because a Diary/Log is not strictly compulsory, though it was presented by 80% of candidates in their Portfolio.

Question 6: Community Visit. This was chosen by 73% of the candidates and yielded the third best average mark (56%).

As the results indicate, this question was popular and productive. The letter required in Part (d) often gave rise to presentation errors and exposed some limitations in the usage of English.

3.7 Portfolio of Coursework 2004/2005

The performance, and choices, of candidates in the Portfolio of Coursework was as follows.

2005 Portfolio of Coursework (240 marks): The order of *popularity in answering and *percentage marks and rankings per element were as follows:

Component	Topic	% Uptake	Popularity	Earned	Ranking
Section 1 (140)	Core Items				
Q1 (25 marks)	Curriculum Vitae	98%	1	80%	1
Q2 (35 marks)	Enterprise/Action Plan	96%	2	71%	4
Q3 (40 marks)	Career Investigation	95%	3	65%	5
Q4 (40 marks)	Summary Report	95%	4	73%	3
Section 2 (100)	Optional Items				
Q1 (50 marks)	Record/Log/Diary	80%	5	62%	6
Q2 (50 marks)	Enterprise Report	21%	8	56%	7
Q3 (50 marks)	My Own Place	21%	7	56%	8
Q4 (50 marks)	Recorded Interview	73%	6	74%	2

* This information is based on an analysis of the Sample 20 returns (9.7% of cohort)

3.8 Overview of Portfolio 2004/2005

The grades earned in 2005 in the Portfolio were improved on those for 2004, the first assessment under the revised programme. Distinctions were 26% compared with 24%, Merits were 47% compared with 44% and Ungraded results were 7% compared with 10%. When these results were combined with the slightly lower results in the written examination the overall grades were much the same as in 2004 and 2003.

However, while the written examination results in 2004 and 2005 are similar to the results under the previous syllabus, the results in the Portfolio are now lower at Distinction level by 15% and have doubled in the Ungraded range.

A factor contributing to this reduction in grades in the Portfolio is believed to be the change in the core requirements in 2004 and 2005 compared with 2003. Two straightforward topics, *Formal Letter* and *Completed Form*, have been replaced by two longer and more demanding ones, *Enterprise/Action Plan* and *Career Investigation*. These two topics now carry 75 marks (30%) out of the total for the portfolio of 240 marks, while the replaced topics were worth 40 marks (17%). In addition, the core *Curriculum Vitae* component had been worth 40 marks previously, but since 2003 has been reduced to a maximum of 25 marks.

The *Assessment Guidelines* book contains sample material on all 8 Portfolio topics with 3 graded exemplars for each topic. These exemplars provide a basis for candidates as to the content and presentation of their Portfolio items.

However, direct copying of these exemplars is not acceptable as the work must be the candidate's own individual work. Some scripts gave rise to suspicions of copying/plagiarism, necessitating correspondence with a number of schools in both years resulting in the marks of a number of candidates being withheld this year and in 2004. Any level of plagiarism/copying can threaten the integrity of the assessment process.

3.9 Comments on Specific Areas

Core Items (4 compulsory projects)

Curriculum Vitae: (25 marks). The performance of candidates in this topic this year was equal to 2004 with an average percentage mark of 80%, the highest of all the Portfolio components.

Marks were lost by candidates who failed to describe their skills and qualities, and/or who displayed less than ideal presentation and layout. Under the heading, Education, some candidates offered LCVP instead of Link Modules and sometimes failed to indicate the correct year. Also, a minority of candidates provided insufficient detail for 'Work Experience' and 'Referees'.

Enterprise/Action Plan: (35 marks). This component also produced the same percentage marks for candidates as last year at 71%, which placed it in 4th place in the overall rankings in both years.

The plan was sometimes written in the past tense either in whole or in part and analysis of research was occasionally presented in the future tense, implying that this had not in fact been completed. Candidates tended also to skimp on analysis of research while, in group activities, personal aims were often omitted as were 'Action Steps' and 'Schedule of Time'. Evaluations were sometimes lacking or not linked back to the Aims and Objectives. Non LCVP activities like 'planning a birthday party, organising a holiday or attending university classes for two days were occasionally presented but not allowed.

Career Investigation: (40 marks). The average % marks earned here matched last year's outcome at 65%, representing 5th in the overall ranking.

The attempts by candidates here ranged from excellent to disappointing. Marks were lost for inadequate presentation and by lack of details on required courses. Candidates sometimes mentioned only one pathway into the career and omitted reference to Leaving Certificate subjects or what had been learned about themselves. Duties were often mixed up with skills and qualities. Evaluation, worth 10 marks, was often inadequate and was sometimes focussed on the career and not on the career investigation.

Summary Report: (40 marks). Again, the performance was similar to last year's with candidates achieving an average of 73%, 3rd in the overall rankings.

The report was generally well answered, though some were far too short. Personal aims in group activities were sometimes omitted or unclear. Marks were lost for lack of headings in the report and failure to link the conclusions and recommendations with the aims.

Optional Items (Any 2 from 4)

Record/Log/Diary: (50 marks). This was the most popular choice of the four options again this year though the percentage that chose it was down 3% at 80%. The average percentage mark was marginally up at 62% this year (6th in the overall ranking).

Candidates performed well generally in this familiar component. Marks were lost when reasons for choosing placements were omitted or were too brief. Other shortcomings noted were insufficient detail in personal account and limited analysis of own performance each day. A number of candidates produced poor evaluations and some failed to explain how what has been learned could be applied to school, home and community.

Enterprise Report: (50 marks). This element was again the least popular one, taken by 21% of the candidates (19% in 2004). The average percentage mark was 56%, 10% lower than the average last year and was joint lowest in return overall.

Failure to summarise main points and not using charts, table or diagrams lost candidates marks. Some reports demonstrated insufficient evidence of personal contributions to group activities. Others were too short and/or failed to link the recommendations to the aims. Occasionally, the report was not based on an enterprise activity in which the students had been involved.

My Own Place: (50 marks). This project was equally 'unpopular' with 21% of the candidates attempting it, the same as last year. The average mark was down 4% at 56%, joint lowest mark of all the Portfolio components.

Failure to offer an analysis of a local issue, or to make suggestions for improvements, lost candidates marks. There was a lack of pertinent illustrations in some

contributions. Conclusions, recommendations and evaluation, worth a total of 18 marks, tended to be the categories where some candidates lost significant marks.

Recorded Interview/Presentation: (50 marks). This was the second most popular optional choice with 73% of the cohort submitting a video interview. Candidates tended to perform well and the average marks were the highest in the optional area (and 2nd highest in all components, behind the CV) at 74%, the same as in 2004.

Some candidates tended to give pat answers in response to set, unvaried questioning. The standard of recording could be improved in some centres. Inadequate attention is sometimes given to the sound quality and the interview environment. The documentation returned was sometimes confusing and unhelpful.

4. Conclusions

- The number of candidates taking the Link Modules assessment has increased by 10.2% to 14281 over the four years to 2005. There are, however, more candidates actually experiencing the programme in schools than are included in these figures. These are candidates who are ineligible because of their choice of Leaving Certificate subjects.
- The performance by candidates in the written examination has shown a consistent pattern over the past three years, under both old and new syllabuses. Totalling the most recent average marks per student in Sections A and B, plus those of the most popular four choices in Section C, gives a figure of 84 marks per script in 2005 (82 in 2004), an average of 53% (51% in 2004) of the available 160 marks.
- These results are significantly lower than the levels achieved in the Portfolio. A similar addition of the average marks gained in the most popular elements of this year's Portfolio gives an average mark of 168 (163 in 2004), an average of 70% (68% in 2004) of the 240 marks available.
- Adding the average results of the written examination and the Portfolio results gives an average overall mark of 252 in 2005 (247 in 2004) a Pass grade.
- The revised programme has now been examined in 2004 and 2005 and the results show a different pattern from the performance in the last examination under the previous programme in 2003. While the written examination results are similar, the results in the Portfolio are lower at Distinction level by 15% and are twice as high in the Ungraded category.
- A significant contributor to the reduction in results in the Portfolio is the change in the core requirements from 2003 with the replacement of previous short and more straightforward questions by longer and more demanding ones.

- Any improvement in the Portfolio results will have a significant effect on the overall grades because of the weighting applicable. With the increased synergy between the topics in the Portfolio and the written examination such improvement should have a positive effect on the written examination performance also.

- Candidates tend to lose marks in the written examination for a number of reasons:
 - Not understanding or failing to address the questions as posed
 - Terse and minimal answers
 - Responses confined to limited aspects and views
 - Imperfect demonstration, and understanding, of evaluation across the board

- Candidates tend to lose marks across the range of Portfolio components in a number of ways:
 - Projects are sometimes too brief and incomplete
 - Shortage of, or weakness in, analysis and recommendations
 - Personal aims and evaluation, and their linking, being neglected often
 - Limited use of visuals and tables/charts in reports and presentations
 - Inadequate research and sometimes lack of analysis
 - Casual preparation for, and techniques in, conducting and recording interviews.

5. Recommendations

The LCVF programme, with its associated Link Module assessment, is attracting an increasing number of students with an 11.2% increase over the past 4 years. This is a tribute to the educational attractiveness of the programme and to the excellent work of teachers and schools in promoting and delivering the programme.

- The average overall marks earned in the written examination in 2005 was 84 marks or 53% of the available total.
 - More focus on practice in this area should help candidates improve their performance, particularly in the Case Study which currently produces an average of only 43%.
- The reduction in Portfolio performance may reflect increased complexity in some Portfolio tasks. These tasks are often competing for the time and energy of candidates in the run up to a very demanding examination campaign. Some candidates display a cavalier attitude to the work involved and presented.
 - Projects and activities can be scheduled as early as possible and proofreading and checking of the documentation should be systematically built into the process.
- The average overall in the Portfolio is 70% of available marks. This percentage masks the range of results in the various core areas.
 - Candidates should concentrate more on the Record/Log/Diary component as it is taken by 80% of candidates. The average mark here is currently 62%. Concentrating on this aspect a little more should bring this up to the average range of 70%, should add a significant 20 marks to the overall marks, and could push candidates into the higher categories.
- Candidates should be encouraged to assess their own portfolios by reference to the marking scheme for each component. This was published and circulated to schools last August and is available on the SEC web site www.examinations.ie under the heading *Examination Material Archive* on the home page. Follow the

links to the Links Module 2005 Marking Scheme, which reproduces the relevant document, LMMS2, on pages 14 and 15. The other pages in the marking scheme contain the agreed solutions and the allocation of marks for the written examination.

- This documentation should be made available to the candidates as an aid to assessing and revising their material.

- The specific comments made in the course of this Chief Examiner's report, summarised in the Conclusions above, on individual areas of the written examination and the Portfolio, should also be of assistance to teachers and candidates in preparing for, and revising, the Link Modules programme.
 - These comments should be used in classwork to give information on specific examination questions and Portfolio elements with a view to developing and improving effective techniques and approaches.