



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2010

LCVP LINK MODULES

**CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT
COMMON LEVEL**

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LINK MODULES 2010

1. Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus and Programme

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

It is confined to students who are taking particular combinations of established Leaving Certificate subjects. These are known as Vocational Subject Groupings (VSGs). 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 ICT tuition and practice. As outlined in the Programme Statement for LCVP, the Link Modules are designed to be combined flexibly with each other. They should be implemented in close integration with the vocational subjects.

The LCVP was reviewed in 2001 and the revised Link Modules were first examined in 2004. Assessment Guidelines were published in 2002 to assist teachers and LCVP co-ordinators. This publication, which is available at www.slss.ie, is used by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (formerly SLSS) in providing in-career seminars for teachers of LCVP. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) issues a circular annually, in January, to inform and help schools prepare candidates for the assessment of the Link Modules. It is available at www.examinations.ie/schools.

1.2 The Examination

The examination, which is offered at common level, comprises two components:

1. A Written Examination (40%)
2. A Portfolio of Coursework (60%)

The Written Examination, which is marked out of a total of 160 marks, is taken by candidates in May of the second year of the Leaving Certificate programme. The Portfolio of Coursework, which is prepared mainly during class time over the two years of the programme, carries a maximum of 240 marks. Both components are assessed and marked by external examiners appointed and trained by the SEC. Grades are awarded to candidates as follows:

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

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

1.3 Candidature

Table 1 below shows the candidature for LCVP for the years 2007 to 2010. As can be seen, the proportion of Leaving Certificate candidates taking LCVP has increased by 1 % since 2007.

Table 1: Number of candidates sitting Link Modules in the period 2007 - 2010

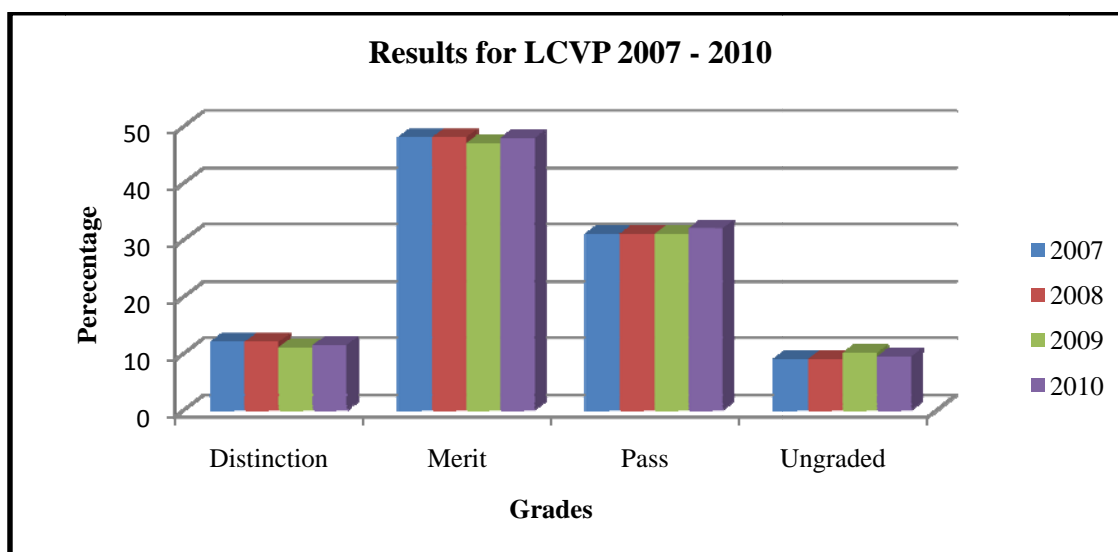
Year	LC Candidates	Taking Link Modules	%
2007	50,873	13,935	27.4
2008	52,143	14,545	27.9
2009	54,197	15,096	27.9
2010	54,480	15,542	28.5

2. Performance of Candidates

As can be seen from the table and chart below the performance of candidates in 2010 was broadly in line with previous years.

Table 2: Percentage of candidates achieving each grade in Link Modules 2007 - 2010

Year	Total	Dist.	Merit	Pass	Ungraded
2007	13,935	12	48	31	9
2008	14,545	12	48	31	9
2009	15,096	11	47	32	10
2010	15,542	11.4	47.9	31.3	9.4



The following reports for each examination component should be read in conjunction with the relevant published marking scheme which can be accessed on the State Examinations Commission website www.examinations.ie

3. The Written Examination

3.1 Introduction

The Written Examination, which is of two and a half hours duration, comprises of three sections as follows:

- Section A (30 marks): DVD sequence profiling a business or community enterprise or organisation. The six minute DVD is shown to candidates at the start of the examination. Candidates are required to answer eight questions based on the DVD sequence.
- Section B (30 marks): Case Study covering topics such as a 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 (513 schools in 2010) one month before the date of the Written Examination. Candidates are required to answer three questions based on the Case Study.
- Section C (100 marks): There are six multi-part general questions covering the full range of the syllabus. Candidates are required to answer four questions.

3.2 Performance of Candidates

Table 3 below shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Written Examination 2007-2010 (160 marks).

Table 3: Performance of candidates in the Written Examination 2007-2010

Year	Total	Written Examination			
		+80%	65-79%	50-64%	0-49%
2007	13,935	3	20	37	40
2008	14,545	6	29	36	29
2009	15,096	5	24	34	37
2010	15,542	5	26	37	32

3.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Table 4 shows the attempt frequency, average marks and average percentage marks for each Section / Question in the written paper. This information is based on an analysis of the Random Sample returns (9.1% of cohort).

Table 4: Attempt frequency and average marks per Section/Question

Question	Topic	Attempt Frequency	Average Mark	Average %
Section A (30)	Audio Visual			
Q. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.	DVD based on a recruitment firm	100%	23	77%
Section B (30)	Case Study			
Q. 1, 2 and 3.	Based on a local community	100%	15	50%
Section C (100)	General Questions			
Q.1 (25 marks)	Enterprise	64%	16	64%
Q.2 (25 marks)	Teamwork	87%	14	56%
Q.3 (25 marks)	Job Advertisement	82%	13	52%
Q.4 (25 marks)	Leadership and Communication	46%	12	48%
Q.5 (25 marks)	Charity Fundraiser	47%	11	44%
Q.6 (25 marks)	Work Experience/Shadowing	92%	13	52%

The 2010 Written Examination was well received by teachers. Marks were lost by some candidates for not reading the questions correctly (or misinterpreting the requirements), not giving the required number of points, repeating points and failure to develop answers. A significant number of candidates had difficulties with evaluation.

Section A: Audio Visual

Average Percentage Mark 77%

The content of the DVD was considered very relevant to the Link Modules course and a good resource for teachers. Candidates generally performed well in this section producing the highest average return on the Written Examination of 77%.

Examiners noted that Questions 5 and 7 proved difficult for some candidates. Common answers for Question 5 focused on Curriculum Vitae but did not refer to anything else. The point about social networking sites from Part 3 of the DVD was frequently included in candidates' answers.

In Question 7, many candidates had difficulty giving three reasons for interview preparation. Typical answers mentioned methods of interview preparation but did not include the reasons. Very little development of answers was evident in many cases.

Section B: Case Study

Average Percentage Mark 50%

The Case Study was based on a local community. Examiners concluded that it was clear and easily understood. Candidates who had prepared well were duly rewarded. Given that the Case Study is issued to schools prior to the Written Examination a better standard of answering was anticipated.

Question 2 was not well answered. Candidates should take time to read the question carefully. In part (i), the majority of answers did not separate the County Enterprise Board and the County Council. A general answer was given to cover both. In part (ii), many candidates focused on the actual enterprises mentioned in the Case Study rather than on ways to encourage new enterprises into the local area.

Question 3 parts (i) and (ii) were well answered although in part (i), very few candidates described the method of gathering information. In part (iii), the majority of candidates mentioned one project only rather than the two required by the question. A significant number of candidates did not explain the challenges in retaining what was good about the area.

Section C: General Questions

The questions posed in this section cover the full range of the syllabus.

Question 1: Enterprise

Attempt Frequency 64%

Average Percentage Mark 64%

- (a) This part was well answered. However, some candidates failed to name a product/service.
- (b) The standard of answering here was quite good. Examiners commented that some candidates gave only one answer under each heading and confused weaknesses with threats which meant marks were lost.
- (c) Answers presented for this part were of a good standard but some did not describe the characteristics of entrepreneurs as required in the question.
- (d) Even though the standard of answers presented here was good, some candidates gave descriptions rather than explaining the differences between entrepreneurs and managers.

Question 2: Teamwork

Attempt Frequency 87%

Average Percentage Mark 56%

- (a) A number of candidates lost marks for not identifying the teamwork activity with some stating Action Plan rather than naming the activity. Some candidates did not elaborate on their role in the activity. A number of answers were disallowed as they referred to a non-LCVP activity.
- (b) The majority of candidates performed well in this section.
- (c) This section was generally well answered. However marks were lost where answers were insufficiently developed.
- (d) Examiners reported that most candidates were able to name an evaluation method but failed to develop the point.

Question 3: Job Advertisement

Attempt Frequency 82%

Average Percentage Mark 52%

- (a) Candidates, in general, performed well in this section. Difficulties were mainly associated with the term 'Equal Opportunities Employer'.
- (b) Examiners reported that most candidates presented two points but failed to give a third point and consequently were not awarded full marks.
- (c) Many candidates misinterpreted this question and gave advice on the content of the application form rather than advice on completing the application form. Some candidates confused an application form with a Curriculum Vitae.
- (d) Many candidates listed four relevant points but failed to develop them adequately.

Question 4: Leadership and Communication

Attempt Frequency 46%

Average Percentage Mark 48%

- (a) This part of the question was reasonably well answered. The majority of candidates explained their role in the activity in detail but did not explain why it was a success.
- (b) Marks were lost due to lack of development.
- (c) Many candidates misinterpreted the question. Where correct answers were presented there was a failure to develop answers adequately.
- (d)
 - (i) The standard of answering was quite good in general.
 - (ii) Many candidates gave one method of improving communication skills rather than the three required by the question.

Question 5: Charity Fundraiser

Attempt Frequency 47%

Average Percentage Mark 44%

- (a) A large number of candidates presented an agenda for a 'general meeting' rather than a 'first meeting' and consequently lost marks. The compulsory point (election of officers) was omitted in many cases.
- (b) Many candidates discussed the benefits of teamwork rather than the benefits of participating in the activity.
- (c) Answers presented by some candidates lacked development and were therefore not awarded full marks.
- (d) Many candidates described a series of steps in the resolution of a dispute rather than three different methods of resolving disputes as required by the question.

Question 6: Work Experience/Shadowing

Attempt Frequency 92%

Average Percentage Mark 52%

- (a) Candidates generally performed very well here with the majority being awarded full marks.
- (b) Most candidates performed well here. However, some lost marks due to a lack of development of answers. Some candidates misinterpreted the question and answered from the perspective of the employee rather than the employer, as required in the question.

- (c) A large number of candidates gave very detailed responses on the planning and organisation of their work placement but failed to evaluate the experience. Some did link it to a future career plan but did not refer to school, home or community and therefore were not awarded full marks.
- (d) A significant number of candidates performed well as they described the difficulties they experienced. However, marks were lost as answers were not developed sufficiently. There was some repetition of points.

3.4 Conclusions

- Examiners reported that the Written Examination paper was fair and covered a wide range of specific learning outcomes from the Link Modules syllabus. The choice of questions gave candidates a good opportunity to display their knowledge.
- Performance in the Written Examination showed an improvement on 2009.
- Candidates lose marks in the Written Examination for the following reasons:
 - not reading or interpreting questions correctly
 - not responding adequately to the command words used in questions e.g. describe, list, outline and explain
 - failure to use the learning gained through the completion of Portfolio coursework when answering the relevant questions in the examination paper
 - failure to support answering with the correct amount of detail or development
 - insufficient analysis and evaluation where required.

3.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that teachers:

- refer to the LCVP Programme Statement available at www.education.ie which gives the specific learning outcomes for each unit within the Link Modules. The specific learning outcomes should be referred to on a regular basis to ensure that all work prepared and presented is part of the LCVP programme
- provide students with an opportunity to practise for the Written Examination, using past examination papers
- familiarise students with the requirements of the command words used in the examination paper
- use the published marking scheme as a resource and a guide when preparing for the Written Examination. These are available at the State Examinations Commission website www.examinations.ie

It is recommended that students:

- use past examination papers and marking schemes to prepare for the Written Examination. These are available at the State Examinations Commission's website www.examinations.ie
- read all questions carefully and answer all the required parts
- take a critical look at each answer before leaving it to ensure that all relevant details are included
- take account of mark allocations for questions and parts of questions and plan the use of time accordingly.

- use the learning gained through the completion of Portfolio coursework when answering the relevant questions in the Written Examination

4. Portfolio of Coursework 2010

4.1 Introduction

The Portfolio of Coursework, which has a mark allocation of 240 marks, consists of two sections as follows:

Section 1: Core Items (compulsory)

- Curriculum Vitae (25 marks)
- Enterprise/Action Plan (35 marks)
- Career Investigation (40 marks)
- Summary Report (40 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. They concurrently evaluate and document their experiences and submit these documents for assessment. Each portfolio item must be the candidate's own original work. The inclusion of material directly downloaded from websites or copied from other sources is not acceptable. However, there is one exception, downloaded material may be used within the Career Investigation when dealing with information regarding further education and related entry requirements. This is because such information is of a specific, semi-legal and technical nature and not amenable to personal adaptation.

The Recorded Interview/Presentation may be presented in DVD and VHS videotape format.

4.2 Performance of Candidates

Table 5 below shows the percentage of candidates achieving each grade in the Portfolio of Coursework 2007-2010

Table 5: Performance of candidates in the Portfolio of Coursework 2007-2010

		Portfolio			
Year	Total	+80%	65-79%	50-64%	0-49%
2007	13,935	43	40	12	5
2008	14,545	31	46	17	6
2009	15,096	34	45	16	6
2010	15,542	31	46	17	6

4.3 Analysis of Candidate Performance

This information is based on an analysis of the Sample 20 returns (9.1% of cohort). The attempt frequency, average marks and average percentage marks were as follows:

Table 6: Summary of the performance of candidates in the Portfolio of Coursework 2010

Topic	Attempt Frequency	Average Mark	Average %
Core Items			
Curriculum Vitae (25 marks)	100%	21	84%
Action Plan (35 marks)	98%	26	74%
Career Investigation (40 marks)	98%	27	68%
Summary Report (40 marks)	98%	30	75%
Optional Items (any two)			
Work Experience Diary (50 marks)	90%	31	62%
Enterprise Report (50 marks)	14%	32	64%
My Own Place (50 marks)	14%	29	58%
Recorded Interview (50 marks)	84%	38	76%

Examiners made the following general observations regarding candidate performance in the Portfolio of Coursework:

- the overall standard of layout and presentation was good. The portfolios were generally well presented and bound. The majority of candidates presented word-processed portfolios.
- the majority of candidates adhered to the prescribed limit on the quantity of work presented
- standards within and between centres were quite variable
- some candidates lost marks for poor spelling, grammar and punctuation
- there was an increase in the number of portfolio items disallowed. Action Plans and Summary Reports based on non-LCVP activities were disallowed. Work Experience Diaries were disallowed where the dates were outside the two year time frame of the programme
- some candidates did not submit full portfolios
- some portfolios gave rise to suspicions of copying/plagiarism, necessitating correspondence with schools. This resulted in the marks of a number of candidates being withheld pending investigation by the SEC. Any level of plagiarism/copying can threaten the integrity of the assessment process.

Core Items

Curriculum Vitae (25 marks): The average percentage mark awarded for this item was 84%. This mark was equal to the mark achieved in 2009 and it was the highest of all the portfolio items.

Curriculum Vitae were generally well prepared and presented, although marks were lost due to the following:

- poor presentation and layout because of errors in the use of tabs, spacing and fonts
- poor spelling, grammar and punctuation errors
- not including a section on 'skills' and 'qualities'
- not using the correct title for the Link Modules
- omitting the title, position and telephone number of referees
- not including the address of the work placement, the date or the duties relating to that placement.

Enterprise/Action Plan (35 marks): The average percentage mark achieved for this item was 74% which was 1% higher than 2009.

Some of the issues that arose in relation to the Enterprise/Action Plan were as follows:

- parts of the plan, for example, action steps, schedule of time and evaluation methods, were written in part or fully in the past tense
- some candidates omitted a personal or a group objective
- repetition of research methods led to loss of marks. In some cases there was no analysis of the research methods
- the duties pertaining to the day of the event were omitted in some instances
- some candidates did not include income, expenditure and profit in the schedule of costs. Some candidates made reference to income only
- in some cases evaluations were either omitted or insufficiently developed. Where an evaluation was provided, in some instances it did not link back to the stated aims and objectives
- on occasions, the plan submitted did not meet the criteria of an LCVP activity.

Career Investigation (40 marks): The average percentage mark awarded for this item was 68%. This mark was equal to the average mark achieved in 2009.

Common weaknesses noted by examiners included the following

- poor presentation, grammar, spelling and punctuation
- insufficient detail given on the duties involved in the career
- skills and qualities needed for the career were omitted from some candidates' work
- in some cases the career choice was not linked to the candidate's personal aptitudes; in other instances the career choice was not linked to the Leaving Certificate subjects

- when describing the two different pathways to the selected qualification some candidates did not give sufficient detail about the course content. The course title, CAO points requirements and end qualification awarded were omitted by a number of candidates
- descriptions of the out of school activity lacked sufficient detail
- some candidates failed to evaluate the career itself or the career investigation process.

Summary Report (40 marks): The average percentage mark awarded for this item was 75% and was equal to the mark achieved in 2009.

Examiners indicated that Summary Reports were generally well answered, however, marks were lost for the following reasons:

- a number of candidates failed to include a personal aim or a group aim when reporting on a group activity
- some reports were very short and lacked adequate detail. The content did not relate to the stated aims of the report. The description of the activity was frequently insufficient
- a small number of candidates omitted headings within the body of the report
- conclusions were not always linked to the stated aims of the report
- some of the recommendations were not valid to the report
- the Assessment Guidelines (page 21) outline the restrictions which apply to the content of material submitted. A number of candidates did not take account of these restrictions and submitted a report on My Own Place as well as a Summary Report on the same activity. This also happened with the Enterprise Report
- there were some instances of material downloaded from websites
- reports on non-LCVP activities were disallowed.

Optional Items (Any 2 of 4)

Work Experience Diary (50 marks)

The average percentage mark achieved for this item was 62%. This was identical to the mark achieved in 2009. This was the most popular optional item and was submitted by 90% of candidates.

Examiners reported that candidates generally performed well in this item and were comfortable describing their experience in the work place or work shadowing. Good descriptions of their personalised accounts were given in general. The range of work placements tended to be quite similar across the candidature with childcare, primary teaching, shop assistants, restaurant work and trades being the most popular.

Common weaknesses noted by examiners included the following:

- errors in presentation and word-processing with mistakes in the use of headings, fonts and tabs
- reasons for choosing a work placement were not well explained and many candidates failed to mention their own aptitudes. Links to their Leaving Certificate subjects were omitted. Most, however, covered their career plan well

- analysis as a concept posed difficulties for candidates and some failed to analyse their own performance in any great detail
- a number of candidates appeared to have difficulty with the evaluation of their work experience and failed to link it to their future career aspirations and/or future studies. Efforts to link what had been learned during the work placement, to home, school or the community were disappointing or omitted completely
- the use of extensive headings throughout the diary restricted the flow of a detailed account of the work experience and resulted in repetition of points already made.

Enterprise Report (50 marks)

The average percentage mark achieved for this item was 64%. The mark achieved in 2009 was 66%. Only 14% of candidates submitted an Enterprise Report.

Examiners noted the following:

- some candidates lost marks for omitting the author's name. Marks were also lost for omitting the table of contents.
- some candidates did not make sufficient use of charts, tables or diagrams and consequently lost marks
- some candidates did not describe their own individual contribution to the enterprise
- the summary of the main points in the report was generally not well attempted
- recommendations lacked clarity and did not always relate to the report itself.

My Own Place (50 marks)

The average percentage mark achieved for this item was 58% compared to 66% in 2009. This was the least popular item along with the Enterprise Report.

Common weaknesses noted by examiners in relation to My Own Place include the following:

- omission of a table of contents
- many reports concentrated on one area or aspect of their local area and failed to give an overview of it
- some candidates omitted their own individual contribution
- methods of research were stated but not adequately developed
- the information in the body of the report was not consistent with the stated aims and objectives.
- there was a lack of analysis of a key issue and suggestions for improvement were not well developed. When analysis did occur it tended to be implicit rather than explicit
- conclusions and recommendations did not link back to the stated aims and objectives of the report
- evaluations omitted the link to candidates' Leaving Certificate subjects.

Recorded Interview (50 marks)

The average percentage mark achieved on this item was 75%. This was 1% less than 2009. It was very popular with 84% of candidates submitting a Recorded Interview.

Examiners reported that candidates scored well in this item and that content was very good. Most candidates were well prepared. They demonstrated good knowledge and communication skills. The majority of centres kept within the five minutes allowed for the recorded presentation. Less than 1% of Recorded Interviews were submitted in VHS format in 2010, compared with 10% in 2009.

Marks were lost due to the following:

- in some instances candidates did not develop their answers sufficiently or give opinions
- using 'learned off' answers to a prepared list of questions.

Issues with DVDs:

Examiners identified a number of issues relating to the DVDs as follows:

- in some instances candidates' examination numbers could not be seen or read.
- some DVDs would not play on any device.
- a small number of DVDs were completely blank.
- the sound quality was poor in a number of cases.
- when the DVD was filmed during lunch or break time there was a lot of background noise.
- the sequence sheet did not reflect the running order of the candidates and was not included with the DVD in some instances.

4.4 Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions derived from examiners' reports and from the analysis of candidate performance.

- The Portfolio of Coursework was generally well done and of a much higher standard than the Written Examination.
- Candidates lost marks in the Portfolio of Coursework for the following reasons:
 - portfolio items are too short or not fully completed
 - the material presented had presentation and layout errors
 - personal or group objectives omitted
 - evaluation were not linked back to the stated aims and objectives
 - individual contributions omitted from group projects
 - inclusion of non-LCVP activities.

4.5 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

It is recommended that Teachers:

- obtain and read the circular issued by the State Examinations Commission to schools in January each year called “Assessment Arrangements”. A copy of this circular can be downloaded from the website www.examinations.ie/schools. This circular should be read before starting the recording of the Recorded Interview
- ensure that students adhere to the Assessment Guidelines (page 20) which state that “No more than **six items** should be presented in the portfolio - **one** item from each of the core areas and **one** item from each chosen option”. Producing multiple copies of portfolio items takes up a significant amount of class time and may have a negative impact on the quality of portfolio items submitted and ultimately on the time available to prepare for the Written Examination
- try to schedule activities as early as possible as this allows time to review and proofread portfolio items before submission
- if possible the person selected to conduct the Recorded Interviews should be familiar with second level students and be able to put them at ease. Ensure that the person selected is familiar with page 120 of the Assessment Guidelines regarding the conduct of the interview
- questions asked should be open-ended and provide students with an opportunity to give full and detailed answers. The interviewer should ensure that questions make reference to the LCVP programme
- make three copies of the DVD and submit two to the State Examinations Commission with the Portfolio of Coursework. Ensure that the DVD is finalised correctly and plays on a domestic DVD player. DVD-R is the most compatible format when burning DVD’s. Avoid using DVD RW. Write the school roll number on each DVD
- complete the sequence sheet in candidate order and submit it with the DVD
- delete a candidate’s name from the sequence sheet if the candidate is no longer in school.

It is recommended that students:

- follow the guidance of teachers and review portfolios on a regular basis. Students should be aware that significant marks are available for presentation across the entire Portfolio of Coursework
- prepare well for the Recorded Interview. Develop answers without prompting from the interviewer. Answers should be presented naturally and confidently.