



Circular 0063/2016

To Boards of Management and Principals of Post-Primary schools and the Chief Executives in Education and Training Boards

Re: Revised procedure for October Returns of Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students to the Department of Education and Skills for 2016/17 and future years.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this circular is to notify post-primary schools of the revised procedures for the submission of data on Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students by schools to the Department of Education and Skills as part of the annual return known as the October Return.

The objective of this change is to reduce the administrative burden on schools regarding the recording of data on PLC students. Due to the recent deployment of functionality for recording learners on the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) schools offering PLC courses will now have the ability to load PLC student data in batches from their local school system/s directly onto PLSS.

This circular amends Circular 38/2014 – *Arrangements for the submission of returns to the Department of Education and Skills by post-primary schools for 2014/15 and future years* as far as circular 38/2014 related to the method of return of data of PLC students. The other provisions in respect of returns provided for in circular 38/2014 continue to apply.

Please note there is no change from previous years in how recognised PLC students together with other recognised students enrolled in a school are used as the basis for the allocation of staffing and funding to schools.

2. Revised procedures for October Returns of PLC students

Please note that from 2016/17 onwards schools are required to make a separate October Return in respect of Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students enrolled in courses in their schools as at 30th September each year to the Department.

From 2016/17 this return will be known as the PLC October Return and will be generated by schools from the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) provided by the PLSS team which consists of representatives of SOLAS and the ETBI.

3. Discontinuation of P-POD for PLC students

For 2016/17 schools are required to record all PLC students enrolled in their school as at 30th September on the Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS).

From 2016/17 onwards the Department no longer requires schools to record PLC students on the P-POD system.

This change has been introduced to minimise the administrative burden placed on schools by requiring schools to record PLC students on only one of the national student databases in use in the post-primary sector.

PLC students' records for 2015/16 and earlier years will continue to be available on P-POD in line with the retention policy for P-POD.

4. Using PLSS to record PLC students

The Department has been advised by the PLSS team that it will be deploying the functionality to record students on the Programme and Learner Support System to all recognised post-primary schools which are approved to provide Post-Leaving Certificate courses for 2016/17 onwards. All schools offering PLC courses will be required to record student enrolments onto the PLSS system for 2016/17 onwards.

The Department understands that the PLSS team will be providing training to schools in the use of the functionality in PLSS to record students. A separate workshop will be held by the PLSS team for schools on using the October Returns functionality available in PLSS. Queries in respect of the use of PLSS should be made to the ETBI/PLSS Coordinator.

5. Generating October Returns

Schools will be required to generate their October Returns of PLC students from PLSS on the 7th October each year (or the next school day after the 7th October where the 7th falls on a weekend).

Specific information on using the October Returns facility within PLSS may be accessed in the PLSS system.

Schools are required to print off and sign the PLC Certificate of Management. Where the school is an ETB school the signed Certificate of Management must be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the school's ETB for co-signature. The signed copy of the Certificate should be returned to *the Department of Education and Skills, Parents, Learners and Database Section, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath N37 X659.*

Where schools are offering both PLC courses and non-PLC programmes such as Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate two separate Certificate of Management will be required. One certificate should be generated from P-POD for Junior, Transition and Leaving Certificate students as usual and a separate certificate from the PLSS system for PLC students only from 2016/17 onwards.

General information in respect of the October Returns is available at www.education.ie. Any queries (both PLC and non-PLC) in respect of the October Returns process should be sent to p-podhelpdesk@education.gov.ie.

6. Accuracy of Returns

Please note that the total number of recognised PLC students submitted in the October Returns will be used together with the separate returns of non-PLC students, where applicable, to calculate staffing and grant allocations to your school. It is therefore very important to ensure, in particular, that the total number of recognised students is accurate.

The Department is obliged to refer to An Garda Síochána any deliberate overstatement of student numbers for the purposes of claiming additional resources from the Department. In these circumstances it will be a matter for An Garda Síochána to determine what action, if any, should be taken and consequently this may result in criminal prosecution. Recoupment arrangements will also be required in respect of any overpayments (staffing or grants).

7. Data Protection

Please note that a data protection statement in summary format in respect of the use and management of PLC students' data by the Department is available at

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Returns/October-Returns/>.

Schools are requested to bring this data protection statement to the attention of all PLC students enrolling in their school.

Information on the use and management of PLC student data by schools should be available directly from the school.

Information on the use and management of PLC student data held on PLSS is available from the PLSS liaison person for the school.

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PRINCIPAL OFFICER
SCHOOLS DIVISION

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