



Schola Europaea / Bureau du Secrétaire général  
Pedagogical Development Unit

Brussels, 24 November 2020

## MEMORANDUM

Ref.: 2020-11-M-1-en/AB

Orig.: EN

**To:** Directors, Deputy Directors for the Nursery, Primary and Secondary Cycle of the European Schools and the Accredited European Schools, Members of the Joint Board of Inspectors of the European Schools

**From:** Andreas Beckmann, Deputy Secretary-General

**Subject:** Organisation of the B Tests and Examinations in **S4, S5 and S6** during the first semester 2020-2021

## Introduction

This Memorandum aims to provide schools with guidance on the organisation of 2020-2021 first semester examinations leading to the B1 marks when *in-situ* teaching and learning is suspended.<sup>1</sup> The content of this Memorandum will be revised and adjusted to the requirements of the second semester examinations after January 2021. The recommendations consider the specific contexts while ensuring system-wide consistency and equity of treatment for students.

- The Memorandum focuses on the assessment activities carried out in the Secondary Cycle in years **S4-S5-S6**.<sup>2 3</sup>

In coherence with this Memorandum, a separate MEMORANDUM will cover the short and long written examinations during the first semester in the year S7 (the Pre-Baccalaureate examinations), based on the recommendations of the Working Group 'Assessment Secondary'.

According to this decision, Article 59.5 of the General Rules (2014-03-D-14) reads as follows:

*“The **B mark** is based on the marks obtained in examination(s) or through other forms of assessment. It covers the pupils’ competences acquired during an extensive period of time in certain subjects.*

*In accordance with Article 26a, the assessment system described in Article 59. 1-5. is also applicable in a distance teaching and learning situation. In such a situation, where B tests and B examinations cannot be performed on site, preference will be given to B tests and B examinations identical to the ones in situ. In addition, such B tests or B examinations can be replaced by alternative tasks for assessment”.*

Article 59.5 of the General Rules clarifies that if it is not possible to organise the B tests and examinations *in situ*:

- schools should set remote assessments which are **identical** (i.e., matching closely) to the ones that would be used in normal circumstances,
- or replace them by **alternative tasks**, which should be considered as last resort solutions.

This Memorandum provides some general guidance for such 'alternative tasks'.

Further guidance on assessment, notably on A and B marks, and in the Nursery/Primary cycle, the use of online portfolios and other alternative forms of assessment will be included in the envisaged document *Distance Teaching and Learning Policy of the European Schools* (2020-09-D-10), which will be forwarded to the Board of Governors for approval in December 2020. Further updated information on assessment, such as on digital portfolios used in the Primary cycle are also available on the [Pedagogical Development SharePoint](#) (access is currently limited to European Schools).

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<sup>1</sup> As the A mark is set upon all the observations and of the pupil's overall performance (holistic approach), no change in the attribution of the A mark is foreseen.

<sup>2</sup> See 2018-01-D-19-de/en/fr-2 – Harmonised assessment at the end of year 5 and written examinations leading to B marks in year 5.

<sup>3</sup> See 2019-05-D-38-de/en/fr-1 – Organisational arrangements for written examinations leading to B marks in year 6.

## Scenario 1: assessment can be done on site

### a) Adaptation of the location

When *in-situ* teaching and learning is suspended, the school management must do its utmost to organise the examinations leading to the B marks on-site, if necessary, applying different arrangements respecting hygienic and safety measures imposed by the authorities of the Member State hosting the school. Even if in a Member State it is forbidden to teach *in situ*, it could be possible that examinations are allowed to take place *in situ* under specific conditions.

Therefore, the school management may decide to utilise the school building (spreading pupils in several rooms) for examination purposes or may organise the examinations in an external venue. In any case it is advisable to consult the local authorities before such a decision is taken.

### b) Adaptation of the calendar

A school can also decide to adapt the examinations calendar to make it possible to organise the examinations *in situ* at a later date until the end of the first semester.

## Scenario 2: assessment must be done remotely

### General principles

Remote assessment should be carried out in such a way that the assessment principles of the European Schools are respected, as defined in the following documents:

- Relevant sections of the General Rules (2014-03-D-14-en-9);
- Assessment Policy in the European Schools (2011-01-D-61-en-4);
- Relevant sections of the Educational Support Policy (2012-05-D-14-en-9) and the Procedural document (2012-05-D-15-12);
- Marking system of the European Schools: Guidelines for use(2017-05-D-29-en-9) + Annexes;
- Structure for all syllabuses in the system of the European Schools (2019-09-D-27-en-3 - principles and Attainment Descriptors);
- Distance Learning Recommendations for course continuity during temporary suspension of obligatory regular attendance of pupils at school (2020-03-D-11-en-7);
- The assessment instructions included in the syllabuses.

If the assessment is to take place at a distance or online, whether with identical or alternative tasks for assessment (as stated by Article 59.5 of the General Rules), the latter must be:

- aligned with the learning objectives of the relevant syllabus<sup>4</sup>;

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<sup>4</sup> See 'Guidelines for use of the New Marking System' (ref. 2017-05-D-29-en-9): "A valid examination accurately tests the learning objectives of the relevant syllabus. Thus, in a valid examination, there should be an alignment between the syllabus, the learning objectives, the assessment itself and the related evaluation."

- based on the content covered and the competences developed during previous teaching and learning;
- in line with the principles of the New Marking System;
- harmonised, if relevant and whenever possible;
- in line with the conditions established in the Individual Learning Plan of the pupils receiving Intensive Support and the special arrangements for assessment authorised for the pupils by the Directors and/or the Joint Board of Inspectors.

Moreover, when assessing remotely, the school management (with cycle and subject coordinators) must also ensure a well-balanced workload for all students. This should be achieved by communicating to pupils in which subjects written assessments (e.g., examinations) are to be taken and in which subjects alternative tasks are requested. A general decision should be taken for each year level, across language sections.

In the following sections, you will find some modalities of alternative tasks. Each school is free to adapt to these modalities according to its needs.

As mentioned previously in this document, more practical and updated guidance is also to be found on the [Pedagogical Development SharePoint](#) (access is currently limited to the European Schools).

## Possible assessment tasks

### a) Open-book or take-home examination formats

Open-book and take-home examinations allow students to access supplementary information (from peers or external resources).

In open-book examinations, students can use any material (notes, books, texts or other resources, including online material) during examinations, without plagiarism or help from another person. Questions on facts as well as knowledge- and content-based questions are easy for students to look-up during a remote exam. Therefore, teachers should not ask for factual knowledge or remember level questions but aim at more complex questions that prompt students to show understanding, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. Conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge should be preferred to factual knowledge. Similarly, teachers may adjust the weighting of the grading criteria so that higher order thinking questions have more value.

### b) Remote oral examinations

Oral tests and examinations assess students' learning by speaking, and their format ranges from open discussions and presentations to formal interviews.

Remote oral examinations guarantee sufficient academic integrity in many subjects. Therefore, teachers may organise stand-alone oral examinations with students using a videoconferencing tool (e.g., Microsoft Teams). In this case, no recording is foreseen.

### **c) Short-term or Long-term works or projects**

Students have a short or long preparation time (several days / several weeks) around an imposed or chosen theme. Teachers can also consider problem-based learning (PBL) or inquiry-based learning (IBL) projects.

### **d) Long-term digital portfolios**

A digital portfolio is a cumulative collection of a student's work. Students decide what examples to include that characterize their growth and accomplishment over the term. Students select their papers (documents and products) and present them in a structured format, accompanied by personal reflection. This task would presume that the teacher has given instructions to students on how to make a well-structured digital portfolio

It is recommended that subject coordinators and subject referents facilitate professional discussions on how to best design such examinations and alternative tasks.

## **Process**

### **a) Preparation**

School management, in coordination with the subject and cycle coordinators should decide which type of examination and alternative tasks the pupils should undergo in the different subjects and the different cycles. A planning should be established.

Teachers will develop the examinations/alternative under the responsibility of the subject coordinators and subject referents. Whenever possible a harmonized approach should be chosen, where relevant and where appropriate. Equal treatment needs to be ensured at least on class/subject group level.

### **b) Testing**

Teachers must communicate to students the purpose and nature of such examinations, along with explicit instructions such as time management, length, academic integrity, timelines, and due dates.

### **c) Grading and marking**

The assessment criteria must be communicated in advance to the pupils. The examinations and alternative tasks must be assessed in accordance with the different levels mentioned in the attainment descriptors of each Syllabus. A weighting of competencies assessed might be established in advance.

Teachers should use an assessment record sheet for the transparent documentation and justification of the mark given (harmonised by subject, at school level).

## Quality assurance and equity

Each school must ensure that subject coordinators/subject referents under the responsibility of the Deputy Director of the school collaborate to design sufficient quality assurance for the equity of the alternative tasks for assessment, based on the approved attainment descriptors of each syllabus.

The marking and grading could be done according to a well-established matrix within a subject department.

## Fostering academic integrity and fraud prevention measures

The European Schools aim to foster a climate for academic integrity and trust and to focus on supporting learning rather than on punishment and surveillance. The following strategies can be used to nurture academic integrity:

- Teachers should discuss with students the concept of academic integrity in the context of their subject and explain why it is important.
- Schools and teachers must inform students of the consequences of committing fraud (plagiarism, being helped by others), and of the measures the school has taken.
- Teachers can build in opportunities for students to demonstrate the thinking process informing their work, such as through multi-stage assignments, where students submit components of the assignment at staggered due dates.

In addition to fraud prevention measures, schools and teachers can take procedural steps:

- Teachers may check the exam work with an anti-plagiarism application, when available. Such an application will require prior consultation from the school's Data Protection Officer and approval by the Director as data controller.
- Teachers may check the originality of the exam work by following up with short oral interviews.

## CONCLUSIONS

The school management is requested to organise the first semester examinations and tests (B marks) in line with this Memorandum, and to inform members of the school community accordingly.

**Priority has to be given to the organisation of the exams *in situ*** (adapted location and/or adapted calendar).

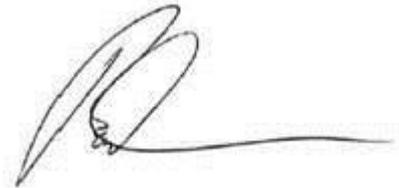
If not possible due to national, regional or local measures of confinement, **the preferred alternative task for assessment is the open-book timed examination.**

Other alternative tasks are possible and remain at the discretion of the school management. It is recommended that coordinators organise a discussion on alternative tasks for assessment both at school level.

This Memorandum enters into force with immediate effect.

A review of this Memorandum will be carried out after the first semester, based on the feedback communicated by the schools. The recommendations will be adapted if necessary.

The Pedagogical Development Unit remains at your disposal for any questions you may have on this subject.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Andreas BECKMANN  
Deputy Secretary-General

Annexe: Synthesis diagrams (English)

Copy: Pedagogical Development Unit and Bacculaureate Unit.

# Annex – synthetis diagrams

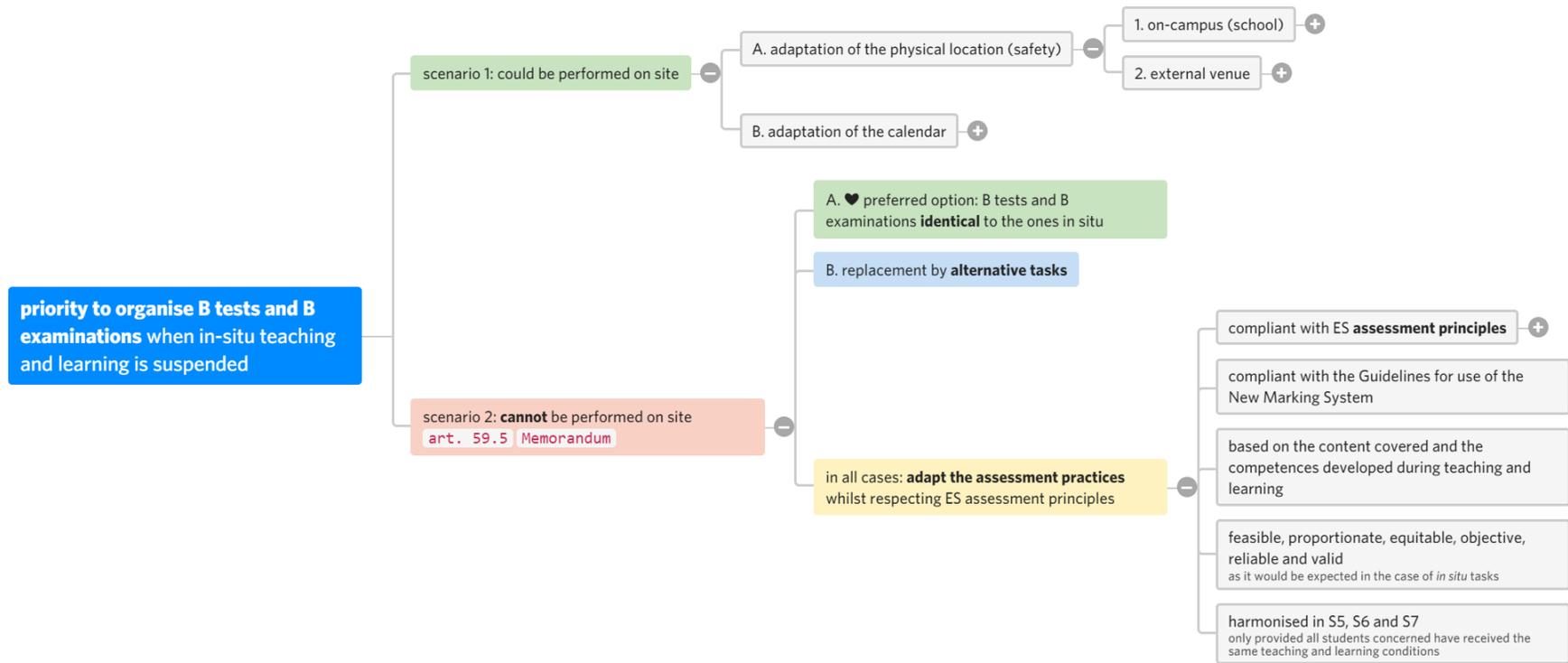


Figure 1. Decision tree for the organisation of examinations.

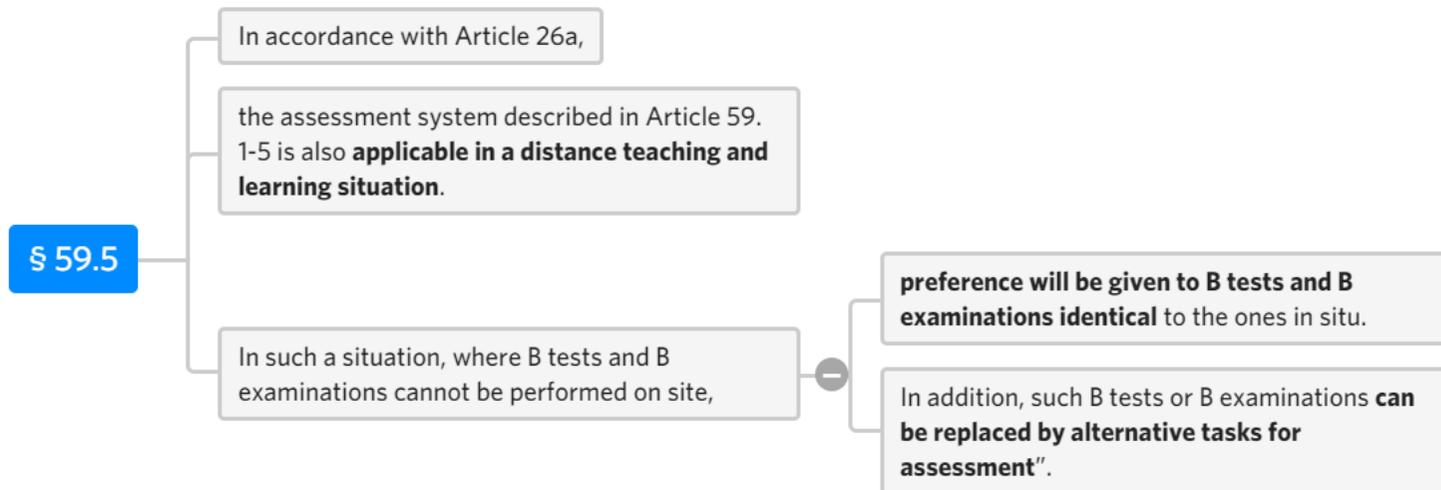


Figure 2. Logical breakdown of the article 59.5 (General Rules).