

SECONDARY

EXAMINATIONS

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SC & HSC 2020 - ACTION PLAN

(05.05.2020)

(No. B/32) Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate 2020, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if –

- (a) a request for the rescheduling thereof has been addressed to the Local Examinations Syndicate of the University of Cambridge and, if so, indicate where matters stand, and
- (b) an Action Plan has been set up for the 2020 cohort of students who will be sitting therefor and, if so, give details thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, globally a large majority of countries have witnessed nationwide close down of schools, resulting in alternative timings being identified for assessments at different levels. The closure of schools and the subsequent postponement of examinations is now an international reality. Cambridge Assessment International Education is responsible for the conduct of O Level Examinations in over 50 countries while AS and A Levels are taken in over 130 countries.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, most of these countries have taken the decision to close schools, resulting in loss of school days and this in turn has implications for assessment and examinations. On 03 March of this year, Cambridge has informed of its decision not to hold its international examinations in May-June 2020 series in any country. We are given to understand that Cambridge is not yet in a position to receive entries of October-November 2020 exams as in an update of 20 April 2020, Cambridge has stated that it will confirm the dates when school candidates can be entered for the November 2020 series as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware, schools will resume on 03 August 2020 and there will be need to make up for the lost days due to the confinement for students to catch up with their studies. Also students will be required to adequately complete the syllabus for the different subjects to be taken at SC and HSC levels. In view of the above, it should be ensured that the sufficient time and space are provided for students to develop their preparedness and to complete their syllabi such that they may take the international examinations in the best possible conditions. The school calendar as well as the assessment calendar will accordingly have to be adjusted, that is, it will be from the period August 2020 up to February/March 2021.

In this context, discussions are already ongoing with Cambridge Assessment International Education regarding the rescheduling of SC/HSC examinations. Such examinations will have to be taken next year for the 2020 SC/HSC cohort of students after the end of the newly adjusted calendar.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/35, B/36, B/47, B/48, B/49, B/50 and B/51 have been withdrawn.

Go ahead!

Mr Nuckcheddy: With regard to those candidates who had already paid for the May/June A Level and O Level exams, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister please inform what are the procedures that are going to be set-up for the refund of these fees?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate will be liaising with the students and we will let them know at what time the refund will be done, most probably after the confinement period.

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EXAMINATIONS

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION-POSTPONEMENT
(05.05.2020)**

(No. B/36) Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the National Certificate of Education, she will state if consideration will be given for the postponement thereof in order to ensure that the students eligible to sit therefor are not unfairly penalised amid the Covid-19 lockdown in view of the disparity in the level of preparedness thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SECONDARY

EXAMINATIONS

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS 2019 - CAMBRIDGE O LEVEL HINDUISM SUBJECT - GRADE THRESHOLD

(06.03.2020)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the issue of the Grade Threshold for the subject Hinduism at the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2019, which was raised by the Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or on Monday 24 February 2020 at Adjournment.

The matter had been referred on 27 January 2020 to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, which has contacted the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE). The latter has informed the MES that Grade thresholds are set by it for each syllabus in each examination session.

According to CAIE, grades reflect a consistent level of achievement between different syllabuses within the O Level qualification and in different years. Each exam paper is unique and the difficulty of exam may vary from year to year. These slight variations require the different grade thresholds may need to be set each year to ensure that everyone gets the grade that reflects their level of achievement. Exam papers are never absolutely comparable within a subject across years, thus the grade threshold will inevitably vary from year to year.

CAIE has further informed that grade thresholds are set by using arithmetic calculation and not by using norm referencing. According to CAIE, professional judgement and statistical evidence are used when deciding on key grade thresholds. Statistical and technical information include marks distribution information (mean mark and standard deviation for current exam series and previous ones) as well. Archived scripts from previous years are also used to ensure that grades being set each year are comparable and fair.

CAIE has informed that they have followed all the procedures for the determination of grade thresholds for Cambridge O Level Hinduism.

The relevant stakeholders who have made representations would be informed by the MES of the above process as explained by CAIE.

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EXAMINATIONS

MATTERS RAISED

STUDENTS - SC EXAMS - EXAMS FEES

(06.03.2020)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My address is to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education.

With regard to the 5 credits benchmark for SC as a gateway for HSC in the Republic of Mauritius, there will students with 4 credits who will want to repeat SC exams. I want to bring to the attention of the hon. Minister of Education that among those students, there are some hardship cases. The fact that they are no longer eligible to have their exams fee paid by the Government, I just want to raise your attention, so you can make an assessment and on a case-to-case basis to see whether you can help those students in need.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important for me to inform the House that all students who have not got the 5 credits criterion to move on to Lower VI, all students whose families are on the SRM Register, will be eligible for the payment of the fees a second time. So, this applies to Mauritius and to Rodrigues as well.

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EXAMINATIONS

YEAR 2020

MATTERS RAISED

2019 SC EXAMINATION - HINDUISM - GRADE THRESHOLD

(24.02.2020)

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Education regarding the grade threshold, especially in Hinduism.

In fact, many Educators, students, parents and trade unionists are distressed by the serious discrepancy in grade threshold for the 2019 School Certificate examination. They have written letters to the Ministry of Education and MES seeking clarification why someone even with 60% in Hinduism has got 7 and not a Credit. I would request the Minister of Education to clarify us about it.

Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): I will pass on the message to the Minister of Education.