

# SECONDARY

## EXAMINATIONS

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS 2021 – ENGLISH LANGUAGE (ORAL) - BREAKDOWN

(26.10.2021)

(No. B/931) **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 Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2021, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examination Syndicate –

- (a) a detailed breakdown, band-wise from 1 to 5, of the results obtained by the students in Oral English Language, and
- (b) information as to the number of students who did not obtain a credit 6 in English Language because of the grades they obtained in the Oral English Language.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to inform the House that in view of the pandemic situation no oral assessments were held for Cambridge School Certificate Examinations in 2021. In addition, due to the torrential rains from the 28 April 2021, the English Paper 1 could not be taken. I wish to highlight here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Oral English component, counts for 12% of the overall grade. Cambridge Assessment International Education was contacted and we were informed that in such circumstances a special consideration applies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I already informed the House in my reply to PQ /415, special consideration is an adjustment which CAIE makes if the candidate misses one or more papers in a given subject in circumstances considered as exceptional and adverse, for example, disruption of an examination due to being COVID-19 positive, cyclonic weather, floods, earthquakes, etcetera. And this provided that the candidate has taken at least one component in the subject.

Mr Speaker, Sir, candidates for the English paper, in Mauritius entered for an option comprising the Oral test. We were informed that the IT systems at Cambridge could not

have produced the grade in the subject unless the input of marks, for all components, is affected. The marks for the oral component were thus determined on the basis of the marks scored by the student in the only paper for which they sat, that is, Paper 2. This is the established standard operating procedure of Cambridge for such cases and the calculated mark of the Oral test was determined in the same way for all candidates.

I am tabling, as requested, a breakdown of candidates results in Oral English bandwised from 1 to 5.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, as explained earlier, the grades assigned in the Oral Paper had no bearing on the overall marks of the candidates. In fact, it was the other way round. The grades assigned to the Oral Paper were based on the marks scored by the candidate in Paper 2. Thus, their results in English at the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2021 cannot be attributed to the marks allocated to students for the oral assessments.

I am tabling the papers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, hon. Minister. I am a bit flabbergasted because I know 12% is the weighting of Oral, in normal circumstances, I have just heard you. What avenues are left for aggrieved students if they are not happy with the grades they have got? Still they have got a grade 4 or 5 in Oral and this will bear a lot of prejudices to them in the future. What can these students do for remedy?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to bear in mind that we were in a pandemic situation and on top of that we had the torrential rains; the students did not take the papers. And in normal circumstances, if Cambridge did not apply the special consideration, the students would have been ungraded. We had negotiated with Cambridge; Cambridge allowed our students to get a grade. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have just explained, the results attributed to the students for the oral papers did not determine their grading. It is, on the other hand, the results that they obtained through the written paper that allowed the allocation of the marks for the oral papers.

# SECONDARY

## EXAMINATIONS

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS – MARKINGS & GRADING – DISCREPANCIES, ANOMALIES

(26.10.2021)

(No. B/930) **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 markings and grading at the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examination Syndicate, information as to the list of cases, subjectwise, where discrepancies and anomalies were noted since 2015 to date and table copy thereof, indicating the – (a) causes thereof, and

(b) prejudices, if any, caused to the students concerned therewith.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that since 2015 to date, the total number of 91,300 candidates sat for the School Certificate examinations and there were 139 cases of grade changes made during that period.

With regard to the Higher School Certificate, out of 52,877 candidates who sat for the examinations during that same period, there were 56 cases of grade changes.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to give the details thereof. For School Certificate, in year 2015, there were 44 cases. In 2016, there were 20 cases. In 2017 - 21 cases, 2018 - 17 cases, 2019 - 26 cases, and in 2020-2021 - 11 cases.

For the Higher School Certificate examinations, in year 2015 there were 9 cases, in 2016 -20 cases, in year 2017 - 5 cases, 2018 - 15 cases, 2019 - 6 cases and in 2020-2021 - 1 case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the causes of discrepancy may result from marking scheme and assessment criteria not being consistently applied by a few markers having a different interpretation of the marking scheme. This tends to be more common in essay-type and open-ended questions, which require the personal judgment of the marker.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am hereby tabling information pertaining to the number of cases subject-wise for both Cambridge SC and Higher School Certificate, where discrepancies and anomalies resulted in grade changes.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the figures that she gave for 2020-2021 have taken care of Design and Technology discrepancy that was noted especially in the results of 37 students of two particular secondary schools?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of Design and Technology results for High School Certificate, it is true that 29 candidates from Collège du Saint-Esprit and eight candidates from New Eton College, who had entered for Design and Technology Paper 9705, found their results as subsidiary results. And this information was given to the MES, which queried and the case was referred to the Cambridge International and the latter informed that for these two batches of students, the special consideration that was meant to be applied because of the fact that they did not take the paper because of torrential rains was not applied and immediately, the results were then reviewed and the students were given the Alevel results.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Hon. Minister, now that some students have to join University prior to getting their HSC results, Government has made a proviso for these students to get their results directly in that University. I have a case at Toronto University, where students got 'A+' in a subject but when he got his results in Mauritius, it is only 'A' in Main and in Subsidiary, he got small letter 'a' but when he got his results it is small letter 'b'. There are discrepancies which are taking place and I think Cambridge has to be notified about same because here, I hold the two different results in my hand.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when the results were given to the students online, it was clearly specified that these were provisional results and the proper scrutiny that normally Cambridge does was not completed. And it was mentioned that their results would come with their result slip and if there are minor changes, the students were already informed about it. What we did prior to their getting their results was to facilitate the admission procedure and we had requested Cambridge to ensure that the results could be communicated to the Universities prior to the release of the results, so as not to penalise the students.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Hon. Minister, there is a letter addressed to you on 21 October, I have a copy of it. A student has got 'one', 'one', 'one', 'one' in four papers and still, the overall grade is not an 'A+' what it should be. It is only 'A'. And will the hon. Minister check with the MES whether this discrepancy, if it is, can be modified?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this information was already conveyed to me and the MES is already dealing with Cambridge International Examinations for that.

**Dr. Gungapersad:** Hon. Minister, students, when they go for remarking of papers - I am not talking of clerical check, but remarking of papers – you know like me, it is very costly. Would you, with the help of MES, check with Cambridge University if the fee could be subsidised, especially for modest families where students very often do not go forward because they do not have the amount of money to do so?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I suppose a subsidy cannot be requested from Cambridge. We will try to see whether things can be done at our level, but I am sure that the students who are on the Social Register could even request from the Ministry of Social Security for support.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!