



*The European Parents' Association
of the European Schools*

*ALICANTE, BERGEN, BRUXELLES I, II, III, IV
FRANKFURT, KARLSRUHE, LUXEMBURG I, II,
MOL, MÜNCHEN, VARESE.*

IP Memo extra JTC, 5th June 2020

On 5 June, the Joint Teaching Committee (JTC) of the European Schools (ES) gathered for an extra-ordinary meeting to discuss two documents. Most importantly, **Consequences of COVID-19 – Follow-up of the Board of Governors and Preparation of the 2020/21 school year (2020-05-D-25-en-1)**. Some time was also spent discussing the current situation and the outlook for **language tests**.

The main point was organised under the following topics:

- Background (I)
- Measures taken by the schools and the OSG during the suspension of teaching in situ (II)
- Re-entry approach of the different schools (IV)
- Follow-up of the BoG (III)
 - Bacc and Evaluation
- Preparation for the coming school year (incl. mandate for the task force) (V)
 - Hybrid Learning

Opening the meeting with a special communication, the Secretary General (SG) expressed his gratitude to all stakeholders for their efforts and contributions in an “emergency situation”, including parents.

The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) proceeded to introduce the document at hand which he described as a result of informal consultations with the directors and the ES presidency, as well as of support and feedback received from parents and pupils.

The DSG recalled the recommendations document (Latest version: **2020-03-D-11-en-5**) provided by the OSG which has been updated regularly on the basis of feedback from the various stakeholders, “shifting from open recommendations to binding requirements”; as well as the decisions of the Board of Governors (BoG) at their April meeting (**2020-03-D-44-en-1**). Looking ahead to next year, the DSG suggested that, in order to be prepared for any situation and scenario, the JTC will be asked to mandate a Task Force for this purpose, starting in the second week of June until mid July, in time for the BoG to take the necessary decisions by Written Procedure (WP) at the end of July. Further details of the Task Force would be discussed under the last agenda point topic.

Focussing on how distance learning has gone so far, the DSG referred to another document supplementing the main one mentioned above (**MEMO 2020-05-M-6-en-1**), “which establishes in a specific chapter clearly defining ‘minimum requirements for online presence and activities of teachers’ as part of a concept of quality assurance during the period of suspension of teaching ‘in situ’”.

Interparents took the floor to congratulate the OSG and the individual ES for their efforts to meet the urgent and unforeseen challenges presented by the pandemic, adding that “*while much progress has been made during the lockdown period, there should now be a serious evaluation of lessons learned in order to raise and harmonize standards across the system going into September. During the lockdown period, students’ experience with teachers has ranged from exemplary to completely absent. It would be necessary to evaluate and identify the reasons for any absences, in order to provide training, support or resources. While an adjustment period was acceptable, anything that does not meet the standards set by the OSG should no longer be tolerated.*

Interparents appreciates the Recommendations document, and welcomes the Memorandum which lays out the requirements for Distance Learning. Parents need to be made aware of the basic requirements, in order to ensure quality and equal treatment of all students across the system. Now that these documents have been developed, it is important to share them with parents.

Looking forward to September, parents would also appreciate a clear definition of Distance Learning in terms of approach, strategy and targets. A system-wide Distance Learning Policy should be a public document available to all stakeholders. In the coming months, schools should also produce local policies incorporating requirements and recommendations from the central Distance Learning Policy.

Finally, Interparents feels that before moving forward it will be essential to evaluate the effect distance learning has had on the attainment of this year’s syllabi aims: this must be assessed in a detailed manner, class by class and subject by subject, in order to identify any gaps that will need filling.”

The DSG commented that, indeed, the feedback has not always been very good. During the last two weeks, the OSG contacted the directors, receiving explanations and agreements for improvement. He suggested that the last four weeks of the school year should be used to improve, and also to test and get prepared for the coming one. He announced that there were training activities foreseen for the end of August.

Acknowledging the role of parents during distance learning, the DSG pointed to a document aimed specifically at parents, made available on 20 March: Recommendations to Parents on **how to Support Learning at Home during suspension of obligatory regular attendance** of pupils

(**2020-03-D-21-en-1**), which he also termed a “dynamic” one, meant to updated based on experience and feedback received after the first weeks of distance learning and teaching.

Furthermore, one week later, the OSG published **Guidelines concerning the pedagogical use of online video, audio and chat meetings and data protection (2020-03-D-27-en-1)**, meant to support teachers when using specific tools, as well as addressing aspects of “netiquette” and data protection, namely the protection of privacy of minors. These guideline have now been integrated into the main document (**2020-03-D-11-en-5**).

Finally under this topic, the DSG mentioned the organisation of Helpdesks and networks by the OSG's Pedagogical Development Unit (PDU) in order to provide guidance for schools about the set-up of distance learning if needed, and to answer questions, in consultation with the Digital Learning and Teaching team, "a network of experienced and dedicated teachers and coordinators", operating under the auspices of the IT-Pedagogical WG.

Interparents took the floor to express parents' appreciation of these initiatives of the PDU, adding that *"the Digital Learning and Teaching team could even be expanded to include student*

'champions' to provide peer-to-peer support. How can the identification and sharing of best practice be further formalized and communicated? Specific directives or guidelines could perhaps be communicated directly to teachers by OSG via Sharepoint.

We hope that Inspectors will also complement the work of the OSG by identifying subject-specific distance learning champions, and sharing DL best practices from within the ES system and across the various national systems. These champions should also be involved in adapting the syllabi for hybrid learning.

Teachers should be given the opportunity to express what has worked well and which challenges they've faced - this could be achieved through a self-evaluation form and/or level/department meetings in June. Would schools be allowed to set up a system for self-evaluation of teachers and training in June?

Moving on to **Educational Support**, the DSG informed the JTC that two meetings with Educational Support Coordinators of the ES were held in late March and in late April, to launch and further the following initiatives:

- get information on if and how Educational Support was being provided;
- > identify the main constraints in the provision of distance Educational Support and
- > provide the necessary support/ guidance.

Two surveys were launched to get information on the situation in each school and cycle. Put briefly, the surveys showed that:

- "a) the majority of the schools started the provision of Educational Support in all cycles and types of support, as from the first day/week of closure;
- b) the Educational Support is supervised by the Support Coordinator and organised in the context of the Support team: Class/subject teacher, Support teacher and Support assistant (when applicable);
- c) some schools provide resources to the families, when needed;
- d) Teachers and assistants are in close contact with pupils following ISA and their families. In most cases, there is a daily contact with the pupils;
- e) most schools in Primary (especially as from 23 April) and all schools in Secondary use TEAMS as the main communication platform, however, other platforms and several

other tools are used in the provision of Educational Support.”

A comprehensive list of online resources in five languages (EN, FR, DE, ES, PT) for distance learning Educational Support has been provided.

Interparents thanked the OSG for these timely measures and commented that:

“The new support coordinator at the OSG arrived at the right time and has already proved her value.

There is a need to ensure distance learning for educational support. This implies a need to include in the central guidance attention to special needs pupils in the class setting online (or in situ with specific restrictions) to make sure that individual or group support lessons continue as much as possible. From what we know, despite improvement over time, there have been and still are gaps in provision.

If schools will move to system of shifts, ISA pupils should get priority treatment and, if preferred by parents, be allowed to come more often to school to participate in class and support lessons.

It is important to make special allowances for therapists operating under tripartite agreements. This can, for instance, be dedicated access to Teams.

While we greatly value the efforts made by OSG, schools and teachers, we feel that there should be some guidance from OSG to schools to clarify the key issues regarding the educational support provision in these particular circumstances and to ensure that the educational support policy and procedures are followed such as:

- o *organisation of virtual Support Advisory Group meetings at the end of the school year,*

- o *general line should be to continue educational support with the same hours in the next school year*

- o *transition from P5 to S1*

- o *flexibility as regards deadlines for external reports or requests for special arrangements, notably for the BAC phase. Good communication is key; which includes having updated, compliant and accessible school guidelines in all schools.*

For the future, it is important to have a full range of support structure. In this regard, in the view of Interparents, progress to clarify the role of support assistants and to integrate other specialists via a modernised statute will be very important”.

At this point, the DSG requested the IP interventions to be sent to the OSG by e-mail. He also confirmed that the ISA agreement will continue.

Turning to the **follow-up of the BoG** meeting in April, the JTC was presented with an overview of the decisions taken there in Written Procedure afterwards, which had been communicated by the SG in a letter to all stakeholders on 20 April. The final document on the regulations for this year’s **European Baccalaureate (EB)** session is **2020-05-D-20-en-2**. InterParents has created a summary which has been sent to all parents of ES S7 students via their parent associations.

For the Secondary Cycle up to S6, the OSGES shared with Directors a MEMORANDUM (**MEMO 2020-05-M-6-en**) on 14 May, “providing clarifications regarding pupils’ assessment and awarding of final marks for the school year 2019-2020”. It addressed “requests for clarification received from Directors in particular with respect to promotion and progression in the primary cycle, pupils’ absences in the first semester, pupils’ mobility and the Latinum.” A further, annual, MEMORANDUM on ‘Class Councils’ (**MEMO 2020-05-M-4-en**) addressed “the particularities of the second semester of

the 2019/20 school year and also provides the legal frame for Class Council meetings which might have to be organized and/or followed by certain members exceptionally by distance”.

The JTC was also informed about the temporary suspension of locally recruited teachers’ (LRT) evaluation missions. Planning for potential evaluation missions in the coming school year will commence in June.

The Interparents delegates took the floor, expressing parents’ hopes that “*today’s meeting is the starting point to a longer discussion on the best means of organising the months ahead for the whole community*”, and commenting on the BoG decisions, starting with the EB 2020:

“We feel that the lack of adequate consultation in the lead up to the Board of Governors meeting and in the follow-up weakened the results.

With regard to assessment and formal evaluation, we hope that going forward, there is adequate risk assessment with planning undertaken well in advance. We would underscore that consultation with stakeholders in various bodies and working groups can only strengthen proposals. For this reason, we strongly support the Task Force proposed and hope that they work closely with the working groups and committees already in place.

Looking at decisions already taken:

*1. For the **Baccalaureate**, it is felt that the formula arrived at for calculating the Bacc result (doubling the C mark) did not reflect a key aspect of the Baccalaureate: the relative weighting of different courses in the final mark. This meant that the choice that students had made to specialise in certain subjects was not fully honoured, and in the end a high weight was given to two-hour options, complementary courses, PE and labs. This may impact the end results.*

*2. **Moderation**: Parents remain anxious about the possible moderation of Bacc results this year, and believe that if not managed correctly, moderation could violate students’ right to legal certainty, inevitably leading to formal complaints. We believe that in no case should moderation imply a reduction of marks. Parents would also hope that the methodology you have chosen includes analysis and comparisons made with previous years--and not only based on overall averages but also broken down by school, section, options studied and gender. IP would ask for transparency regarding any moderation process so that parents have access to the criteria that are used.*

*3. **Autumn Session of Bacc**: Regarding the extraordinary Bacc session in Autumn, it is our understanding that the current marking scale should apply no matter when the exam is held. We also ask that contingency measures be planned in case the exam cannot be held at the scheduled time in situ.*

*4. With regard to the **S4-S6 students**, the decision to double the first semester B marks has been controversial with parents across the system. It is felt that at best doubling the mark does not adequately reflect the progress students may have made throughout the year and at worst it may mislead university admissions officers. IP hopes that OSGES and the schools continue to make best efforts to mitigate any potential negative consequences.*

We appreciate:

- *the memo that you have circulated informing teachers and class councils of the importance of reflecting progress over the second semester in end-of-year marks, while also being sensitive to the difficulties students faced during the months of social distancing;*
- *the possibility now offered for students to receive a declaration upon request attesting to the duplication of the marks on the transcript. We should remember that these marks will stay on record well beyond the current crisis period, and eventually admissions officers may cease to take the current*

circumstance into account. For the S6 students, it is also worthwhile to recall that this same cohort will be the first to take the Baccalaureate under the new marking system...so they risk being doubly penalised."

Regarding moderation, the Spanish ES presidency replied that they were provided with a statistics expert from the Spanish Ministry for Education to help and promised that moderation "will be done in a very clear way so no students will not have problems with the marks".

As to IP's criticism concerning the lack of wider consultation on the EB 2020 arrangements, an OSGES representative explained that the BAC WG's mandate did not cover extraordinary matters.

Students' representatives concurred with IP on the point that the loss of the usual weighting in the BAC marks did not honour their choices.

Turning to **re-entry strategies** of 13 European Schools, the JTC was reminded that two of them, Alicante and Varese, will have to be closed until the end of the school year, following national, Host Country (HC) regulations, and that, if it is possible according to those HC regulations, the decision to come back to teaching *in situ*, the decision to do so is the responsibility of each Director. The JTC also heard that a **pilot project on Hybrid Learning** has been launched in the ES Frankfurt/Main. It is meant to allow both pupils at home and those in the classroom to follow the lessons via live streaming. The analysis of the project's results would be shared with the IT PEDAGOGY WG later in June. The OSGES also pointed to the annex of the meeting document, providing a detailed overview of national rules on school re-openings and the individual ES approach.

The European Commission (DG HR) representative commented that the re-entry in the Brussels schools had raised a lot of questions. In particular, the announcement by the Directors that distance learning, i.e. online classes for pupils staying at home, would now end, should be revised by the OSG.

InterParents supported DG HR's point.

The Directors' representative replied that the BRU directors' main goal had been to maintain "health and safety in our school community". The changes announced by the Belgian authorities came suddenly and they still needed to be adapted to the ES system. He also pointed out that "there are still lessons which continue to be taught online like L2, religion, PE and European Hours. The teachers who teach *in situ* will do their best that pupils who stayed at home can follow.

The Primary Cycle teachers' representative explained that they could not be expected to continue teaching from home in the afternoon after a morning's *in situ* teaching "never leaving the classroom" until 13:00.

IP commented: *"We are happy to hear that teachers will put more emphasis on L2 in the coming months. We don't think parents are asking for a full program for DL, but continue at least using Teams for managing assignments and sharing docs. We would not expect full lessons, but some availability of teachers for students staying at home."*

The DSG stated that the ES had an obligation not to leave anyone behind, like the pupils who cannot come *in situ*, and that practical solutions were for the Task Force to develop.

Looking ahead to the next school year, IP commented:

"Parents understand that we can't predict what the national rules will be starting with September. Most likely the situation will be different depending on the MS. Among Interparents delegates we have

reflected on all possible scenarios: From a full reentry to school to a total closure. In between there are many options:

- there could be different ways how social distancing requirements are enforced which leads to **different maximum students numbers in class**, which means the need for rotating of students per day or per week

- there also could be different ways of how stable so called bubbles are composed. **Bubbles** is the term used actually in the ES in Brussels in primary where social distancing in a stable class is not needed anymore between students and there is only the requirement that one bubble is not in contact with another bubble.

- or there could be a mix between the bubble approach and a social distancing approach depending if it is for younger or older students.

We ourselves have come up with at least **6 different scenarios**. And there may be more! So we understand that this is not an easy task to plan for it and that ultimately it is the responsibility of the school directors to comply at minimum with what local rules say, **BUT**, it should not be that schools remain closed just because the school had no means to prepare for all these challenges.

On the other hand, schools should not just open partially (maybe just because of political considerations, in particular pressure coming from the institutions) without a thorough understanding of what this partial opening entails for the teachers, the vulnerable teachers, the students who are rotating, the vulnerable students.

The central office could therefore provide some guidelines adapted to our quite system which reflects all possible scenarios imposed by the local rules. It should also indicate possible solutions which accommodates in the best possible way, the educational and socio-psychological needs of the students.

Should we not define **what - from a logistic and pedagogical point of view - triggers (partial) re-opening and closing?**

Should we not also develop guidance and coordinate assistance for any safety question?

We think we should also use this time to explore how school capacity could be expanded to allow a maximum of schooling.

Be it:

- Investment in technical equipment in the classroom,

- filling the football fields with prefabs, gaining teaching space in other large spaces at the school...

- or extending the timetable.

We hope we can develop proposals, also thinking outside the box.

Finally, just a further challenge, in case some students decide to take their bac in autumn, how will you find a common slot which complies with the different local rules in September? And will as a consequence the school stay closed these days at least for Secondary?"

On the possible **impact on the 2020/21 school year** of the pandemic, the OSG informed the JTC about its planning for **a) teaching and learning**, b) staffing, c) budget and other areas.

For a) the OSG stated that if “distance teaching will have to be continued or classes will have to be split into groups this will have a serious impact on the timetabling in the Primary and Secondary cycles. A potentially reduced timetable will have an impact on the syllabi. In this context inspectors could be mandated to review the syllabi and to establish amended syllabi which cover the most essential content.

The potentially amended syllabi will have an impact on the examinations. Moreover, the format of the examination might need to be reviewed due to potential suspension of *in situ* examination. New forms of online testing and examination might need to be developed. In these areas, inspectors may rely on the networks of teachers, coordinators, subject referents and external experts and use the existing online environment for cooperation. In these activities, the Office of the Secretary-General will have to provide support.

Moreover, if teaching *in situ* will remain suspended, a quality assurance framework for distance and/or hybrid teaching and learning needs to be established which is binding for all schools. This frame will also have to cover the training needs of teachers.

Finally, particular emphasis will have to be given to the year 7 and the organization of the EB 2021 session”.

IP delegates made interventions on the various aspects. On subjects and syllabi:

“Parents believe that it is important not to talk about essential and non-essential subjects. All subjects are relevant. The syllabi must be adapted by inspectors and teachers in order to allow all students to attain learning objectives within a hybrid or distance learning context.

The learning standard should not be lowered nor the scope of the curriculum be narrowed. All courses should be delivered at the same or comparable standard through one of the available channels. Art, music, PE could be taught via workshops or project based. Some teachers have come up with creative solutions, best practices should be shared between the teachers per level and subject within the whole system.”

On assessment and the EB 2021 session:

“We believe it is important that the standard of learning and evaluation is assured. Automatic promotion should not be an option next year, but instead we must ensure that all students receive the curriculum and are fairly assessed.

Beyond this, it will be important to broaden the testing modalities laid out for secondary B tests, taking into account that the situation may continue into the next school year. Maximum flexibility should be ensured by derogating existing rules if necessary in order to enable the appropriate evaluation of students even under a distance learning and hybrid learning regime. Nevertheless, IP believes that for formal B tests, in situ exams should be carried out as a priority--and within the constraints of social distancing rules. Contingency plans should include the possibility to reschedule exam sessions and, as a last resort, options for sitting exams online should be set out. For the last scenario, best practices for online examination in member states should be examined.

In the case of Bacc exams, the possibility to change the timing and/or conditions of the preBacc exams and Bacc exam itself should also be envisaged as part of contingency planning.

The development of a formal evaluation programme for S4-S7, with all contingencies laid out and potential legal issues addressed, and including formulas used to calculate final marks should be part of the mandate of the Task Force to be ready by September. The timing is particularly important for students in the Bacc cycle. For younger students and non-B-test assessment of S4 to S7 students, alternative age-appropriate online assessment methods should be developed as part of annexes to syllabuses, ideally these should also be in place by September.”

And, finally, on Quality Assurance (QA):

“A QA framework for Distance or Hybrid Learning must be developed which is not based on parent or student feedback but on actions pro-actively and routinely undertaken by inspectors and school management. Such a framework can only be developed based on clearly articulated distance and hybrid learning standards and expectations.

- *The Pedagogical Developments Unit has already begun to develop minimum requirements (see the recent memorandum), but it should be the job of the Task Force should flesh this out into a full Distance Learning Policy that will meet the needs of pupils from nursery through the Baccalaureate.*
- *Monitoring: means should be developed to monitor the work being carried out by teachers online, whether through self-evaluation or online monitoring of activities.*
- *Training in online tools and methodology, support for teachers and Best Practice Sharing will also be important in assuring high quality delivery of the syllabi.*
- *Finally, the WSI and teacher inspection regime should be adapted with checklists updated to include Distance Learning elements.”*

The [?? **inspector ?? (Mr Coenen)**] commented that the adaption of syllabi and the policy for distance learning were to be worked out by the new Task Force. However, the content of the syllabi would not be affected, as this was an issue of teaching methodologies rather than learning objectives.

The DSG underlined that the Task Force members would be free to consult experts.

With regards to the possible impact on **staffing**, the JTC was informed that the pandemic already had an impact on secondments. Some national delegations have indicated that they either could not finalize the recruitment of qualified seconded teachers. Some candidates who were already selected have since withdrawn their candidature.

IP commented: *“Parents share concerns about the potential impact on staffing, whether this be related to recruitment or the result of staff sickness, vulnerability or self isolation. We hope that schools have sufficient funds to hire replacement teachers if needed. We believe that it is absolutely essential to assure that teachers are in situ in classrooms whenever possible from September, particularly in the primary cycle, and no effort should be spared in identifying and installing teachers. There may be more flexibility for the secondary cycle, where remote online teaching may be a possibility during difficult or transitional periods.”*

Finally, the **impact on the budget** and other areas was discussed. The OSG reminded the JTC that “teaching in groups may require an increase of the teaching staff which would have a budgetary impact. Other technical solutions, like for example live streaming of teaching, will require an investment in hardware and potentially in the IT infrastructure of the schools.” Apart from these obvious issues, the OSG pointed to the re-planning and possible review of Whole School Inspection and accreditation processes.

IP thanked the OSG for the recognition of potential budgetary impact and recommended to convene an extra-ordinary meeting of the Budget Committee (BC) before the start of the new school year and the creation of a COVID-19 fund, before presenting the following non-exhaustive list on potential additional costs:

- *Teaching costs to ensure in situ and distance learning continues; Substitute/replacement teacher costs to cover for vulnerable or quarantining teachers with in situ; Assistant costs for additional supervision of pupils within the school*
- *Equipment costs to support live streaming, materials for teachers to pre record sessions and their own virtual teaching needs (eg laptops, cameras, WIFI)*
- *Potential infrastructure changes to ensure social distancing measures can be respected; adaptation and improvement of hygiene facilities in the schools*
- *Additional admin support for school management and OSGES; expert advice on distance and hybrid learning*
- *Additional training costs for teachers*
- *Potential loss of CAT 3 fees*

A representative of the teachers asked whether it is intended for teachers to continue using their private computer equipment. As this was an emergency measure, teachers would expect to be provided with adequate IT equipment in order to be able to fully do their work. They would also welcome the creation of a Helpdesk.

Bringing the COVID-19 related agenda points to a close, the mandate for the **Task Force (TF)** was discussed, and the TF itself mandated in conclusion.

IP made the following intervention to contribute to the mandate discussion which was duly noted by the DSG.

“The mandate should include:

- *Risk assessment and planning for potential scenarios for 2020-2021, including input on secondary time tables.*
- *Remote learning policy to be uploaded in OSGES website, including measures for Educational Support. Any policy should take into account the well-being aspects of distance learning for the whole school community.*
- *Updates to syllabuses as needed, to accommodate remote or hybrid learning scenarios, including alternative age-appropriate online assessment methods to be ready by September.*
- *The development of a formal evaluation programme for S4-S7, with all contingencies laid out and potential legal issues addressed, and including formulas used to calculate final marks.*
- *Distance and hybrid learning training regime and best practice sharing.*
- *Development of a robust quality assurance framework for distance and hybrid learning, including tools and methods for monitoring online teaching; self-reporting templates for teachers; and updates to inspection checklists.*
- *Legal aspects should be considered, including ICT charters signed by pupils, parents and teachers.*
- *Staffing, training, infrastructure, equipment and budget needs going into 2020-2021.”*

Lead by the OSG, the TF will include representatives of Inspectors, Directors, Directors of EAS, EU Commission, ISTC and IP, and will be working closely with the current (ES) and incoming (FR) ES presidencies. It is supposed to provide the BoG by the end of the 2019/20 school year with a risk assessment and concrete proposals to mitigate these risks for the 2020/21 school year.

Finally, on **Language Testing (LT)** the JTC was informed that, although it is suspended at the moment, it has been decided that one parent can be present during the duration of the LT. IP welcomed this development. The HoU of the OSG Pedagogical Reform WG announced that a subWG of it was working on a report on LT with a view towards harmonisation across all ES.