



European Schools

Office of the Secretary-General

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Report of the 'Lessons lost during the European Baccalaureate Orals' Working Group

Board of Governors of the European Schools

Meeting in Brussels on 30 and 31 January 2007

1/ Background

In response to the Report of the Working Group on Teacher Replacement, presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting in Mondorf in April 2005, the Board of Governors endorsed the proposal to create a working group charged with examining the amount of teaching time lost because of the organisation of the European Baccalaureate and of proposing solutions. The reason for creating such a working group lay in the finding that a large number of lessons are not given in the secondary cycle during the period in question. From that viewpoint this gives rise to a problem not only for the Schools, which are required to abide by the provisions of the General Rules governing the school year, but also for parents, who are forced to find solutions for their children during that period.

As lessons are given normally during the Baccalaureate written examinations, the Working Group focused on the orals period only.

The Working Group, which met in Brussels on 29 September 2006, was composed of:

Mrs R. CHRISTMANN	Deputy Secretary-General of the European Schools
Mr M. REULAND	Secondary Inspector
Mrs M. POZNANOVIC-JEZERSEK	Secondary Inspector
Mr H. FEIX	Director
Mrs P. VASSILACOU	Deputy Director for the Secondary
Mrs I. DEBILLY	Staff Committee

A representative of Interparents had been invited to attend the meeting but was unable to do so.

2/ Appraisal of the current situation

A survey, conducted in July 2006, enabled an appraisal of the current situation to be made, the results of which are as follows:

a) The size of schools is the criterion which determines both the date on which lessons end¹ and the way of managing the period between the end of lessons and the date of the proclamation of the Baccalaureate results.

There were no lessons in any of the schools during the Baccalaureate orals. In the small and medium-sized schools, the duration of the orals ranges between 3 and 5 days, while in the large schools the duration is between 6 and 10 days – for the one with the most candidates. The percentage of days without lessons because of the orals therefore ranges between 1.6% and 5.5% according to the size of the schools.

b) Replacement activities were offered, such as:

- sporting activities

¹ See the Schools' 2006 calendar, appended hereto.

- outings
- class trips
- work experience in companies or associations in year 5 and sometimes in year 6.

c) Depending on the size of the schools, the degree of assiduous participation in these activities varied, the absenteeism rate reaching 60% or even 80% in the large schools, leading to safety problems, as the school is unable to check on pupils' absence and thus discharge its responsibilities towards parents.

d) It should be noted that some schools do not organise replacement activities, the Directorate and the parents having reached mutual agreement on the subject.

3/ Reflections

The Working Group first considered the reasons why lessons were not given during the Baccalaureate orals and found that:

1. as a large number of teachers are also examiners, they are unable to give their lessons and it not possible to arrange so many replacements,
2. the presence of pupils in the schools would pose problems in terms of the availability of rooms for the Baccalaureate orals and would be a source of noise, thus hampering organisation of the examinations in good conditions for the candidates,
3. as soon as the Class Councils have taken place, pupils no longer show much interest in attending lessons. However, in view of the very large number of Class Councils to be managed in the large schools, outside lesson hours and the oral examinations, the Class Councils for years 1-3 necessarily have to be held before the start of the orals, so that all the teachers can be present. The experiment with continuing lessons, conducted in a large school for 3 days in 2005, was not conclusive in view of the very large number of absences.

Given these constraints and findings, the Group envisaged several solutions.

The first would be to change the Baccalaureate timetable, putting back the date and organising it outside the school year.

The Group noted that a problem would then arise with candidates' enrolment at universities in some Member States, where the deadline for enrolments is very early in July. In addition, as the Baccalaureate examinations form an integral part of the school year, it would also mean a lengthening of teachers' working time, something for which there is no provision in the Staff Regulations.

An intermediate solution would be to condense the orals period to three days in the large schools.

This approach does, however, have several drawbacks, including the need to recruit more external examiners at a time when many teachers are busy with examinations in their own countries and are thus not free, as well as the additional costs incurred, notably in terms of the number of trips. Moreover, teachers in charge of several classes and/or subjects, who consequently have to examine many candidates, would have difficulty in doing so in such a short period.

4/ Conclusions

After discussion, the Working Group concluded that the Schools are required not only to provide teaching for pupils but also to assess them, the time required for assessment forming part of the school year. The Baccalaureate orals are a specific form of assessment which requires many teachers to be available and arrangements to be made and physical conditions to be provided for the candidates which do not enable lessons for the other secondary pupils to continue.

Nevertheless, the Schools are supposed to cater for pupils until the end of the school year, but not necessarily in the context of traditional lessons with teachers and pupils.

5/ Proposals

On the basis of these conclusions, the Working Group proposes that the Board of Governors:

1. from a formal viewpoint,

grant the schools the possibility of suspending lessons in the secondary cycle during the days required for the Baccalaureate oral examinations at the end of the school year, as they appear each year in the Memorandum on the Baccalaureate drawn up by the General Secretariat and approved by the Board of Governors,

2. from the viewpoint of practical organisation during the Baccalaureate orals period,

- that the number of work experience placements in companies in years 5 and 6 at the end of the school year be increased,

- that the organisation of replacement activities be planned a sufficiently long time in advance, so as to improve the quality of what is offered and to make them compulsory, if necessary, for pupils who register to participate in them, in order to avoid absenteeism and security problems.

The Board of Governors is invited to endorse the above proposals.

Opinion of the Teaching Committee (Secondary)

The Teaching Committee (Secondary) examined the Working Group's report and discussed its proposals. The first proposal was changed at the Parents' request. The proposals appearing in this document have been approved by the Teaching Committee (Secondary).

Annex

School	Dates of the 2006 European Baccalaurate oral examinations	Dates of the end of lessons in the secondary in 2006	Teaching days lost
Alicante	5, 6 and 7 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Tuesday 4 July with reports *	3 days
Bergen	4, 5 and 6 July (morning) <i>Proclamation: Friday 7 July</i>	Monday 3 July	4 days
Brussels I	29, 30 June, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Wednesday 28 June with reports	7 days
Brussels II	28, 29, 30 June, 3, 4, 5 and 6 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Tuesday 27 June (1-6) + sporting activities from 28 to 30 June	7 days
Brussels III	28, 29, 30 June, 3 and 4 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Wednesday 5 July</i>	Tuesday 27 June with reports (1-6)	5 days
Culham	4, 5 and 6 July <i>Proclamation: Friday 7 July</i>	Monday 3 July	4 days
Frankfurt	4, 5 and 6 July (morning) <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Friday 7 July</i>	Monday 3 July (1-6) + sporting and cultural activities until 7 July	4 days
Karlsruhe	4, 5, 6 and 7 July (morning) <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Monday 3 July (1-6)	4 days
Luxembourg I	26, 27, 28, 29, 30 June, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 July (morning) <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Thursday 22 June (1-6) <i>[Friday 23 June public holiday]</i>	10 days
Mol	3, 4, 5 and 6 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Wednesday 28 June	7 days
Munich	3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Friday 30 June with reports (1-2-3-4) Friday 7 July (5-6)	5 days
Varese	4, 5, 6 and 7 July <i>Proclamation:</i> <i>Saturday 8 July</i>	Monday 3 July : 1-6 Friday 7 July: 7	4 days

* It should be noted that the work experience placements for year 5 pupils started on Monday 26 June and last two weeks.