



Information for Schools

PISA Main Study – March 2015

OECD Programme for International Student Assessment

What is PISA?

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that has taken place every three years since 2000. *In 2015, students from 73 countries and education systems are involved*, making PISA the largest study of its kind. PISA assesses the skills and knowledge of 15- and 16-year-olds in three areas – *science, reading, and mathematics* – every three years, beginning in 2000. In 2015, science will be the main focus for the second time (it was also the main focus in 2006). In Ireland, approximately 6,500 students in 168 schools will take part in PISA 2015, which will be administered entirely on computers.

How is PISA conducted?

Internationally, PISA is implemented on behalf of the OECD by a consortium of institutions. The lead institution is the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the US, which is responsible for developing the test materials. Key decisions are made by the PISA Governing Board. Each OECD country has a voting representative on this Board.

In each participating country, PISA is managed on a day-to-day basis by the PISA National Project Manager and other staff from the National Centre. In Ireland, the Educational Research Centre (ERC) is the National Centre. The ERC implements PISA on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. A named *Regional Co-ordinator* (an ERC staff member) will liaise with your school throughout the study.

A National Advisory Committee oversees the implementation of PISA in Ireland, and advises on aspects of the assessment, survey administration, and reporting of results.

What is expected of the school?

In Ireland, 168 schools have been selected to take part in the Main Study in March 2015. During March 2015, school inspectors, working with support staff employed by the ERC, will administer PISA. All test administrators and technical support personnel will be trained by the ERC.

School computers will not be required for the PISA assessment. ERC support staff will bring pre-loaded laptops to each school for the assessment.

Students will be assessed in their schools on an agreed date in March 2015. About 60% of PISA students are in junior cycle (mostly third years), while the remainder are in transition year and fifth year.

In each school 42 students are selected at random based on their dates of birth (they must have been born in 1999). If there are fewer than 42 students born in 1999, all are invited to take part. Selected students will be assigned to one of two identical sessions and asked to complete computer-based tests that include science, reading and mathematics and a questionnaire.

Schools are asked to provide two rooms, each capable of accommodating up to 21 students and 21 laptops, for testing. These could be classrooms, general purpose rooms, or computer rooms (if desk space is available). Alternatively, a larger room or hall, capable of accommodating up to 42 students and 42 laptops (including cables and power sockets), could be considered.

What does the assessment consist of?

The *PISA tests* consist of 'real-life' tasks in science, reading and mathematics (i.e., PISA is not intended to be curriculum-based). About one-third of questions are multiple choice and the remainder are in other formats, such as a typed response or drag-and-drop. At the beginning of the assessment, students take part in a practice session to familiarise themselves with the format of the PISA test, *so there is no need for students to prepare in advance of PISA nor do selected students need to be studying science*. Examples of test items can be found at www.erc.ie/pisa. Students in Irish-medium schools will have the option of completing mathematics and science components of PISA in English or Irish.

The *PISA student questionnaire* asks students about their demographic, family and home backgrounds, learning environments, beliefs and attitudes towards science, health and well-being, educational and occupational aspirations, and familiarity and engagement with ICTs. Again, students in Irish-medium schools will have option of completing this in English or Irish.

Principals of participating schools will be asked to complete a short *online school questionnaire* about school resources, management, policies in areas such as assessment, and school organisation.

Parents of students will be asked to complete a short questionnaire. This will be available in *paper and online formats*, in both Irish and English. The parent questionnaire seeks information on parental and home background, pre-school education and childhood activities of the PISA student, attitudes and beliefs about science, and student well-being and attendance at school.

What happens next?

To assist us with planning for the testing in March 2015, we ask that you **rank the proposed test dates** in order of preference. Please submit this information online by logging onto https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PISA_MS_2015_Form no later than **October 10 2014**. If you are unable to complete the form online, please fill out the [green form](#) and return to the ERC by post.

In selecting dates for the PISA assessment, you should take into account factors such as Transition Year work experience, school trips, and other activities that may mean that some PISA students may not be in school (see the guidelines on the form). It is very important that most or all selected students take part in PISA. An ERC staff member, in the role of Regional Co-ordinator, will contact the Principal of each school in December to confirm the testing date.

You are also asked to nominate a person on the school staff to liaise with the ERC; the **School Contact**. Please keep in mind that this person will be **responsible for all preparatory tasks and communication with the Regional Co-ordinator** between **January and March 2015**.

How are results used?

The OECD will publish *international results in December 2016*. The ERC will publish detailed national results on the same day, with further secondary reporting planned for the first half of 2017.

Each school will receive a report of its results, compared to the national average, at the end of 2015.

All information collected in the survey is confidential and it is not possible to identify individual students, parents or schools in the database constructed following the study.

Where can I find out more on PISA?

More information, such as the list of countries participating in PISA, the members of the PISA National Advisory Committee, information materials and national reports from previous PISA cycles, are available on the PISA national website at **www.erc.ie/pisa**. International results and reports are at the international PISA website at **www.pisa.oecd.org**.

If you have any additional queries or concerns, do not hesitate to get in touch with us. Your Regional Co-ordinator contact details are on the letter accompanying this sheet.

General Queries:

Gerry Shiel, PISA National Project Manager

PISA 2015, Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Phone: (01) 8065227; **Fax:** (01) 837 8997 **Email:** pisa2015@erc.ie

<http://www.erc.ie/pisa>

Many thanks for your support for PISA.