DEAR STUDENTS, DEAR PARENTS,

The next Central Final Examinations are scheduled for the Spring of the coming year and schools are now starting the preparation phase.

An important priority of this Land Government is to improve the quality of our schools, so that students have the best possible qualifications to compete for jobs.

All students currently receive the same tasks in the subjects of German, Mathematics and English (1st foreign language) for the central final examinations. These tasks are developed by expert commissions, in which specialist advisers and scientists are represented in addition to teachers. The Ministry of Education has now laid the groundwork to enable all students to better prepare themselves. In principle the following applies: thanks to uniform assessment criteria, requirements/standards and task formats there are similar conditions in all schools throughout Schleswig-Holstein and for all students.

The most important information regarding the process and structure of the examinations is set out below.

I wish all students much success.

Karin Prien
Minister for Education, Science and Culture of Land Schleswig-Holstein

WHY ARE THERE CENTRAL FINAL EXAMINATIONS?

Central Final Examinations are intended to contribute towards ensuring that
— comparable, fair and at the same time appropriate examination requirements of high technical quality are placed on all students;
— there is a stronger focus on educational standards valid throughout Germany;
— the performance requirements for all parties involved are disclosed;
— teaching is enhanced.

WHO TAKES PART?

Examination for the initial school leaving certificate in general education (ESA) in year 9:
— regular participation of students at regional schools (Regionalsschule) in the academic years in which the course of education for obtaining the initial school leaving certificate in general education is being completed;
— voluntary participation at the request of students at comprehensive schools (Gemeinschaftsschule);
— mandatory participation: students at comprehensive schools may be required to sit the examination for the initial school leaving certificate in general education by a decision of the class conference, if progression to year 10 appears to be at risk based on the level of achievements at the end of the first six months of year 9.¹

Examination for the intermediate school leaving certificate (MSA) in year 10:
— regular participation of all students at comprehensive schools;
— regular participation of students at regional schools who are completing the academic years of the course of education for obtaining the intermediate school leaving certificate;
— the class conference may at the request of the parents exempt a student at a comprehensive school with upper level secondary education (Oberstufe) from sitting the examination for the intermediate school leaving certificate, if it is expected that he or she will progress to the upper level based on the level of achievements at the end of the first six months of year 10.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

The tasks for the central examinations in the subjects of German, Mathematics and English are developed by expert commissions and are based on both the subject-related requirements of Land Schleswig-Holstein and the educational standards applied throughout Germany. The written examinations take 135 minutes in each case excluding preparation time. For English the examination is split into a written and a practical language examination part, for which central tasks are also assigned within a specified period of time. The grades achieved in both parts are added together and have the same weight when determining the examination grade in the subject of English.

HOW IS THE EVALUATION MADE?

The written final papers are corrected and marked by the examiner and another teacher. The tasks are sent to the schools accompanied by correction instructions and evaluation keys for this purpose. In this way, an evaluation of the central final papers, that is as clear and objective as possible, is ensured.

WHEN IS AN ORAL EXAMINATION HELD?

The student may apply to take oral examinations in up to two subjects chosen by him/her (apart from the first foreign language). The Examination Board may also require students to take oral examinations in up to two subjects without an application being submitted, if there is a reasonable prospect of improving the final grade. The course work grades (grades for year-to-date performance in all subjects) and grades for the written examinations are announced seven teaching days before the start of the oral examination. The applications to take one or two oral examinations must be addressed to the Examination Board by the students or their parents five teaching days before the start of the oral examination. Three to five teaching days are available for the final preparation for the oral examination.

HOW IS THE FINAL GRADE ARRIVED AT?

The final grade corresponds to the grade achieved for course work in subjects in which neither a written nor an oral examination is sat or taken. If a written final examination is sat, the final grade is calculated from the grade for course work (e.g. 3) and the grade for the final paper (e.g. 4) in a ratio of 2:1 (in this example...
WHEN IS THE CERTIFICATE OBTAINED?
The decision to issue the certificate takes into account the grades awarded in all subjects and optional courses. Not more than one subject and no subject was marked as "unsatisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" in general education and intermediate school leaving certificate. This method ensures that the oral examination in the subjects of German and Mathematics can change the final grade in a meaningful manner.

WHAT DOES OBTAINING THE CERTIFICATE ENTITLE ONE TO?
Obtaining the certificate in general education entitles the student to transfer to upper level secondary education, if the results of the final examination with regard to the requirement level for obtaining the intermediate school leaving certificate are worse than "satisfactory" (befriedigend – 3) in not more than one subject and no subject was marked as "poor" (mangelhaft – 5) or "unsatisfactory" in the intermediate school leaving certificate. Students at comprehensive schools are also progressed to upper level secondary education, if their performance in the annual evaluation of year 10 with regard to the requirement level for obtaining the intermediate school leaving certificate are worse than "sufficient" in not more than one subject and no subject was marked as "poor" (mangelhaft – 5) or "unsatisfactory" (ungenügend – 6). Students at comprehensive schools are also progressed to upper level secondary education, if their performance in the annual evaluation of year 10 with regard to the requirement level for obtaining the intermediate school leaving certificate are worse than "sufficient" in not more than one subject and no subject was marked as "poor" (mangelhaft – 5) or "unsatisfactory" (ungenügend – 6).

WHAT SPECIAL PREPARATIONS DO THE STUDENTS RECEIVE?
Sample tasks and exercise material for all three centrally examined subjects are available for schools under http://www.za.schleswig-holstein.de in the Internet. An exercise book will also be made available to teachers and students in the Spring of 2019.