



**NCCA**

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta  
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Consultation Report on the draft L1 and L2 specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish

March 2023



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# 1. Introduction

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The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commenced work to develop Leaving Certificate Irish Specifications for L1 (Language 1) and L2 (Language 2) in December 2018. The imperative for this work came from a range of government policies, including The 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (2010) and the previous five year Action Plan 2018-2022 (2018); from the Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 (2016); and from education policies and curriculum developments in earlier phases of education.

Draft specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish for L1 and L2 were approved by Council for public consultation in November, 2020. The consultation process was carefully planned, mindful of the challenges facing teachers, students, school leaders and their communities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It launched on February 23, 2021 and aimed to gather robust stakeholder feedback on the draft curriculum specifications. Council extended the timeline for consultation until the end of November, 2021 in response to requests from stakeholders as they continued to deal with the impact of Covid-19 on schools.

The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback from teachers, parents, students, Irish language organisations and other stakeholders to inform further work on the draft specifications, with a view to presenting final specifications to the Minister for Education for approval for publication, following which, these specifications would be introduced into schools. However, feedback received during the consultation process was frequently dominated by issues which fall outside of the remit of NCCA and/or which require policy alignment across a range of government departments. Given the richness of the feedback received during the consultation, and the opportunity the consultation provided to gather the views of a large and diverse cross-section of teachers, parents, students, Irish language communities, organisations and individuals, this report attempts to capture more than was originally intended when the consultation was launched.

## Layout of this report

- **Section 1** provides background and context to the rationale for creating L1 and L2 Leaving Certificate Irish specifications.
- **Section 2** considers in detail the feedback received on the draft L1 and L2 Leaving Certificate Irish specifications.
- **Section 3** summarises feedback in relation to the introduction of the new specifications.
- **Section 4** outlines systemic considerations such as the model of curricular provision for Irish.
- **Section 5** proposes next steps.

Quotations used are indicative of the feedback received, though others may have offered similar feedback but phrased it differently. Quotations are included in the language in which they were received as part of the consultation. They are reproduced verbatim. Translations are presented beneath the quotes in square brackets.

## 1.1 Background and Context

Differentiated language curricula for junior infants to sixth class in Ireland's primary schools were introduced in 2019. Two versions of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile are in place, one aimed at Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools, and one aimed at English-medium schools. At post-primary level, it has long been suggested that the same concept be applied. As far back as 2003, in the discussion document *Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum* prepared by Professor David Little for the NCCA, Little said:

*'The continued insistence on a single syllabus for native and non-native speakers of the language, Irish-medium and English-medium students, achieves the worst of both worlds, offering the minority of native speakers and Irish-medium students what is effectively a foreign language syllabus' (NCCA, 2003, p. 9).*

Responding to these concerns, specifications for junior cycle Irish were developed from 2012 onwards and new L1 and L2 specifications for junior cycle Irish were implemented in classrooms commencing in 2017. The L1 specification focuses on meeting the needs of members of Irish-speaking schools and communities, including Gaeltacht schools, Gaelcholáistí, Streams and Units, while the L2 specification encourages students learning Irish in English-medium contexts to become more active users of Irish.

The recent development of draft L1 and L2 specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish builds on the differentiated curriculum at primary and junior cycle with the aim of ensuring continuity and progression in the student's learning journey, particularly from junior to senior cycle and to meet the learning needs of students in Irish-medium and English-medium schools. In the context of Irish-medium schools where students engage with the curriculum entirely through the medium of Irish, the L1 specification for Irish would play an important role not only in challenging native speakers to further improve their language skills, but also in supporting students to access learning opportunities and concepts in other subjects, across the curriculum as a whole.

Revisions were made to the existing Leaving Certificate Irish syllabus in 2010 and set out in Circular 0042/2007. The most significant change was an increase in the number of marks allocated for demonstrating the capacity to communicate in Irish during the Oral Examination, from 25% to 40% and a reduction in the number of marks allocated to other language skills. It was at this point that picture sequences were introduced as a component of the revised oral examination. Some stakeholders expressed concern at the time, particularly in relation to the decline in emphasis on literature and the reduction in marks allocated to students' demonstration of their listening comprehension skills. From 2010 onwards, the amount of literature students studied was reduced.

Responding to these concerns, NCCA commissioned two research studies to examine the potential impact of these reforms on student achievement, language quality and teaching and preparation approaches for the oral examination, namely:

- *The Impact of the Reforms on the Oral Irish Examination at Leaving Certificate Level* (Ó Curraoin et al, 2017)

- *Insights into the experiences, attitudes and perspectives of teachers and students in relation to the Reforms implemented in 2012 on the Leaving Certificate Oral Irish Examination (Nic Eoin, 2017).*

Nic Eoin's research showed that the introduction of 40% for the oral examination increased the number of students taking Higher Level from 2010 onwards. However, these studies also highlighted concerns about the approach to and number of picture sequences. Students in Irish-medium schools reported not being as anxious about the oral generally and picture sequences specifically as students in English-medium schools. Concerns were expressed about rote learning in preparation for the oral examination and the lack of opportunities to use Irish outside of the classroom. Research also identified concerns about shortcomings in students' grammatical ability and accuracy in speaking and writing. The research also highlighted the negative experience of the oral examination for some students, particularly those who found the language difficult, which could negatively influence their attitude towards Irish.

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) commissioned a piece of research on the same subject, entitled *Leasuithe ar Scrúdú Gaeilge na hArdteistiméireachta - Anailís ar a dTionchar*. Ollscoil Éireann Mhágh Nuad (Ní Mhaonaigh, S. 2013). Both the research commissioned by NCCA and that conducted by COGG showed no clear evidence in the short to medium-term that students' achievement in Irish or their ability to acquire the language improved significantly following the reforms implemented in 2010. This research, alongside many other factors, informed the work of NCCA in creating draft L1 and L2 specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish.

A series of government policies established the need for differentiated provision for Irish and informed recent curricular developments in Irish across primary and post-primary level, including:

- Literacy and Numeracy for learning and life: The National Strategy for Improving Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 (2011)
- Literacy and Numeracy for learning and life 2011-2020 Review Interim: 2011-2016 (2017)
- The 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (2010) and the previous five year Action Plan 2018-2022 (2018)
- Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017 - 2022 (2016)
- Empowerment: Empowering through learning - Action Plan for Education 2019 (2019).

Providing L1 and L2 curriculum specifications supports the aims set out in the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (2010). It also responds to concerns identified in *Literacy and Numeracy for learning and life: The National Strategy for Improving Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* that Irish language syllabuses did not, at the time, meet the Irish language needs of children and students, especially those who were learning through Irish and whose first language was Irish.

*'Irish syllabuses do not meet the specific needs of students in Irish-medium schools, especially those whose home language is Irish. We need to ensure that the junior cycle program for Irish caters for the specific literacy needs of students in Irish-*

*medium schools, including the development of their cognitive and higher order thinking skills.' (Department of Education Skills, 2011, p. 60)*

The Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, published in 2016, aims to support and promote the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities by ensuring that high quality education is provided through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht schools.

*'Irish language curricula that include learning outcomes for students in Irish-medium schools that differ from those in English-medium schools have the potential to raise expectations for the learning of Irish and to support the provision of an enriched language learning experience for all students in Gaeltacht schools, especially those who are native Irish speakers. Such Irish language curricula will also help to enhance the ability of students in Gaeltacht schools to learn through Irish. '(Department of Education Skills, 2016, p. 33)*

The draft Leaving Certificate L1 and L2 specifications for Irish seek to align with these government policies, all of which aim to support and improve Irish language learning and in a wider sense to protect our native language, which is increasingly in danger due to the gradual erosion of language competencies and use, particularly amongst those for whom Irish is a first language. During the consultation, participants frequently commented that changes to Leaving Certificate Irish must be considered within the wider context of learning Irish across the education system and, for some, it should also be considered within a broader context of societal aspirations for the future of the Irish language.

As you will see in the next section of this report, the vast majority, though not the totality, of consultation participants that commented on the current Leaving Certificate Irish syllabus expressed dissatisfaction with it.

## **1.2 The Consultation Process**

Feedback was sought from education and Irish language stakeholders as well as the general public using the following methods:

- written submissions
- online surveys
- individual follow-up interviews
- focus groups
- bilateral meetings.

Due to restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, all consultation events were held online. Awareness of the consultation was raised in several ways, through NCCA website, social media and a network of Irish language and education stakeholders. An awareness session for teachers and principals from Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools was held in conjunction with Gaeloideachas at the beginning of March, 2021. Invitations were sent to education and Irish language stakeholders to attend bilateral meetings with NCCA to share their organisation's views and provide feedback on draft L1 and L2 specifications. Organisations unable to attend were invited to respond via the online surveys, or via a written submission.

## 1.2(a) Written Submissions

234 written submissions were received by NCCA in response to the Public Consultation. 75 submissions were received from organisations or groups and 159 from individuals. The chart below shows the breakdown of stakeholders, and a further breakdown is included in Appendix 1 below. Where individuals did not specify their identity, they are included as 'other' group in the graph below.

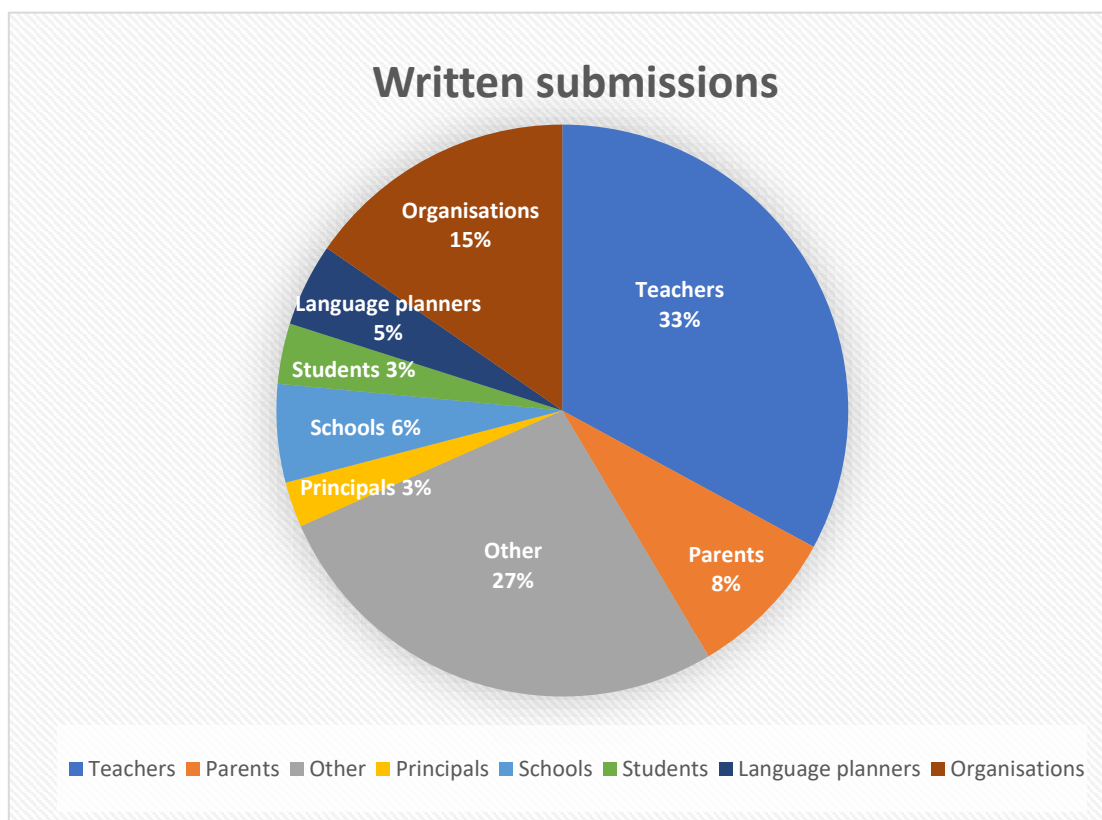


Figure 1 - Break down of written submissions

## 1.2 (b) Online surveys

Feedback was gathered via two online surveys. The structure of the survey was the same for the L1 and L2 draft specifications. Respondents had the choice of taking the surveys in Irish or English. Section 1 of the survey sought brief information on participant demographics (ie, "parent", "student", "teacher" or "other"; what was meant by "other", if selected; and the type of school to which they belonged, if any). Participants could only select one participant type and one school type of those presented in tables 1-4, therefore this data should be interpreted with caution.

Participants were then asked to comment on various parts of the draft specifications by answering closed-ended questions including Likert scale items (eg "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", and "Strongly agree ") or binary choice items (eg " Yes "and " No "). The remaining sections contained open-ended questions to allow respondents to comment further. Answers to the open-ended questions allowed for a maximum of 500 characters.



## L1 online survey

The survey contained 387 valid responses to the draft L1 specification, 209 answered the Irish version and 178 responded the English version. Of the 387 responses, there was an average response rate of 11% for the open-ended questions. The tables below outlines the demographic breakdown of respondents to the L1 online survey and the school type they identified with.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Director / practitioner in an early childhood setting	1	0.3
Parent / guardian (primary)	61	15.8
Primary teacher	14	3.6
Principal / deputy principal (primary)	11	2.8
Parent / guardian (post-primary)	75	19.4
Post-primary student	22	5.7
Post-primary teacher working in the context of Gaeltacht L1	47	12.1
Post-primary teacher working in the context of Irish-medium L1	53	13.7
Principal / deputy principal (post-primary)	8	2.1
Pre-service teacher	2	0.5
Teacher educator	11	2.8
Third-level student	13	3.4
Third-level lecturer/researcher	6	1.6
Other	63	16.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 1: Respondents to L1 online survey*

<b>School type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Community school	18	4.7
Community college (ETB)	2	0.5
Comprehensive school	4	1.0
English-medium (subjects other than Gaeilge)	7	1.8
Education and Training Board (ETB)	10	2.6
Gaeltacht L1 school	61	15.8
Irish-medium L1 school	135	34.9
School with a Stream/Unit	13	3.4
Voluntary secondary school	20	5.2

Other	117	30.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2: School type in L1 online survey

Respondents selecting L1 Irish medium and Gaeltacht schools make up over 50% of respondents by school type. 26% of L1 survey respondents identified as teachers, whilst 19% are parents of post-primary students. Student voice, representative of second and third level students, is less prominent in the survey data, at 9% but is more evident in focus group consultation feedback. The number of post-primary parents / guardians (19.4%) and primary parents / guardians (15.8%) who responded to the L1 survey is significant. This reflects the interest of parents / guardians of Gaeltacht areas and Gaelcholáistí in the two draft L1 and L2 specifications and in the implications of the L1/L2 model of provision for their schools and communities.

### L2 online survey

The survey had 353 valid responses to the draft L2 specification, 237 answered the Irish version and 116 answered the English version. Of the 353 responses, there was an average response rate of 14% for the open questions. The tables below outlines the demographic breakdown of respondents to the L2 online survey and the school type they identified with.

Respondent	Number	Percentage
Director / practitioner in an early childhood setting	0	0
Parent / guardian (primary)	11	3.1
Primary teacher	5	1.4
Principal / deputy principal	1	0.3
Parent / guardian (post-primary)	10	2.8
Post-primary student	9	2.5
Post-primary teacher	280	79.3
Pre-service teacher	2	0.6
Teacher educator	4	1.1
Third-level student	4	1.1
Third-level lecturer/researcher	6	1.7
Other	21	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3: Respondents to L2 online survey

School type	Number	Percentage
Community school	63	17.8
Community college (ETB)	38	10.8

Comprehensive school	10	2.8
Education and Training Board (ETB)	23	6.5
School with a Stream/Unit	0	0
Educate Together	2	0.6
Voluntary secondary school	150	42.5
Other	67	19.0
<b>Iomlán</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4: School type in L2 online survey

L2 school types are broadly representative of English medium school type demographics. 79% of L2 survey respondents identified as post-primary teachers, whilst only less than 6% are parents. Student voice is less prominent in the survey data, at less than 4% but is more evident in focus group consultation feedback.

### 1.2 (c) Individual follow-up interviews

As part of the online surveys, respondents had the option of participating in additional follow-up online interviews. This method of consultation was chosen because it was not possible to visit schools to meet directly with teachers, due to Covid-19 related restrictions. A series of one-to-one follow-up online interviews were facilitated with 19 teachers to gather further insights into their responses to and understandings of the draft specifications. Interviews were conducted with teachers from Gaeltacht schools, Irish-medium schools and with teachers from English-medium schools. Each interview lasted approximately one hour at a time appropriate to the teacher. The feedback shared by the teacher through the online survey was used as a basis for the interview. The interview questions were based on major parts of the draft L1 or L2 specification. Comments on additional areas that emerged during the consultation were also invited.

### 1.2 (d) Focus groups

13 focus groups were held during the consultation, between March and November 2021, to gather and record participants' views on the draft specifications. Each focus group meeting focused on either the L1 or the L2 draft specification. The following areas were explored in the focus groups:

- Rationale, Aims and Objectives
- Structure and Learning Outcomes
- Texts and Literature
- Assessment
- Innovative features of the draft specifications
- Supports and systemic questions.

These focus group meetings were co-hosted by Irish language organisations, including An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta

and Údarás na Gaeltachta. Second-level teachers of Irish from the full range of Irish teaching contexts participated in these focus group meetings, including teachers of Irish in English medium schools, Gaelcholáistí, Streams and Units and teachers of Irish in Gaeltacht schools. Participants in these focus group meetings also included parents of primary school students, students in fifth or sixth year at second level, from a variety of school contexts, 3<sup>rd</sup> level students, trainee teachers, and parents from Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas.

### 1.2 (e) Bilateral Meetings

8 bilateral stakeholder meetings were held online (see appendix 2). The agenda for the meeting shared with stakeholders in advance was:

- Opportunity for the organisation to make an (open) statement on the draft specifications
- Rationale, Aim and Objectives
- Structure and Learning Outcomes
- The Approach to Texts (including Literature)
- Assessment
- Any other issues

## 2. Consultation Feedback on L1 and L2 draft specification documents

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This section of the report provides a summary of feedback received during the consultation on the L1 and L2 draft specifications via 5 consultation methods, namely written submissions, online surveys, individual follow-up interviews, focus-group meetings and bilateral meetings. One written submission was received after the deadline and is incorporated into the feedback below. Where feedback spanned all 5 consultation methods, it is referred to in general terms. Where significant differences were evident across different consultation methods this is referenced. In this report, where possible, distinctions are made between feedback relating primarily to the L1 draft specification and feedback relating primarily to the L2 draft specification. Where feedback was general, this was not possible.

It is noteworthy that the vast majority, though not the totality, of consultation participants that commented on the current Leaving Certificate Irish syllabus expressed dissatisfaction with it.

*“Aithnímid an gá le leasuithe a dhéanamh ar an gcóras reatha le cumas Gaeilge agus eispéireas na ndaltaí i dtaca leis an nGaeilge a threisiú. Tá múinteoirí i bhfábhar athruithe a threiseoidh cumas Gaeilge an phobail agus a chothóidh grá, meas, muinín, suim agus líofacht sa teanga”.*

(Eagraíocht Múinteoirí, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: We recognise the need to make reforms to the current system to strengthen students' Irish language ability and experience in relation to Irish. Teachers are in favour of changes that will strengthen the Irish language ability of the community and that will foster love, respect, confidence, interest, and fluency in the language].

(Teacher Organisation, written submission)

Participants from an L1/Irish medium context were more likely to view the current syllabus as inadequate. They spoke of its failure to provide a Leaving Certificate curriculum specification designed to meet the needs of young native speakers and students who learn primarily through the medium of Irish. A desire to see such students, particularly native speakers, extend their writing, speaking, personal and social skills; their creativity and their understanding of the richness of Irish language and culture was evident, at times, in L1 feedback.

*“Tá ganntanas daoine a bhfuil ardscoilí Gaeilge acu ar fáil d’earnáil an oideachais, na meán, na seirbhíse poiblí agus an iliomad réimsí eile faoi láthair... · Gan forbairt mar is ceart ar chumas teanga an chainteora T1, ní bheidh bláth ar ealaín na cumadóireachta Gaeilge idir litríocht, fhilíocht, phrós, dhrámaí, úrscéalta, scannáin, amhráin &rl”.*

(Eagraíocht Tuismitheoirí sa Gaeltacht, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: There is currently a shortage of people with a high standard of Irish language skills available to education, media, public service and many other sectors ... · Without proper development of the L1 speaker 's language ability, the art of Irish language compositions including literature, poetry, prose, plays, novels, films, songs etc. will not flourish].

(Parents' Organisation in the Gaeltacht, written submission)

Participants from an L2/English medium context expressed the opinion that the current syllabus results in an over-emphasis on rote learning and on literature in Irish, and an under-emphasis on speaking Irish. Concerns relating to students' motivation or lack of motivation to learn and speak Irish also emerged. Somewhat similar to L1 feedback, though for different reasons, a desire to ensure that all students can study Irish at a level of difficulty appropriate to their needs was also evident in L2 feedback. It was suggested that it is important to remember that these specifications are designed for young people still at school and that expectations must be consistent with their age and stage of learning.

## 2.1 General feedback on L1 and L2 draft specifications

Participants in the consultation process were given the opportunity to offer broad observations about the L1 and L2 draft specification documents, before being asked for focused feedback and suggestions in relation to specific sections of these documents. It was noted that this consultation generated a great deal of public discussion. Many welcomed the opportunity to take part in the consultation process, to have a voice and a mechanism whereby they could air their perspectives, questions and concerns.

Participants expressed the view that further consideration should be given to the vital role education plays in the preservation and promotion of the Irish language, particularly in Gaeltacht areas. The challenges of meeting the needs of all students from a diverse array of sociolinguistic backgrounds was a prominent theme in consultation feedback. A small number of written submissions referred positively to the continuity in the curriculum for Irish that these specifications would introduce, from early childhood to the end of post-primary school. It was suggested that this is very important for the teaching and learning of Irish and in strengthening the Irish language throughout the country. It was occasionally noted in the written submissions and in the focus groups that both draft specifications offer scope to adapt the teaching of Irish for different students in a creative, critical and interesting way, though some participants expressed the opinion that this might be easier in L1 contexts. Many consultation participants commented on how important it is that students are motivated to learn Irish.

Other written submissions emphasised that continuity across the curriculum does not yet exist. Many participants in bilateral meetings and one-to-one interviews suggested that the L1 draft specification, taken as a whole, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the sociolinguistic background(s) of the students for whom the draft L1 specification is designed. A small number of participants expressed concerns that the proposed developments could have a negative backwash effect on the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and others argued that these draft specifications are in conflict with the '20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language' and the 'Policy for Gaeltacht Education'. Consultation participants at times commented that the timing of changes to the curriculum for Irish had been less than ideal, as the Primary Language curriculum for junior infants to second class changed in 2015, followed by Junior Cycle in 2017, then the Primary Language Curriculum third to sixth class in 2019; with changes to Leaving Certificate Irish now proposed. It was suggested that comprehensive, integrated planning is not evident in both draft specifications and that wider State policies should be further explored to ensure that this happens.

One of the strongest themes which emerged from the consultation is the view that there is a lack of clarity overall in the detail of both draft specifications which would create challenges for teachers, particularly in relation to learning outcomes, assessment and literature. Consultation

participants were split when asked if the layout of the draft specifications is clear. In a small number of written submissions, the layout of the draft specifications was viewed as clear for the most part, while survey respondents were split when asked this question in relation to L1 and L2 specifications.

Perhaps due in part to familiarity with the L1/L2 approach used in Junior Cycle, when asked if the 'who is this specification for?' section of the L1 and L2 draft specifications is clear, over 67% (L1) and almost 60% (L2) of survey respondents respectively agreed or strongly agreed. In some bilateral meetings and written submissions, it was suggested that the terms L1/L2 are vague, that there is a lack of public understanding of them and that their use is not in line with how they are used in the field of linguistics. A number of consultation participants suggested that the language used in the specifications is too complex or academic, that the pitch is more suited to a third level course, and/or that, in the interests of accessibility, all students should be able to read, understand and achieve the learning outcomes.

*“Oireann an tsonraíocht go mór don fhoghlaimoir acadúil a bheidh ag díriú ar an tríú leibhéal ach tá baol an-mhór ann go gcaillfí an cainteoir nach bhfuil chomh hacadúil céanna. Ba thrua guth na bhfoghlaimoirí sin a bheidh cailte nó tostach sa tsonraíocht seo. Cad faoin dalta le raon scileanna agus buanna eile, a rachaidh le printíseacht, feirmeoireacht nó iascaireacht msh-cá bhfeictear cur chuige a d'oirfeadh dá leithéid sa tsonraíocht seo. Molaim a uailmhianaí is atá an tsonraíocht ach tá gá anailís a dhéanamh ar phróifíleanna éagsúla ag staideanna éagsúla ar an aistear teanga”.*

(Príomhoide T1 taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: The specification is very suitable for the academic learner who will be aiming for third level but there is a very real risk of losing the speaker who is not so academic. It would be unfortunate for the voice of these learners to be lost or silent in this specification. What about the student with a range of other skills and talents, who will go on to an apprenticeship, farming or fishing for example - where is such a suitable approach to be seen in this specification. I applaud the ambition of the specification but it is necessary to analyse different profiles at different stages of the language journey].

(L1 Principal outside the Gaeltacht, written submission)

Participants frequently commented on the information that is not provided in curriculum specification documents and/or suggested a need for further clarity in the draft specifications. This emerged as one of the strongest themes expressed in written submissions and responses to open-ended questions in the online surveys for both L1 and L2 draft specifications. Many participants suggested that this created a general lack of confidence in the draft specifications, with others suggesting that it is difficult to give feedback on the draft specifications without answers to systemic questions which could impact on the introduction of new specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish. Many commented on the importance of reviewing Junior Cycle L1 and L2 Irish specifications and a small number of consultation participants suggested waiting for broader changes arising from the review of Senior Cycle before introducing revised specifications for Irish. Note that the consultation on the draft specifications for L1 and L2 Irish took place before Minister for Education, Norma Foley announced plans for the reform of senior cycle and responded to the publication of NCCA's Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022).

## 2.2 Rationale, Aim and Objectives

After setting out who the specifications are for, the draft specifications for L1 and L2 state the draft Rationale, Aim and Objectives of the two specifications.

Whilst there is overlap in the rationale for the two specifications, the L1 draft specification focuses on meeting the needs of members of Irish-speaking schools and communities, including Gaelcholaistí, while the L2 draft specification encourages students learning Irish in English-medium contexts to become more active users of Irish in Irish language communities. Language and literature are interwoven and deemed mutually reinforcing in both specifications, but in the L1 draft specification, there is an emphasis on literary and non-literary texts; on the canon and on local literature where the L2 draft specification emphasises studying literary and non-literary texts, and the canon of Irish literature, but not local literature.

In terms of the difference between the rationale and the aims and objectives, the rationale illustrates the importance of learning Irish and sets out how the L1 and L2 draft specifications will contribute to the students' language skills, values and personal development. The aims and objectives outline how and why the student should build on their skills and competencies in Irish. Consultation participants were asked to comment on these.

The rationale and objectives, were more positively received in focus groups, bilateral meetings and one to one interviews than in the survey, and the draft L1 specification rationale and objectives were more positively received than the equivalent section in the L2 specification.

The emphasis on language awareness and cultural awareness in the objectives of the draft specifications was welcomed by some. Many participants expressed a view that cultural awareness is important for native Irish speakers while a few participants questioned its' relevance for those learning Irish as a second language. A few participants noted the potential for new specifications to support students to deepen their understanding of the history of the language and local history.

*“An bhfuil an stair i gceist mar chuid den fheasacht chultúrtha? Ba bhreá liom go dtuigfeadh na scoláirí go raibh an Ghaeilge mar theanga an tromlaigh tráth dá raibh”.*

(múinteoir Gaeltachta T1, agallamh)

[Translation: Is history part of cultural awareness? I would love for the students to understand that Irish was once the language of the majority].

(L1 Gaeltacht teacher, interview)

*“Ba chóir go mbeadh Stair na Gaeilge mar chuid den chúrsa. Má bhain an cúrsa le stair na teanga, beidh tuiscint níos fearr ag daoine ar an nGaeilge. D’fhéadfaí é seo a léiriú trí dhéantús scannán, trí nascadh leis an bpobal - cuairt ar an nGaeltacht chun an taithí a fháil agus chun tuiscint níos fearr a sholáthar ar an teanga mar theanga bheo”.*

(macléinn 3ú leibhéal, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: History of Irish should be part of the course. If the course is about the history of the language, people will have a better understanding of Irish. This could be demonstrated through



film-making, by connecting with the community - a visit to the Gaeltacht to experience and provide a better understanding of the language as a living language].

(3<sup>rd</sup> level student, focus group)

A small number of participants also praised the emphasis in the 'Teaching and Learning' section of the draft specifications on skills transfer, while others questioned the extent to which skills transfer across language learning is possible.

The emphasis on connection with the local community and with Irish language communities was broadly welcomed, particularly in relation to the L1 specification. The majority of survey respondents agreed that language use opportunities in the language community are important as part of the language acquisition process and that the teacher helps to provide rich language input to the student. However, a small number of teachers teaching in Gaelcholáistí, commented on the difficulties they encounter in creating links with Irish language communities beyond their schools. It was suggested that students should have opportunities to visit Gaeltacht areas, to deepen their appreciation of the richness of the Irish language. A small number of participants commented positively on how student-centred the draft specifications are and on the emphasis they place on student ownership of their learning. However, among L1 survey respondents, almost 80% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "*This draft specification will encourage the student to use Irish outside the classroom in their language communities*". Among L2 survey respondents, almost 94% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "*This draft specification will encourage the student to use Irish outside the classroom*".

When responding to later questions about Irish in the community, 67% of L1 survey respondents, and 61% of L2 respondents, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*Language use opportunities (outputs) are important in the language community as part of the language acquisition process*". Survey respondents value opportunities for language use in the community, while also having doubts about how well these draft specifications will support this goal and/or how feasible this is in practice. Participants in focus groups, from the L1 sector, suggested that opportunities to use Irish and become active participants in the language community, would create strong links and encourage interest in language and culture among students. A small number of focus group participants remarked that this could be difficult for students of Gaelcholáistí, Streams and Units. A number of L2 participants placed value on visits to Gaeltacht communities and relevant school-based workshops organised by members of the language community. Language Planning Officers suggested opportunities for collaboration with teachers and school communities to raise awareness of opportunities to interact with members of the language community.

A small number of participants spoke positively about how comprehensive the objectives are. A suggestion was made to look again at the order of the objectives, as some are more important than others.

*"saibhriú teanga is tábhachtaí, tá sé chun tosaigh, ach an ceann faoi fheasacht agus cultúr oidhreacht na Gaelainne agus meas ar chultúr agus ar theangacha eile, b'fhéidir gurbh fhiú é a chur níos airde sna cuspóirí, agus na rudaí atá ann a chur síos an liosta"*

(pleanálaí teanga, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: language enrichment is paramount, but the one about awareness and culture of Irish heritage and respect for other cultures and languages, it may be worthwhile to put it higher in the objectives, and to move others down the list] ”

(language planner, focus group)

There was mixed feedback and strong feelings in relation to dialects, with a desire for a balanced approach which recognises the complexity of this issue. A small number of focus group participants suggested that up to now, there has been too much emphasis on standard Irish in the education system and that these draft specifications provide an opportunity to recognise each dialect. The danger of the young person's natural dialect being lost was sometimes emphasised. In relation to L1 contexts, a small number of participants suggested not to place too much emphasis on home dialects, as students need experience of different dialects. It was occasionally noted that by reading literature from different areas, students have opportunities to become more familiar and comfortable with different dialects. Students from L2 contexts commented more on the challenges dialects present when trying to understand Irish from different regions in Ireland. Some of the feedback relating to dialects related specifically to assessment, which is explored later in this report.

Many participants in the consultation welcomed how broad and open the rationale, aims and objectives of the draft L1 and L2 specifications are. Some participants were of the view that the rationale, aims and objectives are too idealistic and ambitious, though a small number strongly disagreed with this viewpoint. The view that the draft specifications are too ambitious was particularly strong in feedback from L1 and L2 teachers. Many teachers suggested that the aims and objectives as set out cannot be achieved in the time available (180 hours of teaching and learning). Participants commenting on both draft specifications expressed the view that there is an imbalance in the emphasis placed on literature and on other language skills particularly on speaking, though this was commonly referred to by participants using the broader term 'communication'. Some participants viewed the relationship between language and literature as separate aspects of learning Irish, rather than as mutually supportive and beneficial.

*“Ba chóir go mbeadh níos mó béime ar an teanga labhartha (chun an scoláire a spreagadh 'an Ghaeilge a úsáid taobh amuigh den seomra ranga') agus níos lú béime ar an litríocht. Creidim féin go bhfuil litríocht na Gaeilge tábhachtach do chultúr & shaibhreas na teanga, ach bheadh níos lú litríochta níos fearr do dhaltai T2 'chun taitneamh a bhaint as an nGaeilge.”*

(múinteoir T2, suirbhé T2)

[Translation: There should be more emphasis on the spoken language (to encourage the student to 'use Irish outside the classroom') and less emphasis on literature. I personally believe that Irish literature is important for the culture & richness of the language, but less literature would be better for L2 students' to enjoy the Irish language].

(L2 teacher, L2 survey)

As a counterpoint, the view was also expressed that the rationale, aims and objectives are in danger of becoming too conservative, too focused on examination preparation rather than life, and may lack relevance to the lived realities of young people, especially students in a L1 context. It was

suggested that the specifications should be relevant and enjoyable for students and should create opportunities for students to be interactive and work together. One suggestion made was that these specifications could embrace wider aims, such as giving students opportunities to practice and develop skills for the stage and in debating.

*“Tá bunphrionsabail agus croíluachanna nuálaíocha agus comhaimseartha i gcoilár na sonraíochta agus gach iarracht déanta an dalta a chur i gcoilár na foghlama. Ba chóir go mbeadh an foghlaimeoir óg inniúil ionannú leis na luachanna úd”.*

(Múinteoir T1 Taobh amuigh den Gaeltacht, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: Innovative and contemporary core principles and values are at the heart of the specification and every effort has been made to place the student at the heart of learning. The young learner should be competent to empathise with those values].

(L1 Teacher Outside the Gaeltacht, written submission)

Survey respondents were split when asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement *“The rationale provides a clear explanation of the vision of the specifications”*. For the L1 draft specification, almost 49% agreed or strongly agreed, while 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

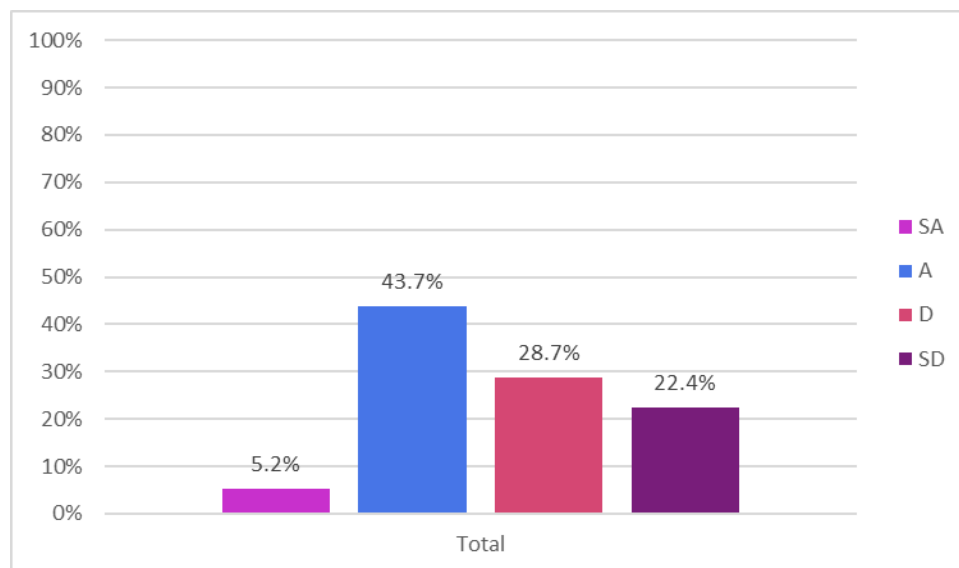


Figure 2<sup>1</sup>: Response to statement *“The L1 Rationale provides a clear explanation of the vision of the specifications”*

<sup>1</sup> Key: SA = “Strongly Agree”, A = “Agree”, D = “Disagree”, SD = “Strongly Disagree”.

The response to the same statement in relation to the L2 draft specification was slightly less positive, almost 42% agreed or strongly agreed, while slightly more than 58% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

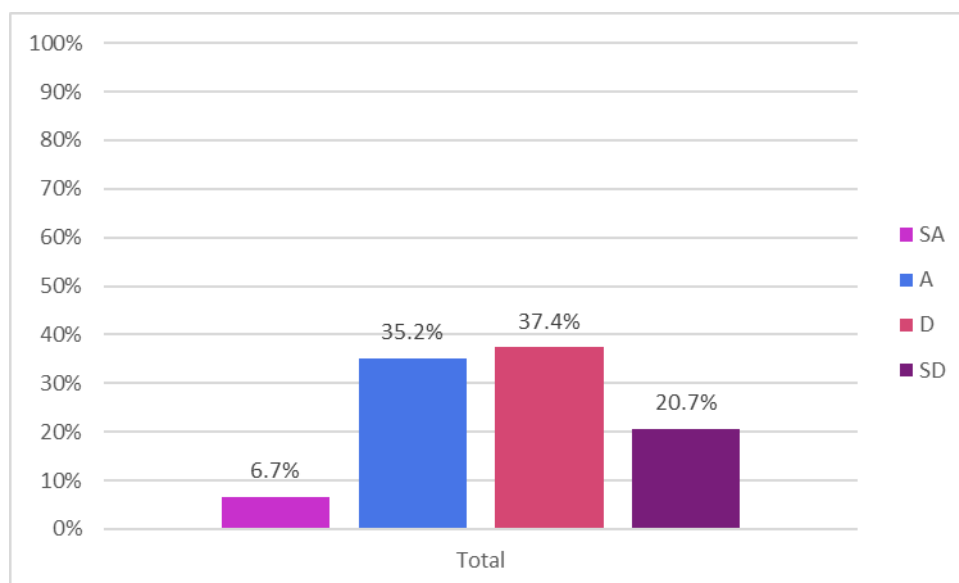


Figure 3: Response to statement “The L2 Rationale provides a clear explanation of the vision of the specifications”

The response to the statement “The Aim gives a clear account of the knowledge, skills and values that this specification aims to develop” was broadly similar across the L1 and L2 surveys. In the L1 survey 42% agreed or strongly agreed, while over 58% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and in the L2 survey, 43% agreed or strongly agreed while 57% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Survey respondents were asked a number of additional questions, which highlighted particular aspects of the rationale, aim and objectives of the draft L1 and L2 specifications and this pattern of mixed responses was repeated. See Appendix 3 for graphs which capture these additional L1 and L2 survey responses.

### Areas for further consideration:

In the further development of the specifications:

- review the clarity and expectations of the rationale and aims to meet the needs of all students, including those from differing sociolinguistic backgrounds
- consider the sequencing/order of the objectives
- review the emphasis placed on cultural awareness in the L2 specification
- re-examine the vision set out in the draft specifications for understanding dialects
- review the relationship between literature and language skills as set out in the draft specifications
- re-examine the overall emphasis on literature in the draft specifications

## 2.3 Learning and Teaching

The ‘Learning and Teaching’ section of the draft specifications outlines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will support students to become independent learners of Irish and take ownership of their own learning. It encourages a student-centred approach to language acquisition by means of a broad range of learning and teaching strategies that are age appropriate and engaging

to the student, including the development of a language portfolio. An integrated approach to the development of language skills is encouraged. The importance of the pedagogies used by teachers, the role of literary and non-literary sources, and links with the community are all recognised. Respondents to the online surveys and participants in the teacher interviews were invited to offer direct feedback on the teaching and learning section of the draft specifications. Observations and comments about teaching and learning were voiced in focus groups, bilateral meetings and written submissions, though less often than in the L1 and L1 online surveys and in the one to one teacher interviews.

In section 4 of the online surveys respondents were asked to express their views on learning and teaching as set out in the draft specifications. When asked if *“the learning and teaching section gives a clear understanding of the expectations for student language acquisition”* 39% of L1 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while among L2 survey respondents 30% agreed or strongly agreed. This view was replicated in focus groups and bi-lateral meetings where participants also requested further clarity on the expectations for student language acquisition.

*“Ní thuigeann múinteoirí an caighdeán ba cheart a bheith ann. Ní hé go bhfuil liostaí foclóra uathu do chuile rud, ach topaicí b'fhéidir gur chóir a chlúdach, bheadh sé sin cabhrach do mhúinteoirí”.*

(múinteoir T2, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: Teachers do not understand the standard that should be there. Not only do they want vocabulary lists for everything, but topics that may need to be covered, that would be helpful for teachers].

(L2 teacher, focus group)

*“Caithfidh an leibhéal agus an caighdeán a bheith an-soiléir. Níl sé soiléir sna dréachtsonraíochtaí faoi láthair le bheith cinnte go n-oibreoidh na dréachtsonraíochtaí do na scoláirí, mar shampla cainteoirí dúchasacha”.*

(cruinniú déthaobhach)

[Translation: The level and quality must be very clear. It is not clear in the current draft specifications, to be sure that the draft specifications will work for students, such as native speakers].

(bilateral meeting)

The role of language awareness and cultural awareness in developing understanding of, and identifying with, the language community, as set out in the draft specifications was welcomed with 66% of L1 survey respondents and 62% of L2 survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement *‘Language awareness and cultural awareness support students to understand the importance of the language community, participate in it and identify with it’*. Reference was made in written submissions to the central place of the language community in the draft L1 specification in particular.

*“...tacaíonn muid ach go háirithe leis an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an scoilphobal agus leis na naisc atá ag scoileanna leis an phobal go ginearálta. Tá sé seo iontach tábhachtach i bpobail Ghaeltachta chomh maith le pobail scoileanna (gaelscoileanna agus scoileanna meáin Bhéarla) do thodhchaí na Gaeilge agus do chur chun cinn na teanga i bpobail ar fud an oileáin”.*

(Eagraíocht Ghaeilge, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation:... We especially support the importance of the school community and the links that schools have with the wider community. This is very important in Gaeltacht communities as well

as school communities (Irish - medium and English - medium schools) for the future of the Irish language and for the promotion of the language in communities throughout the island.

(Irish Language Organisation, written submission)

When asked to comment on the statement “the teacher helps to provide students with rich language input as part of the learning and teaching process”, 62% of L1 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Among L2 respondents, 60% agreed or strongly agreed, as can be seen in the graphs below. Teachers' written submissions, particularly those from teachers in L2 settings, mentioned the importance of the teacher's independence and freedom in adapting teaching content and approaches to their own contexts. Participants in focus groups, bi-lateral meetings and interviews stressed the importance of a comprehensive suite of adequate resources, supports and training to assist the teacher in the implementation of the new specifications, as discussed in section 3: Feedback relating to the introduction of new specifications.

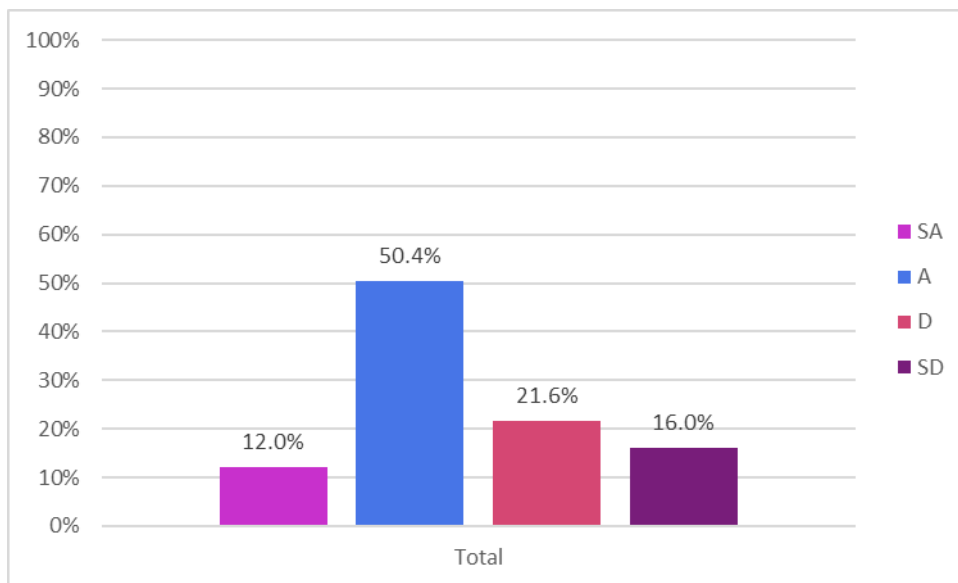


Figure 4: Response to statement: “The teacher helps to provide students with rich language input as part of the learning and teaching process” (L1 survey)

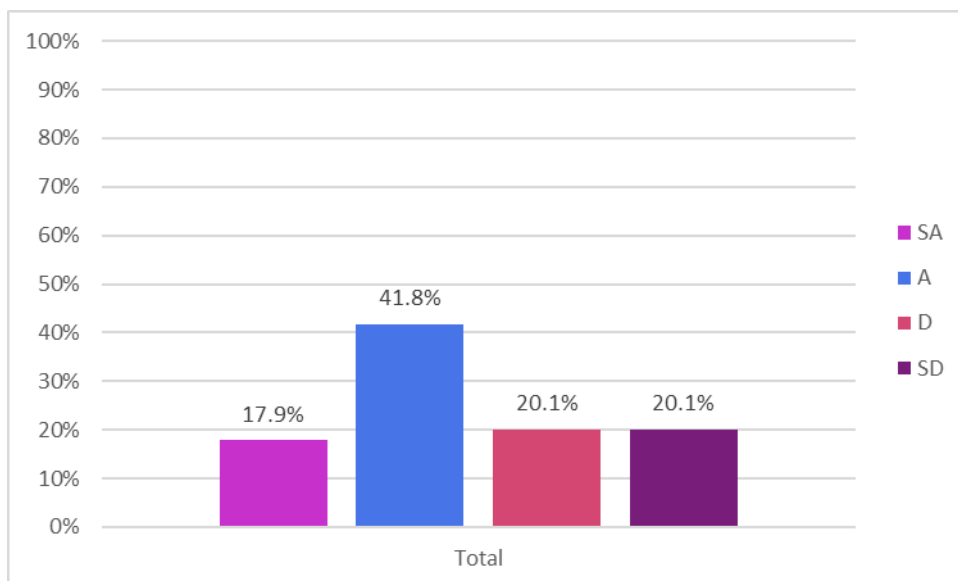


Figure 5: Response to statement: “The teacher helps to provide students with rich language input as part of the learning and teaching process” (L2 survey)

When asked if the draft specifications are in line with the values and principles of [the existing] Senior Cycle, 42% of L1 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 43% of L2 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Some written submissions and participants in bi-lateral meetings suggested that changes should be postponed until systematic changes are being made to Senior Cycle more broadly, as discussed in section 4 Systemic Considerations. As previously indicated, the consultation on the draft specifications for L1 and L2 Irish took place before Minister for Education, Norma Foley announced plans for the reform of senior cycle and responded to the publication of NCCA’s Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022).

L1 survey respondents were divided when asked if “the related learning section illustrates students’ Irish language learning journey from early years to senior cycle and how this experience prepares them to undertake lifelong learning”. 49% of L1 survey participants agreed or strongly agreed. The equivalent figure among L2 respondents was significantly lower, only 31% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 69% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Survey respondents were asked to share their views on the statement “Developing the student’s literacy skills is of considerable importance if they are to become effective users and successfully acquire the Irish language” 60% of respondents to the L1 surveys and 54% of respondents to the L2 surveys agreed with the statement. Some focus group participants commented on the challenges of helping students to develop their literacy skills with a number of participants expressing the view that some students don’t have an interest in reading in any language.

“Níl suim dá laghad ag scoláirí sa Litríocht. Tá an Litríocht ródhúshlánach dóibh. An rang Ardleibhéal b’fhéidir, ach do scoláirí laga, beidh siad i dtrioblóid. Cuirfidh sé eagla ar na scoláirí laga”.

(múinteoir T2, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: Students are not the least bit interested in Literature. Literature is too challenging for them. Higher level class maybe, but for weaker students, they will be in trouble. It will frighten the weak students]

(L2 teacher, focus group)

When asked to comment on the statement, “The draft specification will help students develop language learning strategies that will be transferable to other languages,” 62% of L1 survey respondents and 84% of L2 survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A similar sentiment was expressed when 65% of L1 survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “Language learning (as set out) in this draft specification will help students to undertake other subjects of the curriculum through Irish”.

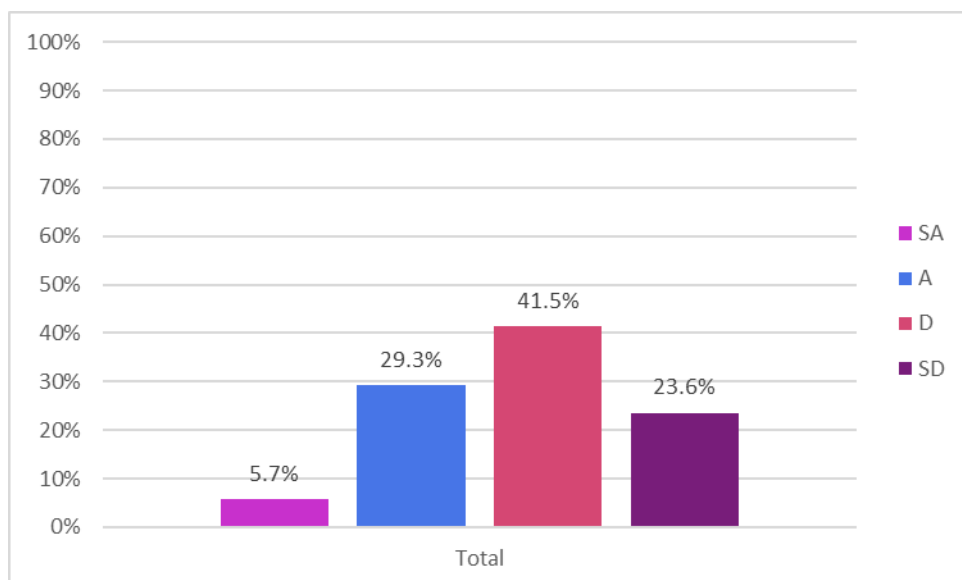


Figure 6: Response to statement "Language learning (as set out) in this draft specification will help students to undertake other subjects of the curriculum through Irish (L1 survey)."

When asked to comment on the statement "Self-awareness as a language learner is one of the most important tools for the student to progress", 62% of L1 survey respondents and 67% of L2 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

A number of written submissions emphasised the need for a greater emphasis on formative assessment in teaching and learning. The importance of guiding learning and gathering evidence of student progress was mentioned. 71% of L1 survey respondents and 78% of L2 survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Assessment plays a role in supporting learning as well as assessing achievement".

*"Tá tábhacht ar leith ag baint leis an measúnú foirmitheach i bpróiseas foghlama an scoláire agus is deis amú é gan aitheantas ceart a thabhairt don ghné seo den mheasúnú foirmitheach".*

(Eagraíocht Ghaeilge, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: Formative assessment is of particular importance in the student's learning process and it is a wasted opportunity not to properly acknowledge this aspect of formative assessment].

(Irish Language Organisation, written submission)

## Language Portfolio

The draft L1 and L2 specifications recommend that the student develop a language portfolio during their two years of Leaving Certificate Irish. It is proposed that this will be a collection of examples of the student's work. The portfolio aims to enhance the student's self-directed learning and reflection skills. It is recommended in the draft specifications that the student engage in conversation and discussion about the portfolio as part of the oral examination, but that the portfolio itself is not assessed for certification.

Mixed views were expressed on the proposal in the draft specifications that a portfolio be an element of the learning process. Many L1 focus group participants and some of the written submissions mentioned the value of the portfolio, suggesting that the portfolio encourages



students to reflect and analyse the learning process and to take ownership of their own learning. A very different view was expressed in the surveys as seen in the graphs below.

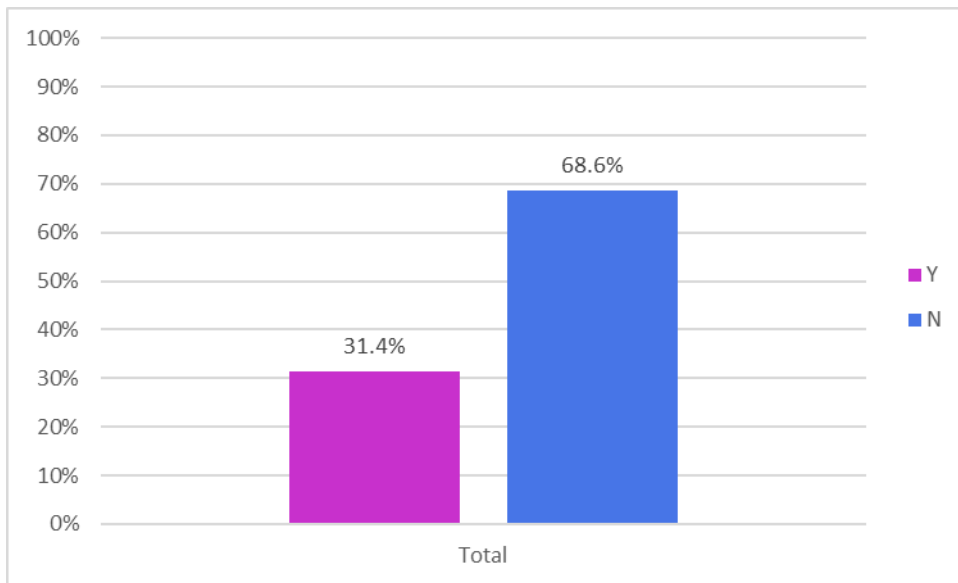


Figure 7<sup>2</sup>: Response to statement “Will the language portfolio support students to strengthen their self-directed learning and reflection skills while on their language acquisition journey? (L1 survey)

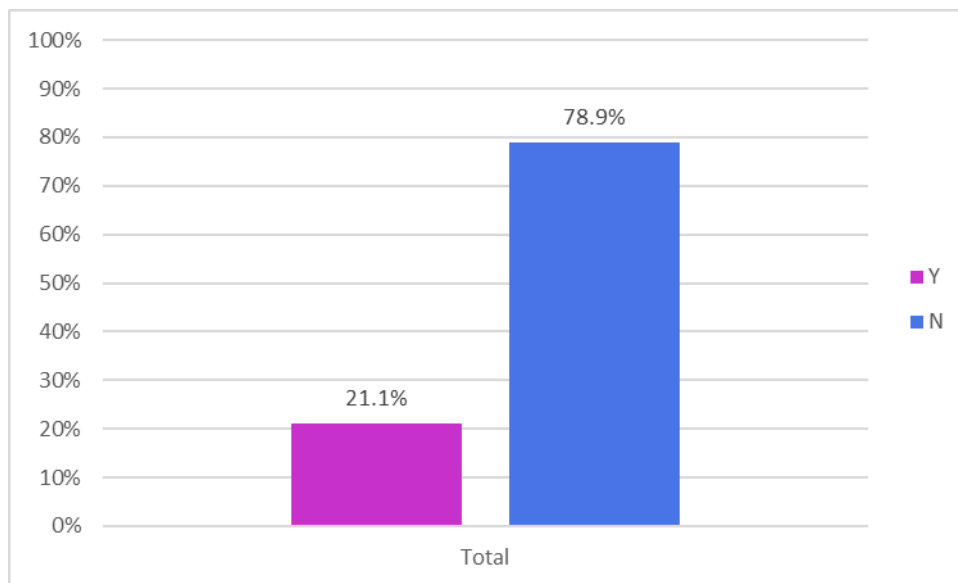


Figure 8: Response to statement “Will the language portfolio support students to strengthen their self-directed learning and reflection skills while on their language acquisition journey? (L2 survey)

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<sup>2</sup> Key: Y = “Yes”, N = “No”

As the focus of the portfolio is on gathering examples of the student's own work, a number of participants suggested that this would be an advantage to a student who moves school, as they would be able to show their new teacher in a concrete way some examples of speaking, writing, responding to and using the Irish language. It was acknowledged that the portfolio creates opportunities for the student to work independently or as part of a group and that the content of the portfolio should be based on the students' interests and learning outcomes from the three strands. It was mentioned that the portfolio instils in students' pride in their own work when they talk about the content of the portfolio and see their own progress when the student receives feedback on a draft and redrafting. Many participants mentioned that the portfolio would add to the student's vocabulary, accuracy and richness of language. Others suggested developing everyday skills through the portfolio, for example completing CVs or forms through Irish. Some commented that the junior cycle portfolio is a good foundation for the Leaving Certificate portfolio.

*"Tríd an bpunann díritear ar scileanna féin-riartha agus féinmhachnamhacha an scoláire a fhorbairt - dul chun cinn atá an-dearfach".*

(Príomhoide T1 sa Gaeltacht, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: The portfolio focuses on developing the student's self-directed and self-reflection skills - very positive progress].

(L1 Principal in the Gaeltacht, written submission)

*"Measann [Eagraíocht Ghaeilge] gur choincheap suimiúil í an phunann teanga agus gur deis iontach a bheadh ann go hidéalach don fhoghlaimoir tabhairt faoi shainábhar a mbeadh suim acu ann. D'fhéadfadh an foghlaimoir machnamh a dhéanamh ar an bpróiseas foghlama agus na scileanna atá sealbhaithe aige/aici chomh maith".*

(Eagraíocht Ghaeilge, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: [Irish language organisation] considers the language portfolio to be an interesting concept and would ideally be a great opportunity for the learner to pursue a specific subject that would interest them. The learner may also reflect on the learning process and the skills he/she has acquired].

(Irish language organisation, written submission)

The portfolio approach was criticised in most surveys, and in some written submissions, focus groups and, to a lesser extent, one-to-one interviews. A small number of participants suggested that the portfolio would be childish for this age group. Several participants, particularly L2 teachers, suggested that the portfolio would demand a lot of time. 58% of respondents to L1 survey and 71% of L2 survey respondents disagreed with the statement *"The language portfolio is an important tool for formative learning and assessment"*, while a number of written submissions noted the possibilities of the portfolio as a method of formative assessment. A small number of participants commented that the portfolio would not support communication as the students would be mostly creating reports or writing reflective notes and it was suggested that some students find it difficult to reflect.

*"Tá buntáistí na punainne foilsithe go forleathan. Ina dhiaidh sin níl ann ach uirlis spreagadh. I mo thaithí sa seomra ranga mar mhúinteoir feictear dom go n-oibríonn sé do roinnt scoláirí. Cothaíonn míthuiscint faoi bhrí na foghlama. Bíonn an t-eolas ar fad sa phunann agus gan tada ina gcloigne! Feictear dom go bhfuil cailíní níos tógtha leo ná buachaillí agus titeann buachaillí siar dá bharr. Cruthaíonn sé strus i measc foghlaimoirí le fadhbanna foghlama. Tuilleadh oibre ar mhúinteoirí".*

(múinteoir Gaeltachta T1, suirbhé T1)

[Translation: The benefits of the portfolio have been widely publicised. After all it's just a motivational tool. In my classroom experience as a teacher I find it works for some students. It fosters a misunderstanding of the meaning of learning. All the information is in the portfolio and nothing is in their heads! It seems to me that girls are more impressed with it than boys and boys fall behind because of it. It creates stress among learners with learning difficulties. More work for teachers].

(L1 Gaeltacht teacher, L1 survey)

A small number of participants questioned the difference between the portfolio and a copy and mentioned that self-reflection and autonomy happen through a copy anyway. In this feedback, the portfolio was interpreted as written, rather than a potentially digital collection encompassing all modes of communication. Participants frequently referenced their experiences of the student language portfolio in Junior Cycle Irish.

Many participants welcomed the idea of using the portfolio as a stimulus for discussion in the oral examination. Some suggested it should replace the (current) picture sequences, and some compared it to the 'document' in the French oral examination. A small number of L1 teachers expressed concerns in one-to-one interviews that this assessment approach could lead to rote learning. Many participants felt that the portfolio would not be successful if marks were not awarded to the portfolio as students would not engage with it.

*"Muna bhfuil faic ag dul don phunann, níl sé réalaióch go dtabharfadh daltaí faoin ngné sin."*

(tuismitheoir bunscoile, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: "If there is nothing [sic: no marks] going for the portfolio, it is unrealistic for students to address that aspect.].

(primary school parent, focus group)

*"Cén fáth go bhfuil idirghníomhú cainte ann muna bhfuilimid chun úsáid a bhaint as...bheadh fíor idirghníomhú ann dá mbeidís ag caint ar ghné éigin den phunann".*

(múinteoir T2, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: "Why is there a speech interaction if we are not going to use it... it would be a real interaction if they were talking about some aspect of the portfolio]

(L2 teacher, focus group)

Participants frequently commented on that the draft specifications were unclear on the role of the portfolio. It was suggested that a structure or checklist be added to the portfolio, however others commented that the portfolio should be based on the student experience rather than a list of named topics. A small number of focus group participants requested that examples or exemplars of the portfolio be provided.

*"Níl mórán eolais faoin phunann teanga sna dréachtsonraíochtaí agus soiléiriú le tabhairt ar an úsáid a bhainfear aisti seachas mar spreagadh don bhéaltríail. Bheadh gá le treoir bhreise don mhúinteoir agus don fhoghlaiméoir chomh maith leis an scrúdaitheoir a bheadh ag úsáid na punainne mar ábhar measúnaithe".*

(Eagraíocht Ghaeilge, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: “There is little information about the language portfolio in the draft specifications and clarification on its use other than as a stimulus for the oral test. Additional guidance would be required for both the teacher and the learner as well as the examiner].

(Irish language organisation, written submission)

### **Areas for further consideration:**

In the further development of the specifications:

- re-examine the clarity of the expectations for student language acquisition
- review the draft specifications for alignment with the values and principles of the Senior Cycle; continuity of language learning; and preparation for lifelong learning
- review the emphasis in the specifications on developing transferable language skills

Student Language Portfolio Guidelines will be published separately to the specifications, to support clarity about the role and purpose of the portfolio.

## **2.4 Texts and Literature**

The draft specifications outline the multifaceted role of literary and non-literary texts in the learning experience of students. They explore the role Irish language literature can play in developing students’ skills and competencies, and the role it can play in students’ personal development and development of their cultural identity. The draft specifications outline the proposed range and number of suggested texts and genres, and give scope for students to select texts. Participants in the consultation offered feedback on these sections of the L1 and L2 draft specifications, commenting on the overall approach to and emphasis on literature in the two draft specifications and on the approach to differentiating expectations at higher and ordinary level.

During the period of consultation an online portal was available that welcomed suggestions of texts to be included on the L1 and L2 literature lists. This portal for suggesting specific texts was separate to the L1 and L2 surveys on the draft specifications. There were 16 responses to the L1 text list portal and 26 responses to the L2 text list portal. The suggested texts will be reviewed and considered for inclusion on the literature lists to accompany final Leaving Certificate Irish specifications.

A major theme emerging from the consultation was the emphasis in the draft specifications on the role of literature in the learning and teaching of Irish. It was suggested by many consultation participants that literature is over-emphasised in the draft specifications. Many suggested that an over-reliance on literature to support language development can negatively impact on students’ attitudes towards the Irish language and to Irish literature. Many expressed a view that teaching approaches to literature diminish students’ enjoyment of learning the language.

*“Cailleann tú scoláirí má bhíonn an téacs ró-dheacair. Caithfidh na téacsanna a bheith in oiriúint don scoláire. Tá spreagadh de dhíth ón litríocht, go mbaineann sé lena saol féin”.*

(cruinniú déthaobhach)

[Translation: You lose students if the text is too difficult. The texts must be student - friendly. Literature needs to be inspiring, that it pertains to their own lives].

(bilateral meeting)

*“An bhfuil sé réalaióch nó cóir béim a leagan ar litríocht má smaoinimid ar an mac léinn agus conas ba mhaith linn úsáid na teanga a chur chun cinn?”*

(ábhar oide, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: Is it realistic or fair to emphasise literature if we think about the student and how we want to promote the use of the language?]

(student teacher, focus group)

*“Ar ndóigh, tuigim tábhacht na litríochta, agus gur cuid riachtanach d'fhoghlaim agus sealbhú teanga é. Tuigim freisin an tábhacht a bhaineann le scileanna litearthachta a fheabhsú agus a fhorbairt i measc na ndaltaí. Chomh maith leis sin, tá a fhios agam nach léifí téacsanna mura ndéanfaí é sa rang, ach an é seo an rud atá tábhachtach i ndáiríre? Bainim féin taitneamh as an gcuid seo den chúrsa agus creidim go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go mbeadh sé ar fáil do na daltaí ar mian leo dul i mbun an réimse seo den teanga, ach níl suim ag go leor daltaí sa litríocht fiú i mBéarla, agus mar thoradh air sin, déantar "chore" de agus gcuirtear iallach ar dhaoine fulaingt tríd. Bíonn sé thar a bheith deacair ar go leor daltaí na téacsanna a thuiscint, agus níos minice ná a mhalairt, foghlaimíonn daltaí freagraí samplacha de ghlanmheabhair lena chinntiú go n-éireoidh go maith leo sa scrúdú chun na pointí a theastaíonn uathu a fháil. Mura dtuigeann na daltaí an méid atá á léamh acu, conas is féidir leis cabhrú lena scileanna teanga a fheabhsú, nó grá don teanga a chothú? Nach é seo an rud is tábhachtaí?”*

(Scoláire T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: Of course, I understand the importance of literature, and that it is an essential part of language learning and acquisition. I also understand the importance of improving and developing students' literacy skills. Also, I know that texts would not be read if it was not done in class, but is this really important? I personally enjoy this part of the course and believe that it is important for it to be available to students who wish to engage in this area of the language, but many students are not even interested in literature even in English, and as a result, it becomes a "chore" and people are forced to suffer through it. Many students find the texts extremely difficult to understand, and more often than not, students learn sample answers by heart to ensure that they pass the exam to get the points they need. If students do not understand what they are reading, how can it help improve their language skills, or foster a love of the language? Isn't this the most important thing?]

(L2 student, written submission)

A small number of consultation participants welcomed the vision for literature set out in the draft specifications. They particularly welcomed recognition that literature supports both cultural and language awareness. The potential of literary texts to support the Language Creativity strand was also emphasised by a few consultation participants. A small number of participants whose focus and feedback related primarily to L1 contexts expressed the view that the role of literature, as set out in the draft L1 specification, had the potential to enhance the abilities of students attending Irish medium schools. Some participants stated that the most important potential for learning here lies in the language the student uses in responding to the texts they explore. A few consultation participants welcomed the idea that students would compare texts.

*Is dóigh liomsa go dtacaíonn téacsanna leis na torthaí foghlama ach an bhfuil an iomarca téacsanna ann, táimid ag caint faoi úrscéal, dráma, filíocht, agus an bhfuil siad ródhúshlánach. Caithfimid smaoinemh ar chúrsaí ama, má táimid chun an teanga a mhúineadh agus ansin na téamaí agus gach rud a bhaineann leis an téacs a dhéanamh. Má tá sé ródheacair nó go bhfuil barraíocht téacsanna ann roghnóidh siad gnáthleibhéal a dhéanamh”.*

(múinteoir Gaeltachta, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: I think texts support the learning outcomes but if there are too many texts, we are talking about novel, drama, poetry, and are they too challenging. We need to think about time, if we are to teach the language and then do the themes and everything related to the text. If it's too difficult or there are too many texts they will choose to do ordinary level].

(Gaeltacht teacher, focus group)

The flexibility of reading texts from a variety of genres was widely welcomed. Consultation participants suggested that modern texts by new authors and in innovative genres should be integrated into the literature lists alongside traditional literary texts. Commenting on the range of genres proposed, a small number of participants suggested that teachers might select poetry rather than song and for this reason suggested that students be required to study at least two songs. Others welcomed the proposal to study three poems by one 'great poet' to deepen understanding of the poet's style and the heritage of the area, though some queried how 'great poets' would be selected. A small number of participants in focus groups welcomed the inclusion of non-literary texts and suggested they provide an authentic and living link to Irish language communities. The suggestion that film or audio-visual texts be included as a genre was welcomed, with a small number of participants suggesting this category should be broad enough to encompass autobiographical films. A significant number of participants in L1 focus groups suggested the inclusion of local folklore and local literature, to create a link between students and the local community. This they saw as a cornerstone worth building on from junior cycle, especially for the native speaker, and some suggested a balance between local literature and literature from other areas, to increase student awareness of heritage, culture and dialects. A small number of participants suggested that local literature could be discussed during the oral examination. Others were skeptical about the amount of folklore associated with some areas of the country, and thus suggested not adding folklore, or at least, not adding local folklore to the prescribed literature. A small number of participants in focus groups and interviews expressed concern over the length of texts, suggesting shorter texts should be included on the literature lists. Others, especially participants from a L1 context, valued engaging with complete literary works rather than passages or selected chapters from texts, to develop a deeper understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of literature. Some participants, from both L1 and L2 contexts, emphasised that engagement with a complete literary text would be time consuming.

Many participants welcomed the possibilities available to teachers to select texts that would be suitable and interesting for a particular cohort of students, and it was suggested that the literature lists be changed regularly. By contrast, when survey respondents were asked to respond to the statement "*The range of texts and the choice between certain genres gives scope to select texts suitable for students' experiences, contexts and needs*", more of a split was evident. 56% of respondents to the L1 surveys disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 68% of respondents to the L2 survey disagreed or strongly disagreed. On the whole, participants suggested that the content of the literary texts should be interesting and relevant for teenagers. Some participants suggested that a balance needs to be struck between texts which are aimed at a teenage audience, and those which give students opportunities to understand a wider range of themes, ideas and protagonists.

*"Moltar réimse ábhair sa litríocht laistigh de na seánraí le téamaí a thagann le ábhar spéise déagóirí na linne. Moltar éagsúlacht a thabhairt san áireamh le meascán de litríocht chomhaimseartha agus litríocht a thabharfaidh feasacht cultúrtha faoi bhráid an scoláire".*

(Seirbhís Tacaíochta do Mhúinteoirí, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: It is suggested that there be a range of topics in the literature within the genres with themes that are in keeping with the interests of the teenagers of the time. It is recommended that diversity be taken into account with a mixture of contemporary literature and literature that will bring cultural awareness to the student].

(Support Service for Teachers, written submission)

Concerns were expressed about the selection of appropriate texts due to the scarcity of literature available that is contemporary and appropriate to the students' abilities and interests. Concerns were also expressed about students' interest in and motivation to engage with texts in Irish, as noted earlier in this report. Mixed views were expressed regarding the role of the student in the selection of texts and further guidance was sought on how this might work in practice. A small number of consultation participants suggested giving students and teachers freedom to choose texts, without having a prescribed list.

*"Fáiltíonn muid roimh an deis a bheas ag an fhoghlaimoir a bheith lárnach i roghnú téacsanna cé go n-aithníonn muid go bhféadfadh sé seo deacrachtaí a chruthú do mhúinteoirí i ranganna ilchumais agus i ranganna móra".*

(Eagraíocht Ghaeilge, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: We welcome the opportunity for the learner to be central to the selection of texts, although we recognise that this can create difficulties for teachers in mixed ability and large classes].

(Irish language organisation, written submission)

The strongest difference in responses to the L1 online survey and the L2 online survey was that L1 respondents were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree with the role and vision of literature in language learning set out in the L1 draft specification than L2 respondents responding to what is set out in the L2 draft specification, as evident in Appendix 3. The importance of literature for language acquisition was emphasised in responses to open questions in the L1 survey, though in closed questions, there was more of a split. 55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"Reading a wide range of Irish literary and non-literary texts enables the student to deepen communication, thinking and critical skills"*, while 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Among respondents to the L2 surveys, 65% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Note also that the profile of L1 and L2 survey respondents was quite different, as detailed in Tables 1 and 3 in Section 1 of this report.

Among respondents to the L1 surveys 57% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *'a range of literary and non-literary texts will help the student to manipulate content, ideas and concepts in other subjects of the curriculum'* and 63% agreed or strongly agreed that the student *'gains insight into ways to use the language creatively through a range of literary and non-literary texts'*. 58% of respondents to the L1 surveys agreed with the statement *"By reading a wide range of Irish literary and non-literary texts, the student gains insights into the culture and language of his / her home and other areas"*. By contrast, in L2 responses to the same statements, 61% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the first statement and 67% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the second statement. 52% of L2 survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. *"Reading and manipulating Irish texts (both literary and non-literary) supports the development of the five communication skills"*. Respondents to the L2 survey were concerned that these draft specifications could result in teachers teaching through English as it could be too difficult to explore texts through the medium of Irish. Some discussion took place in focus groups and one to one interviews in relation to the

potential impact of this approach on students' opportunities to learn from texts and to respond authentically and/or emotionally to texts.

Opinions were collected on the proposed amount of literature students would engage with. A small number of consultation participants expressed the view that the proposed literature does not differ sufficiently in the draft L1 and L2 specifications while others were satisfied with the similarity between L1 and L2 in the proposed literature. A few consultation participants suggested that there is not enough recommended literature and that more challenge is needed for students, particularly native speakers, undertaking the Leaving Certificate specifications. Some suggested the L1 specification should provide an equivalent level of challenge as that experienced by students whose first language is English, and/or in order to fully develop students' literacy skills. By contrast, in the surveys, 68% of L1 respondents and almost 89% of L2 respondents called for fewer texts, particularly literary texts, at both higher and ordinary level. The majority of consultation participants expressed the view that it would not be possible to meaningfully engage with the number of suggested literary texts proposed in the draft specifications in the time available (at least 180 hours of teaching and learning).

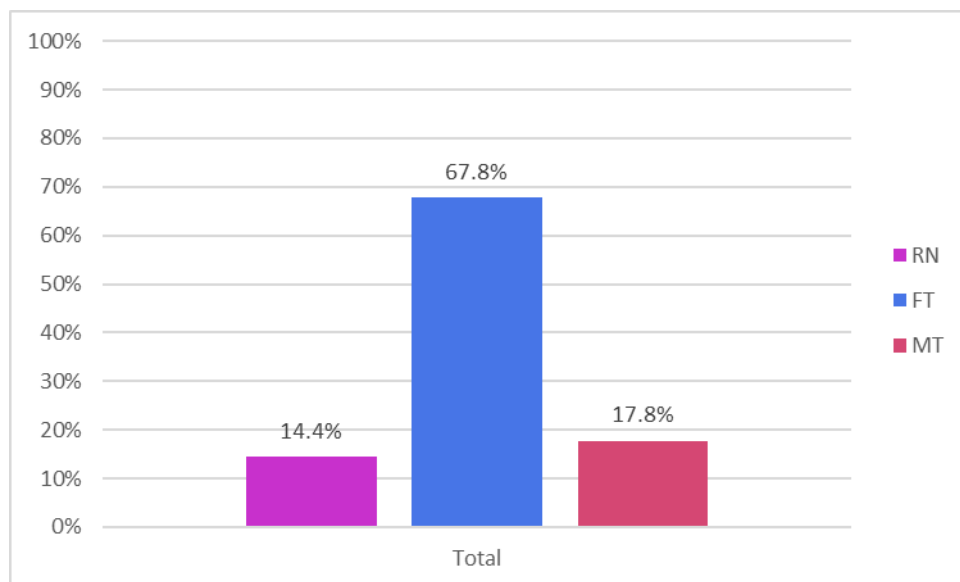


Figure 9<sup>3</sup>: Responses on the recommended number of texts for Higher Level (L1 survey)

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<sup>3</sup> Key: RN = "Right number of texts", FT = "Fewer texts", MT = "More texts"



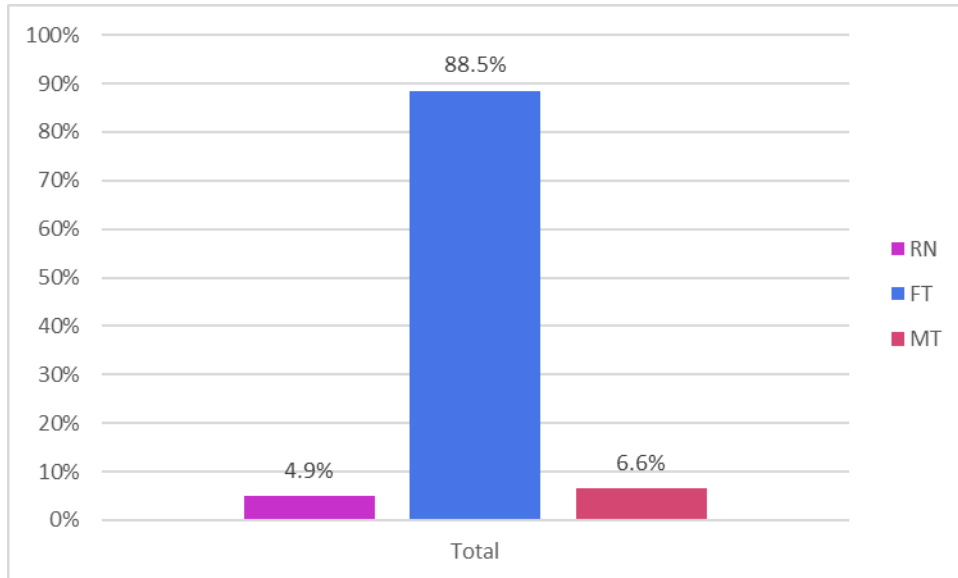


Figure 10: Responses on the recommended number of texts for Higher Level (L2 survey)

*“Má tá 40 dán ar an gcúrsa Béarla, cén fáth nach féidir an méid céanna a chur ar fáil ar an gcúrsa Gaeilge san Ardteist?”*

(tuismitheoirí Gaeltachta, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: If there are 40 poems on the English course, why can't the same amount be provided on the Leaving Certificate Irish course?]

(Gaeltacht parents, focus group)

*“Fáiltimid roimh an réasúnaíocht a thugtar sna sonraíochtaí d'ionad na litríochta i siollabais na hArdteistiméireachta, ach braithimid go bhfuil bearna mhór idir na prionsabail a luaitear ansin agus an líon an-bheag téacsanna litríochta a luaitear leis an dá shonraíocht”.*

(Institiúid Ard-Oideachais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: We welcome the rationale given in the specifications for the place of literature in the Leaving Certificate syllabuses, but we feel that there is a significant gap between the principles stated there and the very small number of literary texts mentioned in both specifications].

(Higher Education Institution, written submission)

*“Bhí muid buartha go mbeadh daltaí á gcailliúint againn dá mbeadh difríocht mhór idir litríocht T1 agus litríocht T2. Tá muid sásta é sin a chloisteáil” (nach mór an difir a bheadh ann)”.*

(múinteoir T1, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: We were worried that we would lose students if there was a big difference between L1 and L2 literature. We're glad to hear that "(there isn't really a big difference)].

(L1 teacher, focus group)

The majority of participants suggested that increased emphasis on literature could lead to reduced opportunities for the development of spoken Irish in class. Some suggested reducing the proposed weighting for literature in the final examination and many, particularly those responding to the L2 draft specification, suggested removing literature from the L2 specification entirely, especially for Ordinary level. Occasionally, comparisons were made to foreign language learning in schools, with the examples of French and German most often cited, as an argument for students learning Irish not to study literature, though the differences in terms of length of time learning the language, and

second language versus foreign language learning, were not acknowledged. Others suggested that the development group revisit whether an appropriate balance between embracing literature for all of the reasons outlined in the draft specifications, and embracing the development of language skills, is being achieved in the draft specifications. Many participants proposed a different model of provision for Leaving Certificate Irish, making the study of literature a stand-alone course. This idea is referenced below in Section 4: Systemic Considerations.

Different teaching contexts emerged as a significant factor in some of the feedback. For example, many teachers teaching in L2 contexts expressed the view that the current texts for Leaving Certificate Irish are too challenging. By contrast, many Gaeltacht teachers questioned the standard of the literary texts on the current Leaving Certificate Text List and suggested that literature has never been sufficiently challenging for students in Irish-medium schools, particularly native speakers.

Another common theme highlighted during the consultation was how challenging it is to comment on the approach to texts and literature, as no literature list is yet available. Participants mentioned uncertainties about the linguistic qualities and scope of texts. This feedback was strongest in bilateral meetings, focus groups with teachers, in some interviews, and in open-ended responses to the L1 survey. The importance of including teacher and student voices and perspectives in compiling text lists for revised Leaving Certificate Irish specifications was also emphasised during the consultation. It was also stated that the texts selected should be diverse and inclusive.

*“Níl aon litríocht curtha ar fáil ach oiread. Is cuid lárnach de shonraíochtaí na Gaeilge í na litríocht. Mar sin, cén fáth nach bhfuil fáil ar an liosta litríochta anois chun tuiscint níos iomláine a thabhairt do chuile dhuine gur spéis leo an t-ábhar seo?”*

(Eagraíocht Mhúinteoirí, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: No literature has been provided either. Literature is an integral part of the specifications of the Irish language. So why not make the literature list available now to give everyone a fuller understanding of this topic?]

(Teacher Organisation, written submission)

*“Nílimid ag iarraidh liosta cuimsitheach de théacsanna, ach ba bhreá linn a fheiceáil cén saghas téacsanna atá i gceist.”*

(rannpháirtithe i ngrúpa fócais)

[Translation: We do not want a comprehensive list of texts, but we would love to see what kind of texts are involved.]

(focus group participant)

Opinions were voiced on whether or not text lists should be the same or different for students studying the L1 and the L2 specification; or for those who opt to access the final examination at ordinary level or at higher level. Some participants queried whether literature might become a barrier for a student wishing to move from L1 to L2, or vice versa. A number of consultation participants suggested providing a recommended literature list instead of a prescribed list. Others expressed concern that a recommended rather than prescribed list could result in a situation where examiners correcting final examinations might not be familiar with all of the texts being referred to by students. This concern was also mentioned in relation to the inclusion of local literature. Some

participants welcomed the idea that additional texts be explored by students accessing the examination at higher level.

*“Maidir leis na téacsanna litríochta féin, ba cheart go mbeadh idirdhealú déanta sna téacsanna litríochta idir ardleibhéal agus gnáthleibhéal le freastal ceart a dhéanamh ar riachtanais gach dalta”.*

(Roinn Gaeilge Scoil T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: As for the literary texts themselves, the literary texts should be distinguished between higher level and ordinary level to properly meet the needs of each student].

(Irish Department of L2 School, written submission)

However, it was also suggested that a course which has what consultation participants often described as ‘too much’ literature, might make students reluctant to continue studying the course at higher level. Concern for students’ wellbeing was also referenced when considering the cumulative size or manageability of the specifications in their entirety. Many teachers teaching in L2 settings welcomed the reduction in the amount of literature recommended for Ordinary Level and others suggested that this be reduced further. Many consultation participants expressed the view that students accessing the subject at ordinary level should have their engagement with literature assessed in the final examination. It was feared that students might not fully engage with literary texts, for the purpose of language acquisition, if they are not assessed in the final examination, or that students will opt to undertake ordinary level if literature is not being considered for assessment.

*“Gan measúnú ar an litríocht don Ghnáthleibhéal, T2, ní mhúinfear seo”*

(cruinniú déthaobhach)

[Translation: Without an assessment of literature for Ordinary Level, L2, this will not be taught].

(bilateral meeting)

*“Má tá ceisteanna litríochta ann ag an ngnáthleibhéal, ní mór féachaint ar an aidhm agus an sprioc atá taobh thiar d’aon cheisteanna scrúdaithe a chruthaítear, agus a chinntiú go bhfuil siad ag leibhéal atá oiriúnach don spriocghrúpa daltaí”.*

(Roinn Gaeilge Scoil T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: If there are literature questions at ordinary level, it is necessary to look at the purpose and objective behind any examination questions that are created, and to ensure that they are at a level that is suitable for the target group of students].

(L2 School Irish Department, written submission)

Some teachers teaching in L2 contexts welcomed the suggestion not to assess literature at ordinary level. Respondents to the L1 survey agreed that literature can be challenging for students undertaking Ordinary level but were still in favour of some literature being assessed at Ordinary level. It was suggested in a number of submissions from L2 contexts that students accessing the subject at Ordinary Level should be asked to demonstrate their understanding of texts but should not be asked to manipulate or critically analyse texts. Some participants linked this request to the fact that students who previously undertook Irish at Foundation Level do not currently explore literature as part of their learning and assessment and would henceforth be studying Leaving Certificate Irish at ordinary level. The experiences of students and teachers in literature at Junior Cycle level were also mentioned and this was explored further as part of an Early Insights Review of Junior Cycle L1 and L2 specifications.

## Areas for further consideration

In the further development of the specifications:

- re-examine the emphasis on and volume of literature in the L1 and L2 draft specifications
- review the potential inclusion of local literature and/or local folklore as a genre
- review whether literature lists should be prescribed or recommended lists
- review whether literature lists should be common or differentiated for L1 and L2 and for Higher and Ordinary Level

In developing the text lists:

- review criteria for selection of texts, including a mix of old and new texts from a range of genres, and the length and complexity of texts
- examine the possibility of publishing literature lists at the same time as final specifications

Areas for consideration in relation to literature and assessment are included in Section 2.7 below.

## 2.5 Structure

The L1 and L2 draft specifications have the same structure, organised into three mutually supportive strands. Communication is the main strand, which is supported by two other strands, namely Awareness and Language Creativity. The elements mentioned in separate strands are included for clarity but it is intended that an integrated approach be taken to strands and elements.

The structure proposed in the draft specifications, the strands, elements and the integration between the language skills was broadly welcomed in focus groups and one to one interviews, and in a small number of written submissions. A number of focus group participants spoke positively about the emphasis the draft specifications place on skills integration.

*“Tá na snáitheanna snoite le chéile cosúil le suimint agus blocanna. Tá comhtháthú i gceist agus iad ag tacú lena chéile”.*

(múinteoir Gaeltachta T1, agallamh)

[Translation: The strands are tailored together like cement and blocks. Integration is evident as they support each other].

((L1 Gaeltacht teacher, interview)

By contrast, L1 and L2 survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, *“The structure clearly demonstrates the interdependence of the strands and how they support the integration of major language skills”*. Respondents to the L2 survey frequently suggested that the approach set out in the strands was too abstract. The majority of respondents to the L1 and L2 surveys (68% and 75% respectively) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the draft specifications for the learning and teaching of Irish are clearly structured. 65% (L1) and 66% (L2) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the 'Course Overview' section provides an indication of the type of student experience that will result from the draft specifications. Among respondents to the surveys, 66% (L1) and 74%(L2) disagreed or strongly disagreed that appropriate emphasis was evident on the development of major language skills and competencies across the strands as shown in the graphs below.

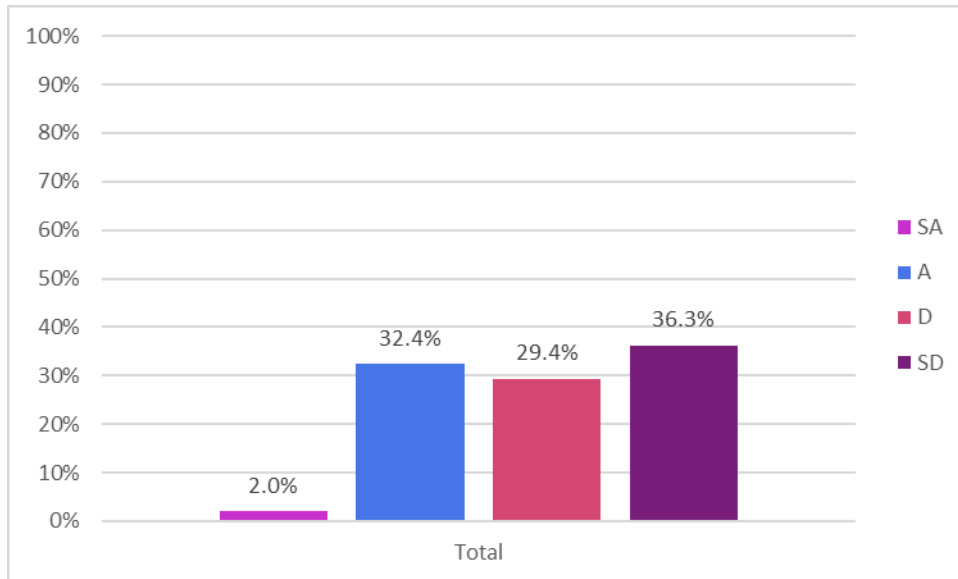


Figure 11: Response to statement: "There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of key language skills and competencies across the strands (L1 survey)."

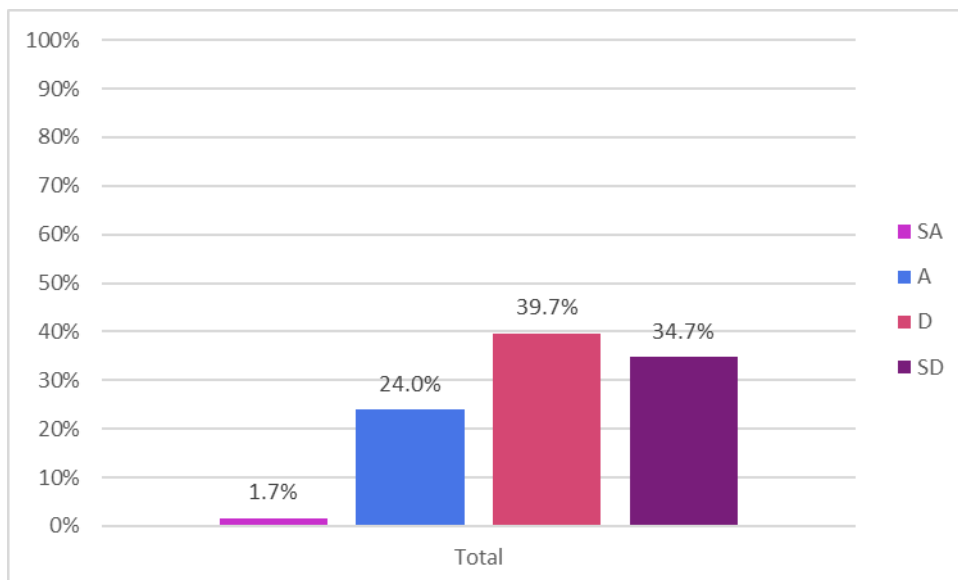


Figure 12: Response to statement: "There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of key language skills and competencies across the strands (L2 survey)."

While some participants suggested that appropriate emphasis is being placed on Communication many others argued that this is not the case. Some expressed the view that there is an appropriate balance between the skills of speaking and writing, and that these are mutually supportive, others suggested that the predominant skill students should develop is the skill of speaking the Irish language. Often this view was expressed alongside a desire that Irish be more widely spoken outside of schools, though others suggested that richness of language, emphasis on speaking Irish and emphasis on improving accuracy of language, whether spoken or written, are mutually supportive rather than competing language skills.

The 'Awareness' strand was generally welcomed in focus group and bilateral meetings, as was the opportunity to give students a chance to understand other cultures and languages, though some questioned how well language awareness is embedding in junior cycle. Some participants

commented that language awareness and cultural awareness support the student to understand the importance of the language community, to participate in that community and to identify with it. The majority of survey respondents agreed, as shown in the graphs below, that self-awareness as a language learner is important for progress. Some noted that learner self-awareness is naturally embedded in the learning process itself. Respondents to the L1 survey suggested that this strand is too subjective for high stakes summative assessment such as the current Established Leaving Certificate; that there is too much emphasis on reflection in general in the draft specifications. Participants commenting on the L2 specifications felt that students in L2 settings would not possess the vocabulary, or have the confidence, to reflect through the medium of Irish. A suggestion emerged to look at how this strand could be explicitly linked to Senior Cycle key skills in the draft specifications.

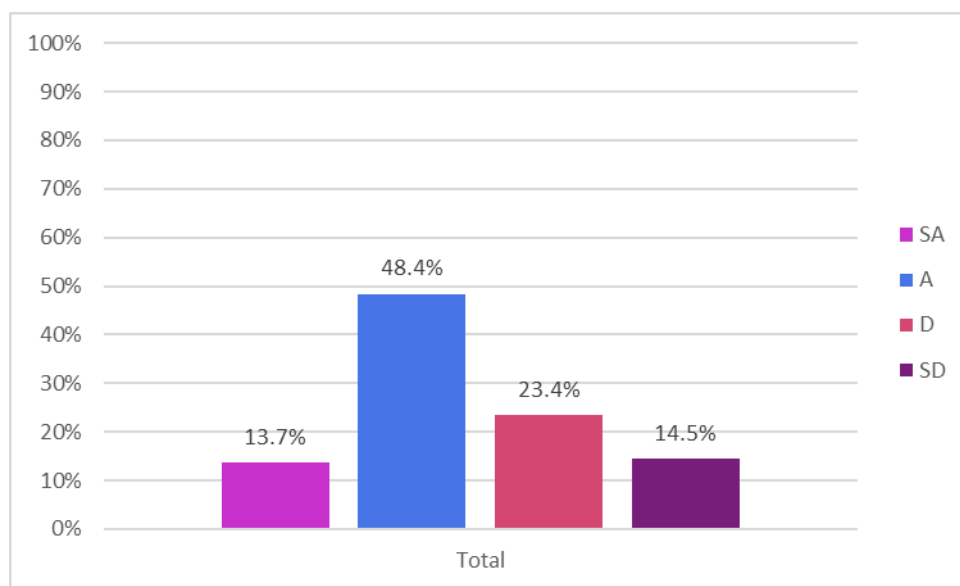


Figure 13: Response to statement: “Self-awareness as a language learner is one of the most important tools students have to make progress” (L1 survey)

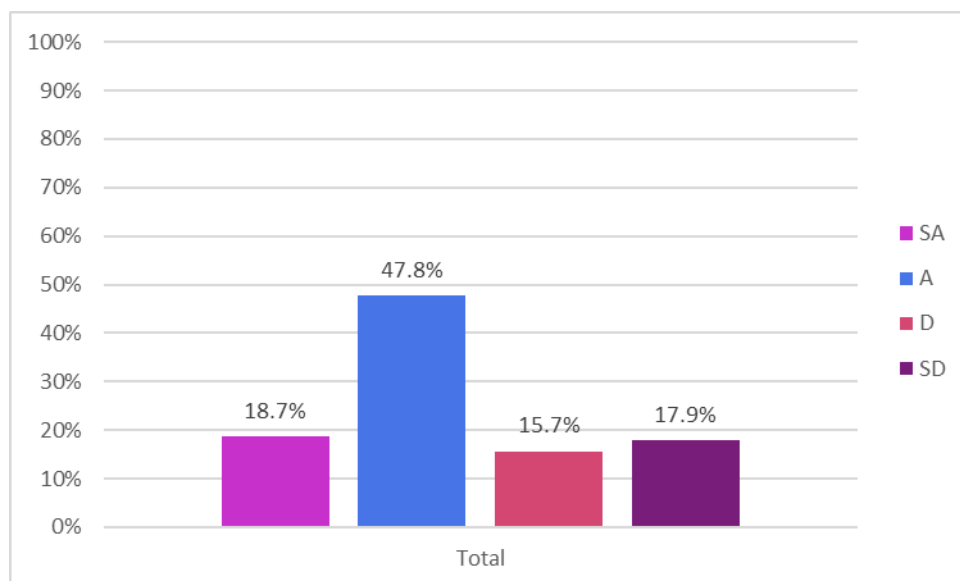


Figure 14: Response to statement: “Self-awareness as a language learner is one of the most important tools students have to make progress” (L2 survey)

Language Creativity, a proposed new strand, was widely discussed and debated. It was suggested that Language Creativity will foster opportunities for students to follow their interests and be more independent in their learning. Many participants welcomed the inclusion of Language Creativity and commented that this is a lifelong skill students will benefit from developing. Many participants mentioned that it is good for teachers to help learners to become creative thinkers, who are critical and innovative in their own ideas, that this will strengthen their language skills, enhance progression in their language abilities, enhance their enjoyment of learning and detract from the attractiveness of rote learning as a shortcut to genuine language acquisition. It was suggested that a range of skills could be developed, such as drama and debates, and that this strand could find meaningful expression in the student language portfolio. It was noted that teachers, students, parents and others must be willing to accept mistakes in Irish as students embrace Language Creativity.

*“Deis sa cheapadóireacht a bheith cruthaitheach – ann cheana féin ach níos foirmiúla anois”*

(Múinteoir T2, grúpa fócais)

[Translation: Opportunity in composition to be creative - already exists but more formal now].

(L2 teacher, focus group)

Many others expressed concern that students who find the language difficult will not engage in Language Creativity. Some participants noted that while it's possible for native speakers to be creative in their use of language, it is much more difficult to be imaginative in a language which is not your first language or in which you lack confidence. This concern was again reflected in the L2 survey, where many respondents expressed the view that the 'Language Creativity' strand is too challenging for L2 students, particularly those still mastering basic Irish language skills. Respondents to the L1 survey also commented that the creative strand is too idealistic and suggested it would not achieve its learning goals, though this feedback was less common from bilateral meetings, focus groups and one to one interviews. A small number of participants suggested weaving this strand into the learning outcomes of the other two strands.

*“While again it would be very good for T1 students, I worry that the T2 students with a lower level of fluency, would not do well.”*

(primary school parent, focus group)

*“Tá sé deacair do scoláirí ag an aois seo in ann iad féin a chur in iúl go cruthaitheach. Seans go mbeidh scoláirí go maith i mbun cumarsáide, ach seans nach bhfuil cruthaitheach”.*

(múinteoir T2, agallamh)

[Translation: It is difficult for students at this age to be able to express themselves creatively. Students may be good communicators but not creative].

(L2 teacher, interview)

A lack of clarity on the content of this strand, Language Creativity, was raised in a few of the written submissions and one-to-one interviews. It was suggested that this aspect will be very difficult to assess without proper clarity. Many participants expressed doubts about the suitability of this strand for summative assessment. Questions were raised through the consultation about the need

for a creativity strand in the draft specification and it was noted that this makes the Leaving Certificate specification for Irish different in structure and aspiration to earlier phases of learning Irish in primary school and in particular junior cycle.

*“Tá sé de thuairim againn nach bhfuil gá le 3 shnáithe agus go mbeadh a ndóthain le Snáithe amháin le cúig scil teanga an próiseas sealbhú teanga agus eochair scileanna na Sraithe Sinsearaí mar bhunús ann nó ag leanúint ar aghaidh ó Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile, go mbeadh Teanga ó Bhéal, Léitheoireacht agus Scríbhneoireacht mar shnáitheanna. Moltar feasacht teanga (Snáithe 2) a threisiú tríd na scileanna thuasluaite agus go mbeadh cruthaitheacht (Snáithe 3) fite fuaite tríd na scileanna teanga mar ghnéithe nó más gá trí shnáithe, moltar go mbeadh na snáitheanna don tSraith Shinsearach mar a gcéanna leis na snáitheanna don tSraith Shóisearach”.*

(Eagraíocht Oideachais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: We are of the view that 3 strands are not required and that one Strand with five language skills would be sufficient to underpin the language acquisition process and key skills of the Senior Cycle or continue from the Primary Language Curriculum, Oral Language, Reading and Writing as strands. It is recommended that language awareness (Strand 2) be reinforced through the above skills and that creativity (Strand 3) be interwoven through the language skills as elements or if necessary through a strand, it is recommended that the strands for Senior Cycle be the same as the strands for Junior Cycle].

(Education Organisation, written submission)

*“Tá snáithe nua ann, Snáithe 3 Cruthaitheacht Teanga. Níl na deiseanna a bheadh ag scoláirí na torthaí foghlama seo a bhaint amach agus a mheas soiléir. Cad a bheadh i gceist anseo”.*

(Roinn Gaeilge Scoil T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: There is a new strand, Strand 3 Language Creativity. The opportunities for students to achieve and evaluate these learning outcomes are not clear. What would be involved here].

(Irish Department of L2 School, written submission)

### **Areas for further consideration:**

In the further development of the specifications:

- re-examine the ‘Course Overview’ section of the expectations for learning, with a view to providing a clearer sense of the type of student experience envisaged
- re-examine the 3 strand structure, including the interation of and integration between them
- re-examine whether greater emphasis should be placed on speaking skills
- review the expectations for the development of reflection skills in the L2 specification
- re-examine the relationship between the ‘Awareness’ strand of the draft specifications with Senior Cycle key skills
- clarify the purpose of the ‘Language Creativity’ strand.



## 2.6 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes describe the understanding, skills, knowledge and values that students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning. Mixed views were expressed on the pitch and ambition of the learning outcomes. Many participants in focus groups, bi-laterals and one to one interviews were of the view that the learning outcomes of the draft specifications are appropriately pitched and sufficiently ambitious, while many others, including 81% of L2 survey participants, expressed the view that the pitch of the L2 learning outcomes is too ambitious for students learning Irish in an L2 context. A small number of consultation participants, generally those commenting on the L1 specification, expressed the view that the learning outcomes are not ambitious enough.

In consultation feedback, the L1 and L2 learning outcomes were variously described as very clear or too technical; as too narrow and prescriptive or as too broad and general. A consistent theme in consultation feedback was that there is a lack of clarity in the learning outcomes in both draft specifications, and that this would pose problems when planning for teaching and learning. 69% of L1 survey respondents and 64% of L2 survey respondents viewed the learning outcomes as unclear or very unclear for the purposes of planning for learning and teaching. Discussing the target audience for curriculum specifications, it was suggested that the learning outcomes be simplified to enhance teachers' students' and parents' engagement with them. Many commented that the learning outcomes contained in the draft specifications cannot be properly judged until more information is available on them, in particular a clear understanding of the standard required. Others suggested that the freedom of learning experiences must be maintained, and that lists of content to cover should be avoided.

*“These outcomes are too vague and ambiguously specify goals that cannot be reasonably measured. If the curriculum aims to teach and examine the learning outcomes, these outcomes should be singular and unambiguous, with clear measurable quantities”*

(Scoláire T1, suirbhé)

*“Sílímíd nach leor sraith de thorthaí foghlamtha a bheith mar threoir do mhúinteoirí atá le bheith ag tabhairt faoi chúrsa atá chomh tábhachtach seo agus gur chóir go mbeadh cúrsa cuimsitheach soiléir leagtha síos dúinn”.*

(Scoil T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: We think that a set of learning outcomes is not enough to guide teachers who are about to undertake such an important course and that we should have a comprehensive and clear course set for us].

(L2 School, written submission)

A lack of substantive difference between L1 and L2 learning outcomes was criticised, particularly in bilateral meetings, L1 surveys and in several written submissions. Many participants expressed concern about inconsistency of interpretation of learning outcomes, within and between schools, among different textbook publishers, when examinations are being designed and among teachers assessing the quality of student work in final examinations on behalf of the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

*“Is díol suntais é nach bhfuil difríocht ar bith idir na torthaí foghlama atá leagtha amach sa dá shonraíocht don ‘Labhairt’, cé gurb í sin an réimse is mó ina samhlófaí difríochtaí idir próifílí cumais an dá ghrúpa. Is sna torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis an ‘Léamh’ is mó a fheictear difríochtaí idir an dá shonraíocht, ach feictear dúinn go mbaineann go leor de na difríochtaí sin (m.sh. ‘iontaofacht foinsí eolais a thuiscint’ nó ‘a mheas’) le cumais chognaíocha (scileanna atá níos airde ar thacsanomaíocht Bloom) seachas le cumais teanga”.*

(Eagraíocht Ard-Oideachais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: It is noteworthy that there is no difference between the learning outcomes set out in the two specifications for ‘Speaking’, although this is the main area in which differences between the ability profiles of the two groups would be imagined. Differences between the two specifications are most apparent in the learning outcomes of ‘Reading’, but we see many of these differences (eg ‘understanding the reliability of sources of information’ or ‘evaluating’) with cognitive abilities (skills higher on Bloom’s taxonomy) rather than with language abilities].

(Higher Education Organisation, written submission)

As previously explored in relation to the aims of the draft specifications, students, teachers and parents spoke to the opportunities and challenges relating to the inclusion of dialects in the learning outcomes. A small number of L2 teachers and primary school parents suggested that learning outcomes in the draft specifications should be based on the skill of translation and some commented that this would help to meet demand for translators in the world of work.

A number of consultation participants queried whether the L1 and L2 learning outcomes would cater for all students, particularly students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A small number expressed doubts about some of the verbs, questioning how they would be assessed. A few consultation participants suggested that there are too many learning outcomes and requested that repetition of learning outcomes be avoided e.g. L2 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, which, it was suggested, are very similar. Some participants sought clarity on the wording used in some learning outcomes. Respondents to the L1 and L2 surveys, when asked if the learning outcomes of the Language Creativity strand would support the student developing as a critical and creative thinker, 41% L1 and 21% L2 agreed or strongly agreed, while 59% L1 and 79% L2 survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, as shown in the graphs below.

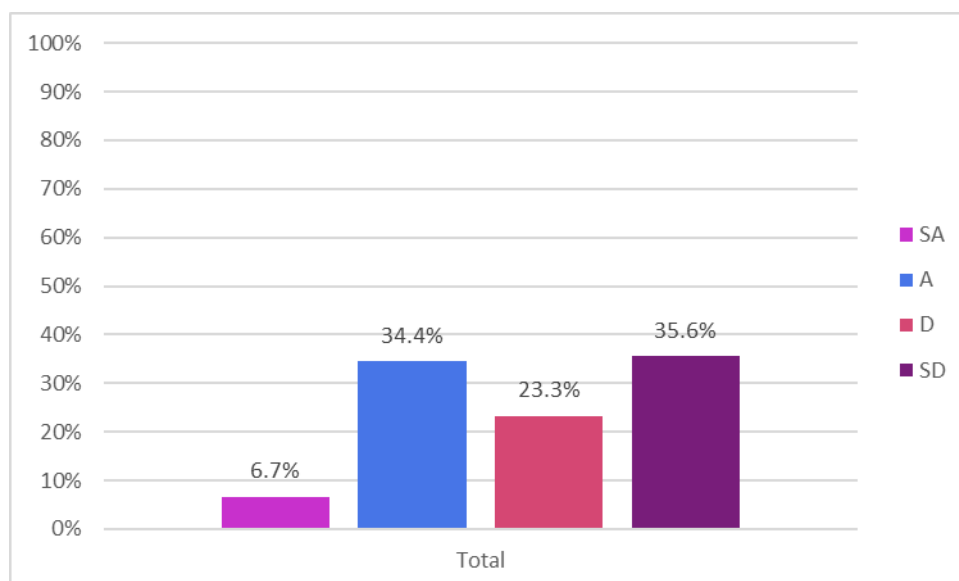


Figure 15: Response to statement: “how appropriate the learning outcomes in this strand are to support students’ abilities to develop as critical and creative thinkers (L1 survey).”

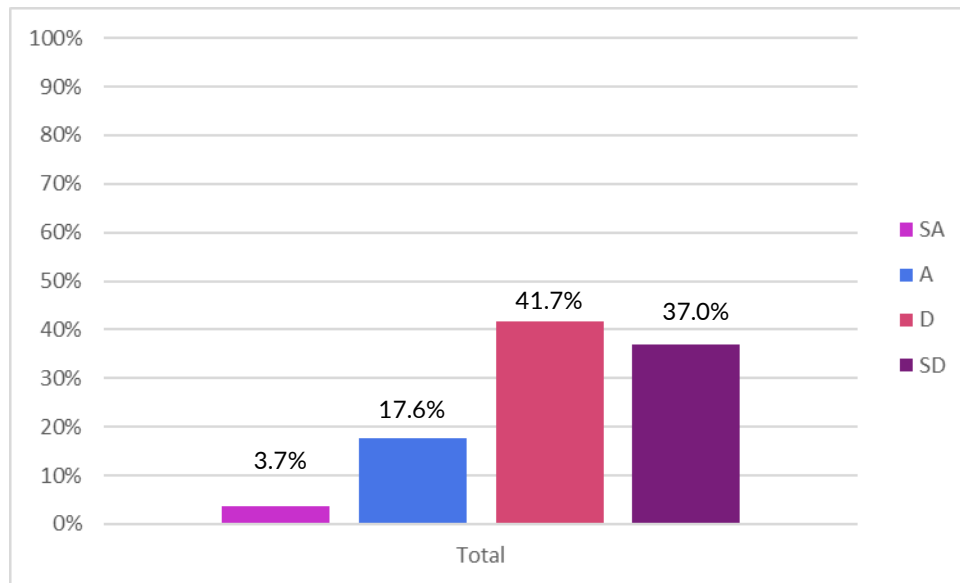


Figure 16: Response to statement: “how appropriate the learning outcomes in this strand are to support students’ abilities to develop as critical and creative thinkers (L2 survey).”

A number of participants in bilateral meetings and a large number of written submissions proposed aligning the draft specifications with *Languages Connect: Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* and with international benchmarks or with an assessment framework for foreign and second language acquisition, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It was suggested that this would ensure effective teaching and learning. Alignment to a framework, it was suggested, would indicate to the student the level of Irish obtained and give direction on how to improve their competency across all of the language skills, with a small number of participants recommending alignment to CEFR across the education system from pre-school to third level. It was queried why the CEFR was mentioned in the Junior Cycle specifications but not in the Senior Cycle specifications. A small number of focus group participants expressed doubts about the suitability of aligning a draft L1 specification for Irish, aimed at native and/or daily speakers of Irish with a framework designed for second and foreign language acquisition.

*“Má bhíonn na sonraíochtaí ailínithe leis an FTCE, ba cheart go mbeadh an ceangal idir na sonraíochtaí agus an FTCE soiléir agus trédhearcach. Ní leor lipéid na leibhéal ‘B1’ nó ‘B2’ a úsáid. Ba cheart tagairt a dhéanamh do na scálaí éagsúla cumais a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí faoi leith cumarsáide agus scileanna faoi leith teanga... Ní mór tuairiscíní an FTCE a chur in oiriúint do chomhthéacs na hArdteiste agus na Gaeilge. Ciallaíonn sé sin gur gá na tuairiscíní a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáide a chur in oiriúint do chomhthéacs sochtheangeolaíoch na Gaeilge, agus gur cheart sainiú níos mó a dhéanamh ar na scileanna teanga a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge (stór focal, gramadach, srl.), de réir mar is cuí”.*

(Institiúid Ardoideachais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: If the specifications are aligned with CEFR, the link between the specifications and CEFR should be clear and transparent. It is not sufficient to use the 'B1' or 'B2' level labels.

Reference should be made to the various scales of ability associated with particular communication activities and specific language skills... CEFR descriptions must be adapted to the Leaving Certificate and Irish context. This means that the descriptions of communicative activities

need to be adapted to the sociolinguistic context of Irish, and that the language skills associated with Irish (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) should be further defined, as appropriate].

(Higher Education Institution, written submission).

*“Bheinn cúramach mar go bhfuil FTCE bunaithe ar an dara teanga. Ní oireann sé do chainteoirí dúchasacha.”*

(cruinniú déthaobhach)

[Translation: I would be careful because CEFR is based on a second language. It doesn't suit native speakers].

(bilateral meeting)

### **Areas for further consideration**

In the further development of the specifications:

- review clarity in the language and the action verbs of the Learning outcomes
- re-examine the similarities and differences in the L1 and L2 Learning Outcomes
- re-examine the accessibility of the Learning Outcomes for all students
- remove unnecessary repetition in the Learning Outcomes
- consider the inclusion of a learning outcome on developing the skill of translation
- re-examine the alignment of the Learning Outcomes of the strand ‘Language Creativity’ to the objectives of the strand

Further scoping, research and deliberation on the opportunities and challenges of aligning with international benchmarks is referenced below in Section 5: Next Steps.

## **2.7 Assessment**

The approach to assessment proposed in the draft L1 and L2 specifications is based on the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the L1 and L2 draft specifications. The draft specifications state that Leaving Certificate Irish will be assessed using a combination of ongoing assessment, supported by a portfolio of students’ work, and via final examination. The draft specifications suggest that the final examination for Leaving Certificate Irish consist of an oral examination and a combined aural and written examination, all assessed during 6<sup>th</sup> year. The final assessment for both L1 and L2 will have two levels, Ordinary Level and Higher Level. It is proposed that students will participate in a common oral assessment for L1 and a common oral assessment for L2. The written paper and an aural examination will assess listening, reading and written skills.

It is proposed that students will have the choice to sit one out of a possible 4 examination papers. Questions relating to whether students would have this choice in teaching, learning and assessment arose frequently during the consultation. Whilst it was possible to clarify this in the dialogic consultation methods (focus groups, bilateral meetings and teacher interviews), this was not clarified in the design of the survey and was not clear to those making written submissions. There is learning for NCCA to be taken from this experience, as a lack of clarity led to this issue dominating much of the feedback received. Note also that the consultation on Leaving Certificate Draft L1 and L2 Irish Specifications took place before publication of NCCA’s Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report and the Minister for Education Norma Foley’s response to that report. Changes to senior

cycle include that students will sit one of the two Irish examination papers at the end of fifth year, as an interim measure until revised Irish specifications are introduced.

Mixed views of the scope of assessment and the possibilities for assessment were expressed. The variation in assessment methods was commended in the written submissions as well as the alignment between assessment and the aims and rationales of the two draft specifications. Many participants suggested changing the proposed assessment structure and components, with a view to reducing what they saw as an over-reliance on rote learning, particularly those responding to the L2 draft specification.

Many commented on the value of innovative assessment methods, with many recommending a project or class-based assessment (CBA) as part of ongoing assessment. Some participants suggested emphasising continuous assessment during fifth and sixth years to reduce the pressure on students. A small number of participants suggested that students do two oral tests at two different points as part of their engagement with the specifications, to help monitor improvement and to place more emphasis on classroom communication. Others were concerned that continuous assessment would create too many assessment periods over the two years. The Language Portfolio was broadly welcomed as having great potential to support and document student progress in learning. Feedback on the Language Portfolio of students' work is outlined in the previous section of this report.

*"(Moltar).. na cineálacha éagsúla measúnaithe chun réimsí sonracha deacrachta nó láidreachta an scoláire a shainaithint".*

(Príomhoide sa Ghaeltacht, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: (It is recommended) .. the various types of assessment to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength of the student].

(Gaeltacht Principal, written submission)

*"Ní mór féachaint ar na measúnuithe ar na páipéir scrúdaithe agus féachaint ar na haidhmeanna agus ar na spriocanna atá taobh thiar dóibh, agus tascanna a chothóidh spéis sa teanga agus atá oiriúnach do dhaltai an lae inniu a chruthú".*

(Roinn Gaeilge Scoil T2, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: It is necessary to look at the assessments on the examination papers and to look at the aims and goals behind them, and to create tasks that will foster interest in the language and are suitable for today's students].

(Irish Department of L2 School, written submission)

76% of L1 survey respondents and 78% of L2 survey respondents responded negatively to the question "Will the assessment as set out in the draft specification support the development of all of the key language skills, listening, reading, speaking, spoken interaction and writing?" 75% of L1 survey respondents and 74% of L2 survey respondents responded negatively to the question "Will this draft specification support the use of a wide and suitable range of assessment methods on a formative and summative basis?" Doubts were expressed about the standard required in students' responses and many suggested, particularly in written submissions, that the draft specifications should include criteria for assessment. It was suggested that exemplars of assessment, sample examination papers and a sample marking scheme be provided to help teachers to better understand the goal of the learning outcomes.

*“Is cur i gcéill é gan páipéar os ár gcomhair le go mbeidh muid in ann an caighdeán ceistiúcháin a mheas agus comparáid a dhéanamh idir T1 agus T2”.*

(rannpháirtithe i ngrúpa fócais)

[Translation: It is a pretence not to have a paper in front of us so that we can assess the standard of questioning and make a comparison between L1 to L2].

(focus group participant)

One of the most dominant themes in consultation feedback related to promoting spoken Irish, in students lived experiences of the draft specifications in the classroom, and via assessment of students’ capacity to speak Irish. Different views were expressed in relation to the existing oral test. Many expressed the opinion that the oral test, as currently structured, is not a reliable test of students’ speaking ability.

Response	Count	Pct
1	27	31.8%
2	12	14.1%
3	16	18.8%
4	14	16.5%
5	16	18.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 17: Response for rating the effectiveness of the oral test (L1 survey). The scale went from “very ineffective” (1 on the scale) to “very effective” (5 on the scale).

Response	Count	Pct
1	30	28.0%
2	15	14.0%
3	18	16.8%
4	12	11.2%
5	32	29.9%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 18: Response for rating the effectiveness of the oral test (L2 survey)

Looking to the future, in these revised draft L1 and L2 Irish specifications, the percentage of marks allocated to the oral test was the subject of much comment and debate during the consultation and in consultation feedback. Some participants expressed the view that the percentage of marks allocated to the oral should depend on how valid the oral could be as an assessment of the capacity to speak and interact in Irish. A small number of participants, particularly L2 teachers, suggested that the mark for the oral test should be reduced to 35%, as recommended in the draft specifications, or even lower. However, the vast majority of consultation participants did not agree with the proposal in the draft specifications to allocate 35% to the oral test. Some suggested that this did not align with the emphasis placed on communication as the main strand of both draft specifications. Views were expressed that the current system of allocating 40% of available marks to the oral test has had a positive impact on classroom practice, though research to date has not shown that it has markedly improved students’ spoken Irish, as discussed in Section 1 above. There was also a perception that reducing the marks available for the oral test by 5% might make Higher Level Irish less attractive for students. Some consultation participants suggested increasing the marks available for the oral test.

*“Má íslítear céatadán na marcanna atá ag dul don bhéaltríail san Ardteistiméireacht, meastar go mbeidh tionchar nach beag aige sin ar an mbéim a chuireann idir mhúinteoirí agus scoláirí ar labhairt na Gaeilge sa tsraith shinsearach agus gur lú daoine, dá bharr, a bheidh ag críochnú a gcuid blianta scoile le cumas gníomhach sa teanga”.*

(Gníomhaireacht Stáit, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: *If the percentage of marks for the Leaving Certificate oral examination is reduced, it is expected to have a significant impact on the emphasis placed by teachers and students on speaking Irish in the senior cycle and, as a result, fewer people will finish their school years with an active ability in the language”.*

(State Agency, written submission)

In relation to listening skills, a small number of participants, particularly in the L2 survey, suggested awarding a higher mark to listening comprehension as listening is an important skill that assists the student to improve their skills in speaking the language. Listening comprehension was praised as a transparent and valid assessment method, although survey respondents expressed differing views about the effect of the hearing test as shown in the tables below. There were others who agreed with the proposed 10% allocation to the aural component of the final examination. A few teachers suggested a communication assessment in which speaking and listening to each other are assessed together, as both of these skills are naturally used by speakers in any conversation. Some participants in the consultation proposed that, if the marks for the oral test remain at 35%, the listening comprehension aspect of the final examination should be increased from 10% to 15%.

*“Cén fáth a bhfuil cluastuiscint ann ag leibhéal T1 ar chor ar bith? Ba cheart na marcanna sin a chur leis an mBéaltríail ina bhfuil éisteacht agus labhairt (cumarsáid) lena chéile. Sin a bheinn ag moladh - measúnú cumarsáide. Tá éisteacht agus labhairt i gceist i gcomhrá. Ní dóigh liom go bhfuil sé réabhlóideach. Tá ciall leis i mo thuairim”.*

(múinteoir Gaeltachta T1, agallamh)

[Translation: *Why is there a listening comprehension at L1 level at all? These marks should be added to the Oral Test which involves listening and speaking (communicating) with each other. That's what I would suggest - a communication assessment. Conversation involves listening and speaking. I do not think that it is revolutionary. It makes sense in my opinion].*

(L1 Gaeltacht teacher, interview)

Response	Count	Pct
1	23	27.1%
2	12	14.1%
3	19	22.4%
4	12	14.1%
5	19	22.4%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 19: Response for rating the effectiveness of the aural assessment (L1 survey)

Response	Count	Pct
1	15	14.2%
2	20	18.9%
3	25	23.6%
4	22	20.8%
5	24	22.6%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 20: Response for rating the effectiveness of the aural assessment (L2 survey)

In relation to the components of the written examination, the meaning of 'Reading in context and language awareness' as included in the draft specifications was questioned as a component of the assessment. A small number of participants suggested reducing the number of marks awarded for reading in context and language awareness, with some questioning its validity in assessing students' comprehension abilities. Some of the written submissions suggested that shorter reading comprehensions be assessed. As mentioned in Section 2.4 above, some participants suggested reducing the weighting of marks for literature, while mixed views were expressed on the proposal not to assess literature for students undertaking L2 Ordinary level.

A small number of participants suggested reducing the marks available for composition and writing short pieces and expressed the viewpoint that writing long essays is associated with rote learning. 51% of L1 survey respondents and 55% of L2 survey respondents expressed the view that the written exam would be very ineffective as shown in the tables below. It was frequently suggested during the consultation that grammar should be assessed as a separate component of the final examination paper to assist in assessing the accuracy of students' language skills. It was also suggested that this could mitigate against rote learning.

Response	Count	Pct
1	26	30.6%
2	17	20.0%
3	19	22.4%
4	12	14.1%
5	11	12.9%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 21: Response for rating the effectiveness of the written exam (L1 survey)

Response	Count	Pct
1	33	31.1%
2	25	23.6%
3	21	19.8%
4	19	17.9%
5	8	7.5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 22: Response for rating the effectiveness of the written exam (L2 survey)

Many participants in bilateral meetings and written submissions queried the decision, following on from the removal of Foundation Level in junior cycle, to remove Foundation Level for Leaving Certificate Irish. Concern was expressed that the standard of the ordinary level would be reduced in order to meet the needs of all students appropriately. Some expressed concern that the number



of students seeking exemptions from Irish could increase as a result. Others argued that keeping 3 levels across two specifications, L1 and L2, would result in 6 possible examination papers for students to select from and some suggested this is too complex and impractical. Many suggested that further consideration be given to this issue.

During the consultation, further information and clarity in relation to assessment was frequently requested, with a particular request for more detail in relation to the assessment of oral language. Many participants suggested that a lack of clarity could contribute towards or create a general lack of confidence in the draft specifications. Many L1 and L2 survey respondents suggested that the link between the learning outcomes of the draft specifications and final assessment is not clear, with some suggesting that this is due in part to the broad nature of the learning outcomes. Many participants commented that they found it difficult to provide feedback without further, more comprehensive information in relation to assessment.

*“Níl go leor eolais ar fáil maidir leis na measúnuithe. Níl go leor eolais ar fáil maidir le cur chuige na scrúduithe béil, cur chuige na punainne, cur chuige na dtascanna scríbhneoireachta, cur chuige na cluastuisceana srl. Tá an t-eolas seo riachtanach le bheith ábalta na dréachtsonraíochtaí a mheas ina n-iomláine agus go cruinn”.*

(Institiúid Ard-Oideachais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: There is not enough information available about the assessments. There is not enough information available on the oral exams approach, the portfolio approach, the writing tasks approach, the listening comprehension approach etc. This information is essential to be able to assess the draft specifications fully and accurately].

(Higher Education Institution, written submission)

### **Areas for further consideration:**

The following are areas to be considered in the further development of the specifications:

- re-consider the structure and components of assessment
- re-consider the weighting of marks and the timelines for assessment
- provide clarity in area of assessment and criteria for assessment
- consider new innovative methods of assessment
- review alignment of assessment with the learning outcomes of the specifications and the vision of formative and summative assessment in developing language skills
- reconsider the levels for assessment, especially Foundation Level.

### 3. Feedback relating to the introduction of new specifications

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Many consultation participants commented on the challenges of introducing Leaving Certificate Irish L1 and L2 specifications. The need for resources, supports and training were emphasised throughout the consultation, with supports in relation to teaching and learning, literature, dialects, and assessment most frequently requested. A number of focus group participants emphasised the need for 'buy in', in relation to the final specifications. Many participants requested that supports be available before the specifications are introduced in classrooms, with others commenting that it could take a further two years to prepare such resources. The importance of local sources, to add to student's linguistic repertoire and cultural enrichment, was emphasised in particular by participants from Gaeltacht communities.

Teachers and parents emphasised the need for a range of textbooks to support the L1 specification with a small number of participants recommending an anthology, a collection of all the literary texts in one resource. A small number of participants recommended appropriate supports be provided for teachers and students to assist in making choices about which texts to study. It was suggested that practical classroom examples of the learning outcomes being achieved in practice would be useful to students, teachers and parents, with some participants seeking guidance on themes and topics to be covered. A large number of participants, from both the L1 and L2 sector, requested sample examination papers. Many also requested sample marking schemes. Some requested planning templates along with guidelines and examples of student language portfolios. Participants frequently expressed a concern that, following on from the discontinuation of a Foundation Level examination in Junior Cycle, the discontinuation of a Foundation Level examination in Leaving Certificate could lead to an increase in the number of students seeking exemptions from Irish.

Participants through all of the consultation methods, recommended comprehensive and ongoing training over a year or two prior to implementation of the specifications. Reference was frequently made to CPD experiences in relation to the introduction of L1 and L2 Irish specifications in Junior Cycle. Participants frequently expressed concern that there would not be enough teachers to teach the two specifications, particularly in small schools. Gaeltacht teachers and respondents to the L1 surveys were concerned that there would not be enough teachers with the appropriate standard of Irish available to implement the L1 specification to a high standard. Concerns were expressed about the lack of teachers from Gaeltacht areas to correct scripts or to assess oral examinations.

## 4. Systemic considerations

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The consultation was dominated by discussion and feedback on the L1/L2 model of curricular provision for Leaving Certificate Irish. As outlined in the introduction to this report, developing differentiated Leaving Certificate L1/L2 curriculum specifications is consistent with curriculum developments at Primary and Junior Cycle and with a range of government policies, including:

- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy for Improving Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011 – 2022 (2011)
- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: Interim Review 2011 – 2016 (2017)
- The 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030 (2010) and the previous five-year Action Plan 2018 – 2022 (2018)
- Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017 – 2022 (2016)
- Cumasú: Empowering through learning – Action Plan for Education 2019 (2019).

While respondents to the L2 surveys rarely mentioned the model of provision, it was the focus of discussion and feedback via all other methods of participation in the consultation. There appears to have been a misunderstanding that the L1 course would be compulsory for all students in Irish-medium schools. It is intended that Irish-medium schools will have to provide L1 as an option for students but students in L1 contexts will not have to access the learning at L1 level. The L1 specification may also be provided in English-medium schools. Many participants from L1 contexts strongly suggested that the L1 specification be optional in L1 schools. In relation to assessment, as outlined earlier in this report, it is intended that students will have a choice between 4 examination papers L1 Higher Level, L1 Ordinary Level, L2 Higher Level or L2 Ordinary Level. Whilst it was possible to clarify this in the dialogic consultation methods (focus groups, bilateral meetings and teacher interviews), this was not clarified in the design of the survey and was not clear to those making written submissions. There is learning for NCCA to be taken from this experience, as a lack of clarity led to this issue dominating much of the feedback received.

Many participants suggested that other potential models of provision be considered. A suggestion for a different model of provision, consisting of specifications provided at 4 levels, came from one Irish language organisation. This suggestion was published online and was frequently referred to or quoted verbatim by other consultation participants, many of whom supported this proposed model. Teachers in one-to-one interviews often expressed doubts about the 4 levels approach, particularly about the most challenging of these proposed levels. Another suggestion from this Irish language organisation, that was mentioned by many participants, was to provide a stand-alone optional course for literature and language enrichment and a mandatory course (for L1 and L2 learners) based on the integrated language skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and mediation. A third suggestion was to develop an optional subject focused on Irish language and culture. Another suggestion was to provide an Applied Irish course, focused on the skills needed for the world of work, such as translation, interpreting, and media-related skills. Others expressed doubts about these suggestions and there was no consensus on the most appropriate model of provision for Leaving Certificate Irish.

*“Tá an córas a chuirfear i bhfeidhm don Ghaeilge sna blianta amach romhainn chomh tábhachtach sin, go bhfuil dualgas orainn uile a chinntiú go mbeidh an córas sin oiriúnach don fheidhm thábhachtach a*

*bheidh leis. Agus de réir an dualgais sin, comhaontaíonn an Comhchoiste nach bhfuil córas an T1 agus an T2, mar atá sé sonraithe faoi láthair, oiriúnach don fheidhm sin”.*

(Comhchoiste Oireachtais, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: The system that will be implemented for the Irish language in the coming years is so important, that we all have a duty to ensure that that system is fit for purpose. And in line with that obligation, the Joint Committee agrees that the L1 and L2 system, as currently specified, is not fit for purpose].

(Joint Oireachtas Committee, written submission)

Participants frequently expressed concern that the commitment to explore incentives for students to take the L1 course, as outlined in the Policy for Gaeltacht Education, was not clarified in advance of or in parallel to the development of the draft specifications. The Policy for Gaeltacht Education mentions the following options:

*‘A range of measures will be considered with a view to incentivising students in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools to engage with the L1 curriculum specification for Irish at senior cycle. A school’s capacity to deliver L1 curriculum specification for Irish at senior cycle will be greatly enhanced by strong uptake of the L1 curriculum specification at junior cycle. Measures to incentivise students may include awarding of third-level bursaries to students who perform at or exceed a specified grade threshold in the L1 curriculum specification for Irish in the Leaving Certificate examination. In addition, for those students who achieve a specified grade threshold in the L1 curriculum specification for Irish in Leaving Certificate, 10% of places in all ITE programmes will be reserved provided the applicants also comply with the other entry requirements for these programmes. Recognition of performance in the L1 curriculum specification for Irish in the Leaving Certificate examination, may also be considered as a requirement for entry to third-level courses which require a higher competence in Irish including courses that include Irish as a language option (eg. law and Irish), and third-level courses that are delivered through Irish’.*

(Department of Education Skills, 2011, p. 60)

However, participants primarily called for bonus CAO points to be awarded as an incentive to encourage young people to undertake Irish learning and assessment at L1 standard. If incentives were not available to encourage uptake of the L1 specification, concerns were expressed that students currently attending Gaelcholáistí, Streams, Units and Gaeltacht schools might choose to attend English-medium schools instead. It was suggested that this could also lead to future problems with enrolment. This feedback did not mention existing incentives to learn other subjects and present for assessment through Irish. Some participants suggested exploring other possible incentives. Some expressed doubts about the impact of bonus points. Some participants emphasised that not all students wish to progress to third level after school and expressed the view that the proposed incentives outlined in the Policy for Gaeltacht Education are thus not equitable or fair.

Some participants expressed concerns about the potential impact of the differentiated specifications on the future of the Irish language in Gaeltacht areas. It was suggested that this could reduce the number of young people visiting Gaeltacht areas to improve their Irish language skills. Many consultation participants stated that students attending Gaelcholáistí are at a disadvantage in terms of their level of fluency compared to native speakers and emphasised that they should have a choice between studying L1/L2 and/or when it comes to examinations. Others emphasised

that the education system has a key role to play in the promotion of the Irish language nationally and in protecting the future and the enrichment of the Irish language. A small number of participants encouraged further use of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning – learning other subjects through Irish) in English-medium schools.

*“Beidh dhá éifeacht ag an gcúrsa nua T1, sílim, ar scoileanna Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoileanna: Caillfidh siad sciar de na scoláirí is uailmhianáí. Fanfaidh siad go dtí go mbíonn an Teastas Sóisearach déanta acu agus fágfaidh siad nó ní thiocfaidh siad ar chor ar bith. Cé a thógfadh orthu é agus iad in ann H1 a shiúl ar chúrsa T2 i scoil eile? An éifeacht a bhéas aige sin ná go gcaillfidh na scoileanna sin múinteoirí dá réir agus don chuid is mó `siad na múinteoirí is óige is fuinniúla a chaillfear.... Tiocfaidh scoileanna ar imeall na Gaeltachta faoi bhrú imeacht ó chóras na scoileanna Gaeltachta. Tá sé ag tarlú sna bunscoileanna atá ar imeall na Gaeltachta mar atá sé. Treiseoidh sé seo an t-athrú i dtreo an Bhéarla. Roghnóidh siad a ngasúir a chur chuig scoileanna Béarla nó tiocfaidh an pobal scoile faoi bhrú athrú go scoil Bhéarla. Ní chabhróidh ceachtar acu seo le cás na Gaeilge”.*

(Múinteoir Ghaeltachta T1, aighneacht scríofa)

[Translation: I think the new L1 course will have two effects on Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna: They will lose a share of the most ambitious students. They will wait until they have completed the Junior Certificate and will leave or not come at all. Who would take it upon themselves when they could achieve H1 in the L2 course in another school? The effect of this will be that these schools will lose teachers accordingly and for the most part `they will be the youngest and most energetic teachers.... Schools on the periphery of the Gaeltacht will come under pressure to move away from the Gaeltacht school system. It's happening in the primary schools on the edge of the Gaeltacht as it is. This will reinforce the shift towards English. They will choose to send their children to English schools or the school community will come under pressure to change to an English school. Neither of these will help the Irish language].

Many consultation participants suggested that a review of the introduction of L1 and L2 specifications for Junior Cycle Irish be completed so that learning from the Junior Cycle Irish review can inform further work on draft Leaving Certificate specifications. Note that this review commenced in early 2022 and was completed in November 2022. Others emphasised that the changes in Junior Cycle will take a number of years more to embed and that this process was interrupted by emergency changes to schooling as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was some suggestion that conducting a consultation of this type during a pandemic may have impacted on the way the consultation was conducted and/or on engagement with the consultation itself.

There were a number of commonalities in feedback from the early enactment review of Junior Cycle L1 and L2 Irish specifications and the consultation on Leaving Certificate L1 and L2 Irish draft specifications. A desire to retain a strong emphasis on oral communication skills in the classroom and in assessment was evident in both. In Junior Cycle, there was a perception that an oral examination, rather than an oral classroom-based assessment (CBA2) and an oral component to the portfolio classroom-based assessment (CBA1), would result in greater emphasis on developing speaking skills. It was noted in both the Junior Cycle review and the Leaving Certificate consultation that for many students, memorisation of written materials features significantly in their preparation for oral assessment/examination. Many participants in the Junior Cycle review and in the Leaving Certificate consultation expressed the view that there is an over-emphasis on literature and an under-emphasis on speaking Irish in the specifications. This was particularly evident from L2 English medium contexts, though it did feature to a lesser extent in feedback from L1 Irish medium contexts. In both the Junior Cycle review and the Leaving Certificate consultation the view was expressed

that a foundation level examination should be available. While there was a lot of discussion in the Leaving Certificate consultation of the appropriateness or otherwise of aligning Leaving Certificate Irish specifications with international benchmarks or an assessment framework such as the Common Framework of Reference for European Languages (CEFR), the CEFR was only mentioned in one written submission and a small number of survey responses in the Junior Cycle early enactment review. However, there was a widely held view in the early enactment review of Junior Cycle Irish L1 and L2 specifications that the pitch of the specifications, particularly the L2 specification, was unrealistic and too difficult for many students. It is unclear to what extent Covid19 related school closures and periods of disrupted learning impacted on participants views of what is achievable for students. The student cohort who participated in the Junior Cycle review experienced Junior Cycle from 2017 - 2020 and 2018 - 2021. In the Leaving Certificate consultation, in relation to the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on teaching, learning and assessment, some participants expressed concern at the number of students who didn't sit an Irish exam when they had a choice in 2021 to opt for a calculated grade in lieu of sitting final written examinations in Irish.

One major difference between feedback from the Early Enactment Review of Junior Cycle Irish L1 and L2 specifications and feedback from the Consultation on Leaving Certificate Irish L1 and L2 draft specifications relates to the model of provision. While the Leaving Certificate consultation was dominated by this issue, it rarely surfaced in the Junior Cycle Irish review. This suggests that the L1 / L2 model of provision is generally accepted at Junior Cycle level. There are many ways of interpreting why this might be the case - perhaps due to the lower stakes nature of this phase of education; due to the passage of time since it was introduced; and/or due to the recognition it represents in terms of meeting the needs of students for whom Irish is their first language and students whose learning takes place through the medium of Irish.

## 5. Next Steps

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NCCA wishes to thank all who participated in the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate L1 and L2 Irish specifications. The consultation provided an opportunity to gather rich feedback and a diversity of perspectives about the draft L1 and L2 specifications. In response to consultation feedback, an early insights review of Junior Cycle L1 and L2 specifications, which was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, commenced in early 2022 and was completed in November 2022. The areas for consideration outlined in Chapter 2, alongside the early insights review of Junior Cycle Irish, have provided rich data and insights to inform next steps for Leaving Certificate Irish curriculum provision.

Consultation on Leaving Certificate Draft L1 and L2 Irish Specifications took place before publication of NCCA's Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022) and Minister for Education, Norma Foley's response to the Advisory Report. Revised assessment arrangements, as announced by the Minister, for all new and redeveloped senior cycle subjects will impact significantly on curriculum provision for Leaving Certificate Irish and will need to be reflected in revised curriculum specifications. All specifications will align to the template, agreed by Council, for curriculum specifications which will be published by NCCA following further research on the nature and design of curriculum specifications for the senior cycle stage of education. Furthermore, the design of the specification will be informed by research conducted by NCCA, in collaboration with the SEC, on the use of assessment components additional to written examinations.

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the consultation was that a shared vision and purpose in relation to Leaving Certificate Irish has not yet been achieved. Doubts remain about the model of provision, about policy alignment and coherence, and about enhanced professional learning and support. While several alternative models of provision were proposed during the consultation, with a particular focus on this in written submissions, looking across all 5 modes of participation in the consultation, there was no consensus on a specific model as an alternative to L1 and L2. It is also important to note that, while many views were expressed about the possible implications of introducing the L1 / L2 model, there was also no consensus about the possible implications of not adopting this model of curriculum provision at Leaving Certificate level. Questions about the model of curricular provision need to be considered in more detail, from an educational perspective and also in the wider context of the future of the Irish language. Further scoping, research, deliberation and consultation with Irish language stakeholders, organisations and policymakers is needed. In particular, further research is needed exploring how other jurisdictions with a similar language profile to Ireland approach curricular provision for a native language which is also a second language. This research may contribute to thinking on possible ways forward. Further planning is also needed in the area of enhanced professional learning and support, so that curriculum changes, when they occur, can be meaningfully realised in practice. In this context, the following next steps for Leaving Certificate Irish are proposed:

- development work is paused on the draft L1 and L2 Leaving Certificate specifications
- additional research is conducted on the model of provision and frameworks used to inform development of curricula for native languages in jurisdictions with a similar profile
- a series of stakeholder seminars are convened to inform advice on the model of provision for Leaving Certificate Irish, taking into account feedback from this consultation and broader changes as part of Senior Cycle redevelopment

- planning for enhanced professional learning and support is prioritised.



## Appendices

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### Appendix 1 Classification of submissions

**Note:**

- Teachers / schools / principals have been classified as Gaeltacht schools if they are on the recognition scheme as Gaeltacht schools (*Scéim aitheantais mar scoileanna Gaeltachta*).
- Gaelcholáiste – Any post-primary school outside the Gaeltacht that operates through the medium of Irish.
- Education organisation – organisations working in education that would include patronage institutions.
- Schools’ organisation – Organisations representing / working on behalf of schools.
- Language planners – a submission from a person or committee / group involved in language planning.
- Teacher organisation – organisations working on behalf of teachers, this would include trade unions.

<b>Individual</b>	63
<b>Teachers</b>	
Irish teacher in Gaeltacht post-primary school	2
Teacher in Gaeltacht post-primary school	2
Irish teacher in a Gaelcholáiste	8
Teacher in a Gaelcholáiste	1
Irish teacher in an English-medium post-primary school	38
Teacher in an English-medium post-primary school	0
Primary school teacher	1
Irish teacher – unspecified	11
Irish teacher in an Irish Unit (Aonad Gaeilge)	1
Teacher – unspecified	1
Group of teachers in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	5
Group of teachers in a Gaelcholáiste	2
Group of teachers in an English-medium post-primary school	5
<b>Parents</b>	
Parent of a son/daughter in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	9
Parent of a son/daughter in a Gaelcholáiste	9
Parent of a son/daughter in an English-medium post-primary school	1
Parent – unspecified	1
<b>Students</b>	
Student in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	0
Student in a Gaelcholáiste	1
Student in an English-medium post-primary school	0
Student – unspecified	4

Group of students in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	0
Group of students in a Gaelcholáiste	1
Group of students in an English-medium post-primary school	2
<b>Principals</b>	
Principal in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	2
Principal in a Gaelcholáiste	1
Principal in an English-medium post-primary school	1
Director of an Irish Unit (Aonad Gaeilge)	1
Principal in a Gaelscoil	1
<b>Schools</b>	
Gaeltacht post-primary school	5
Gaelcholáiste	5
English-medium post-primary school	0
Parents' Committee in a Gaeltacht post-primary school	1
Parents' Committee in a Gaelcholáiste	0
Parents' Committee in an English-medium post-primary school	0
Gaeltacht primary school	2
Gaelscoil	0
<b>Language Planners</b>	11
<b>Organisations</b>	
Community organisation	1
Coláiste Gaeilge	4
Organisation of Coláistí Gaeilge	1
Political Party	1
Institution of Higher Education	2
Teacher organisation	2
Irish language organisation	7
Education organisation	3
Organisation of Gaeltacht Parents	2
Organisation of principals	1
Oireachtais committee	1
State agency	1
Schools' organisation	3
Government department	1
Association of post-primary students	1
Association of third level students	3
Organisation of teachers of Irish	1
Support service for teachers	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>

## Appendix 2

Bi-lateral meetings were held with:

- An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
- Gaeloideachas
- Foras na Gaeilge
- An Gréasán do Mhúinteoirí Gaeilge
- Conradh na Gaeilge
- Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)
- Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

Awareness meetings were held with:

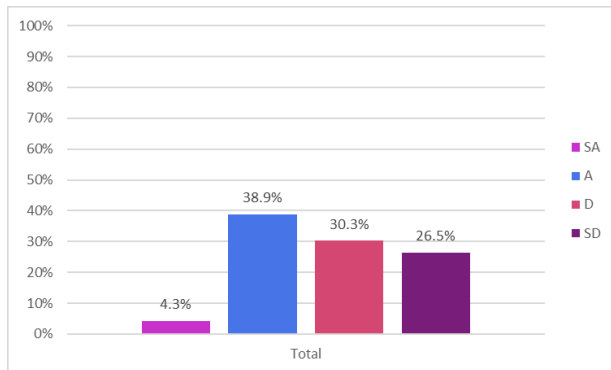
- The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Information sessions were held with:

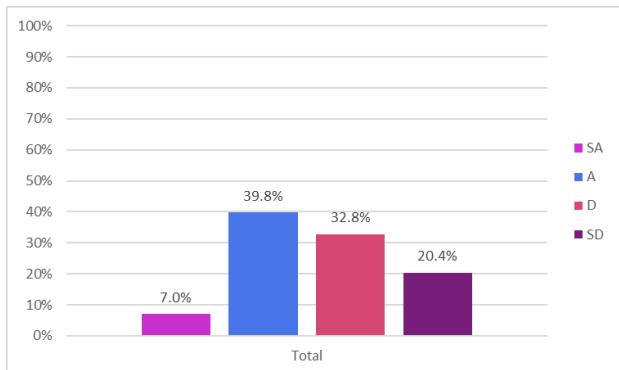
- The Inspectorate
- Joint Managerial Body Secretariat of Secondary Schools (JMB)
- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
- Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- An Foras Pátrúnachta
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

## Appendix 3

### Part 2 of the surveys: General Information

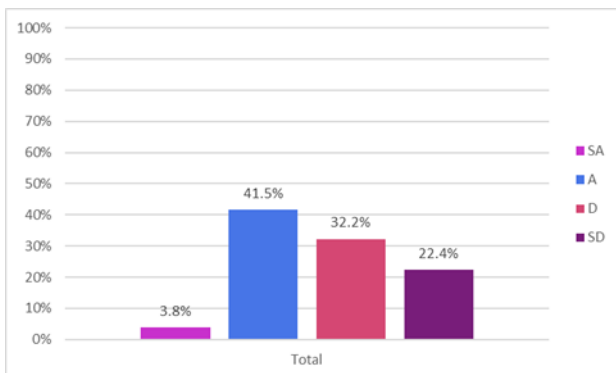


L1 survey

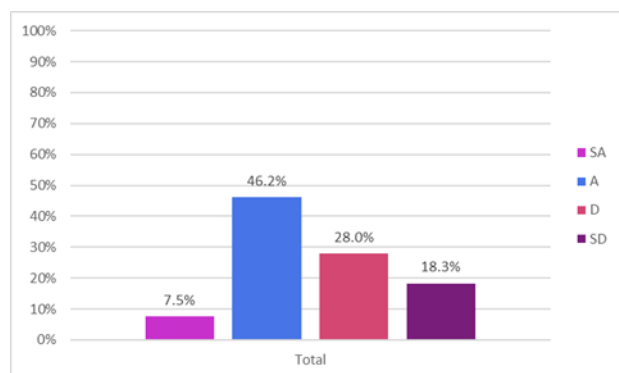


L2 survey

Figure 23: Responses to statement "The layout of the specification is clear".

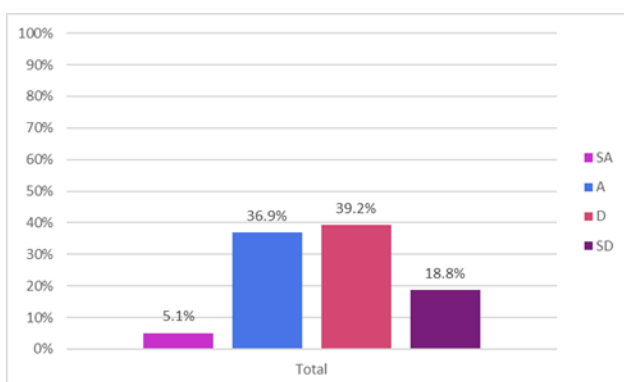


L1 survey

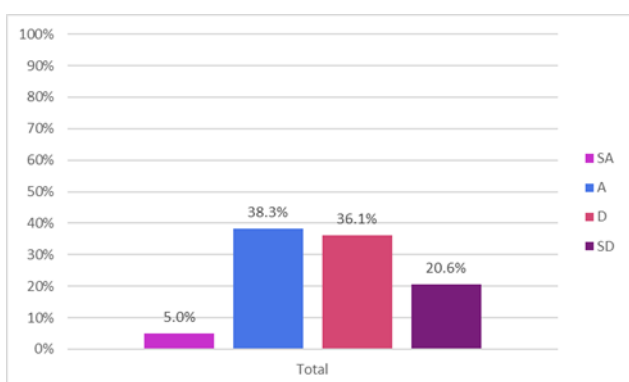


L2 survey

Figure 24: Responses to statement "The specification is legible and it is easy to understand the language of the specification".

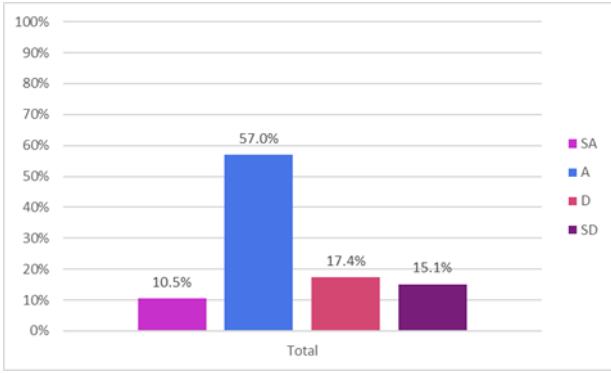


L1 survey

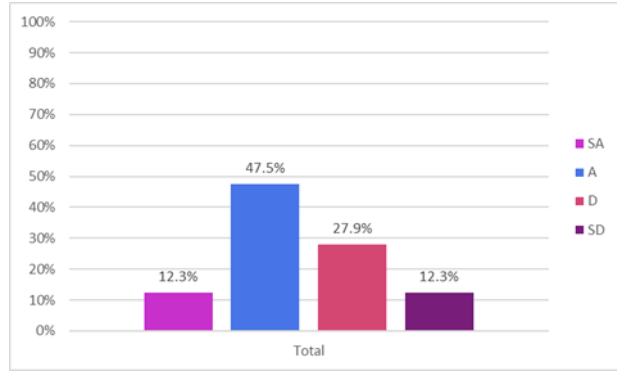


L2 survey

Figure 25: Responses to statement "The specification reflects the values and principles of the Senior Cycle Curriculum".

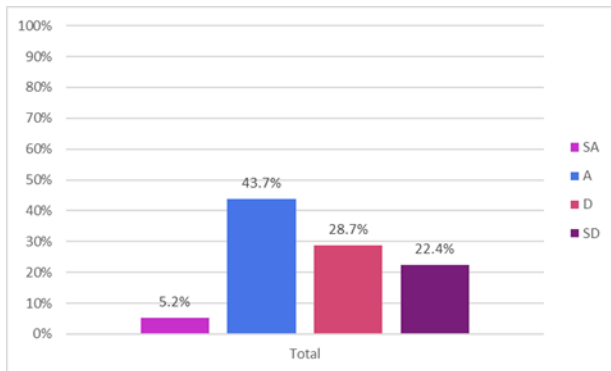


L1 survey

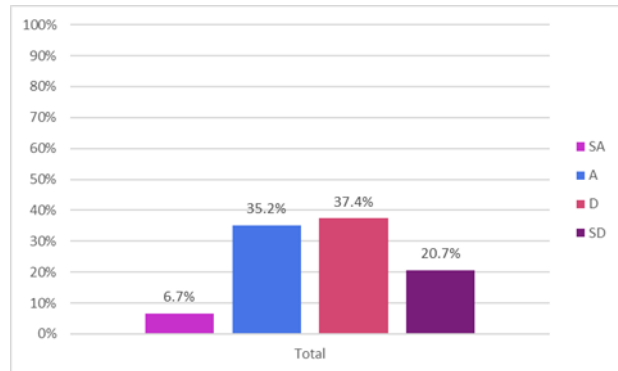


L2 survey

Figure 26: Responses to statement "I understand the group of students which the specification focuses on".

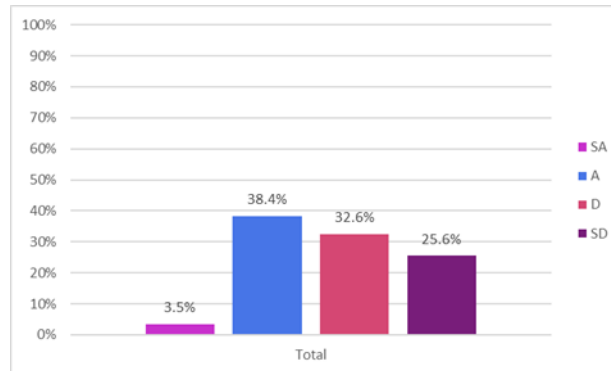


L1 survey

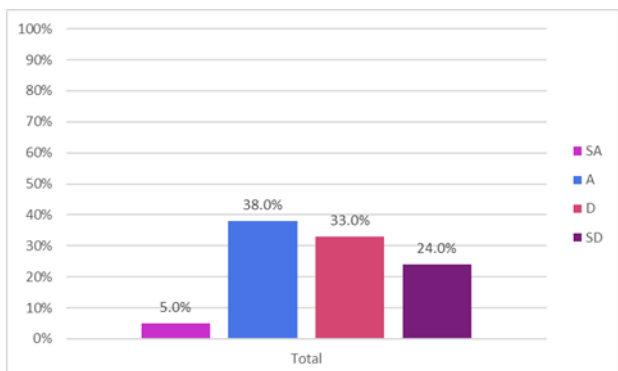


L2 survey

Figure 27: Responses to statement "The Rationale provides a clear explanation of the vision of the specifications".

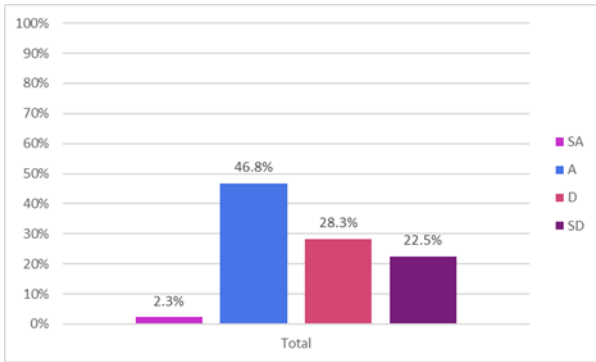


L1 survey

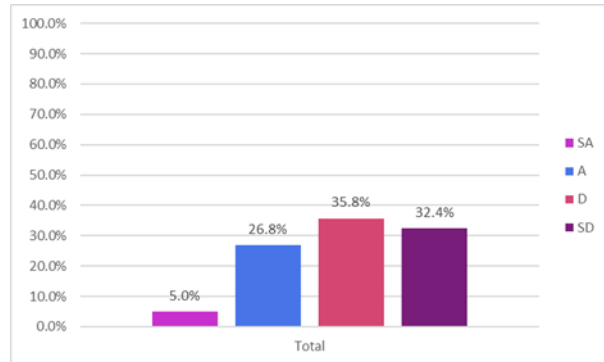


L2 survey

Figure 28: Responses to statement "The Aim (p.14 of the draft specification) gives a clear account of the knowledge, skills and values that this specification aims to develop".

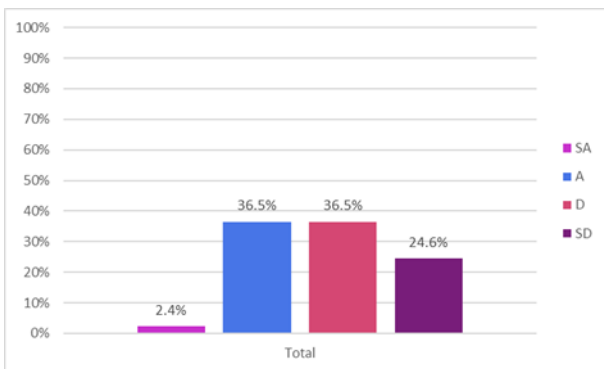


L1 survey

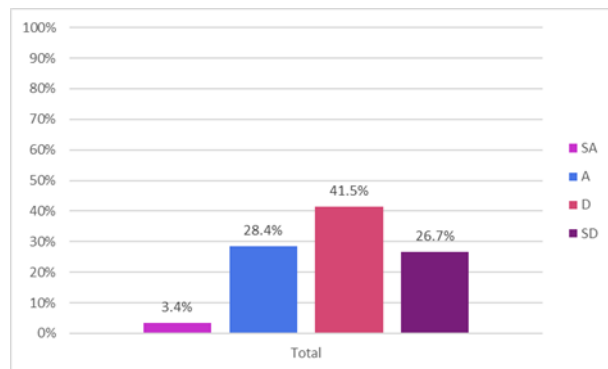


L2 survey

Figure 29: Responses to statement “The ‘Related learning’ section illustrates students’ Irish language learning journey from early years to senior cycle and how this experience prepares them to undertake lifelong learning”.

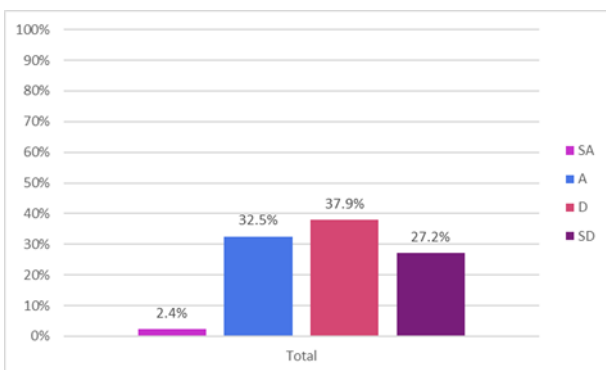


L1 survey

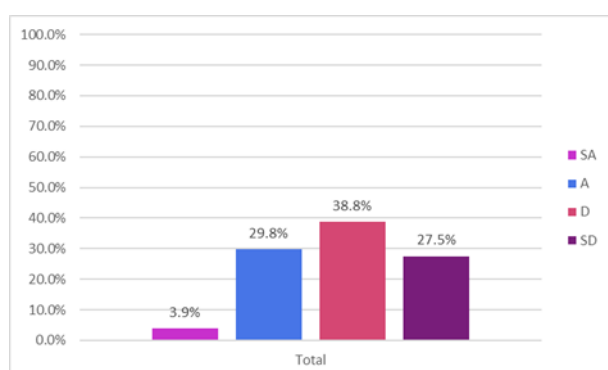


L2 survey

Figure 30: Responses to statement “The ‘Learning and Teaching’ section gives a clear understanding of the expectations for students’ language acquisition”.

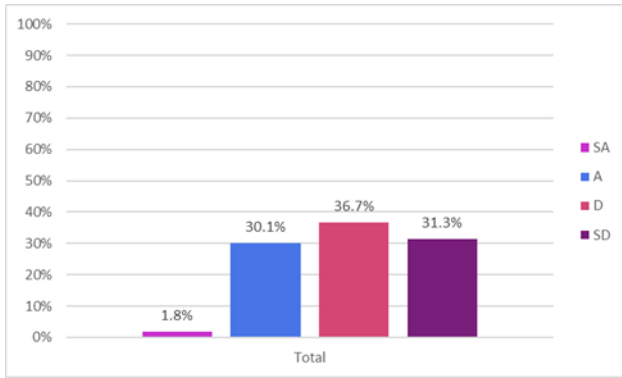


L1 survey

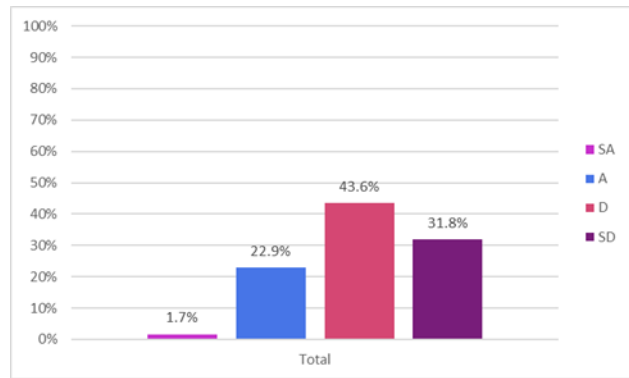


L2 survey

Figure 31: Responses to statement “The ‘Course Overview’ section gives an overview of the type of learning experience that students will have as a result of engaging with this draft specification”.

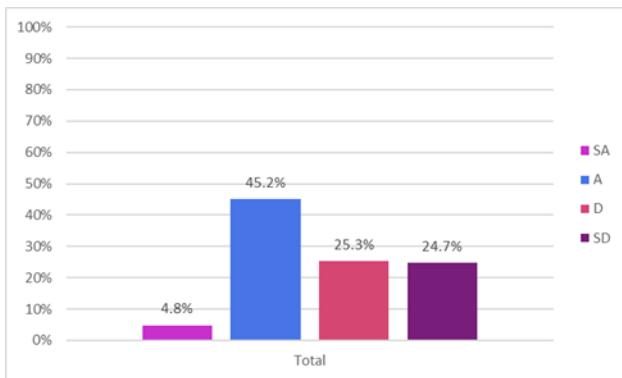


L1 survey

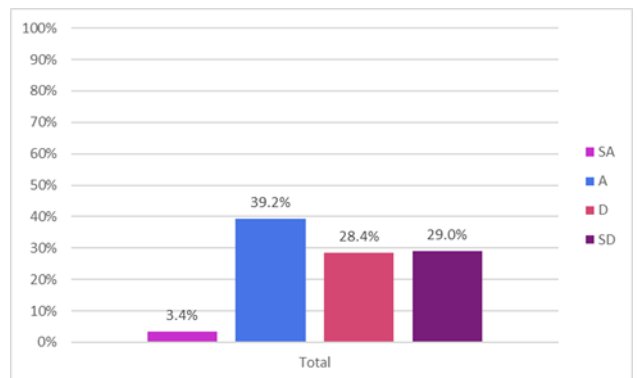


L2 survey

Figure 32: Responses to statement “The strands provide a clear structure for the learning and teaching of Senior Cycle Irish”.



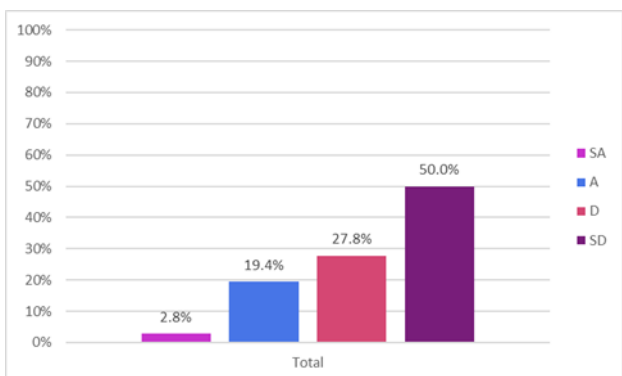
L1 survey



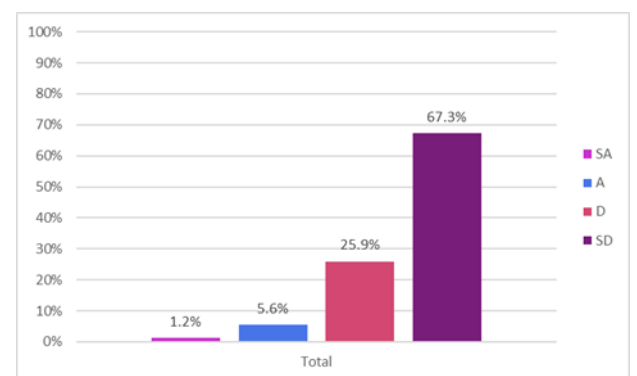
L2 survey

Figure 33: Responses to statement “The ‘Assessment’ section describes the role of formative and summative assessment in students’ learning experiences”.

**Part 3 of the surveys: Rationale, Aims and Objectives**

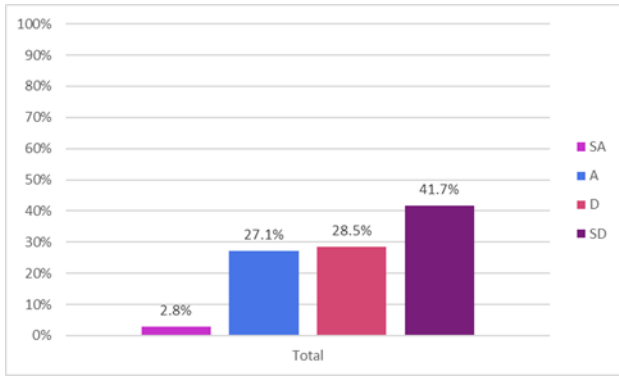


L1 survey

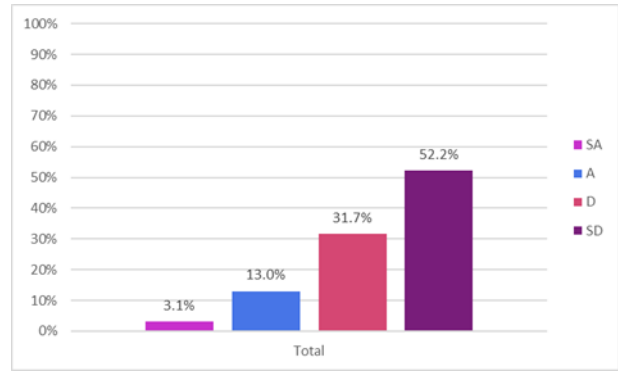


L2 survey

Figure 34: Responses to statement “This draft specification will encourage students to enjoy Irish”.

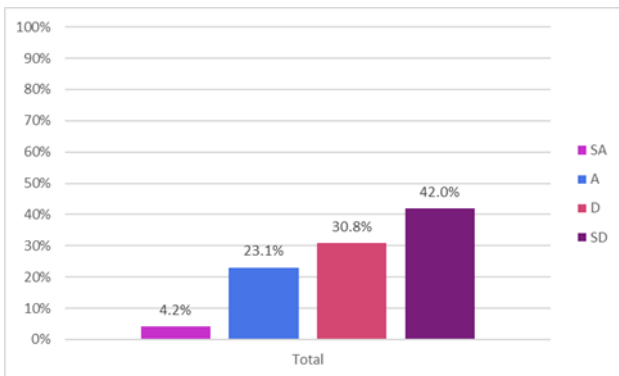


L1 survey

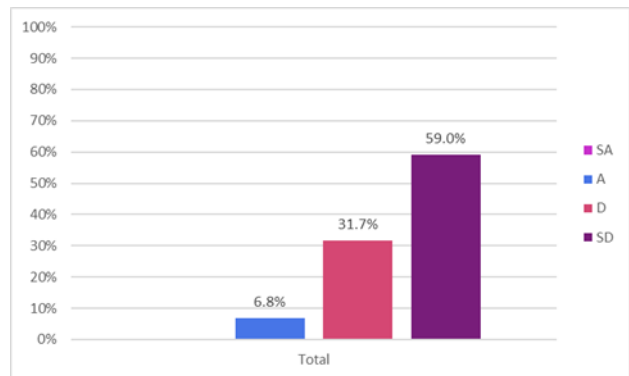


L2 survey

Figure 35: Responses to statement “This draft specification will build on the language skills and competency developed by students during the junior cycle”.

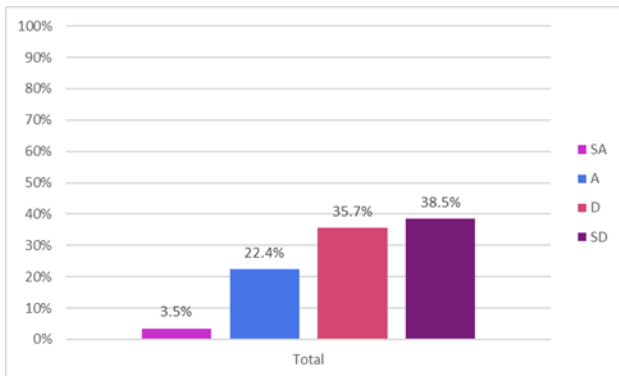


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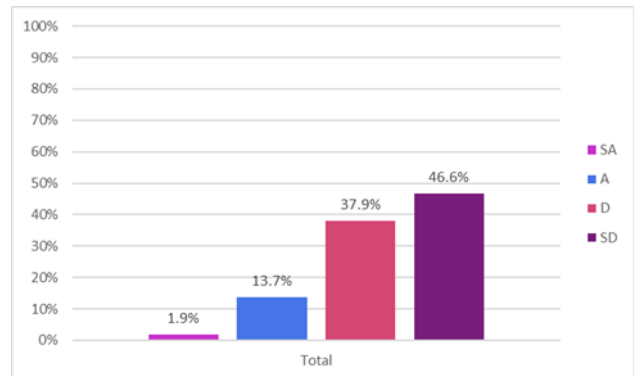


L2 survey

Figure 36: Responses to statement “The draft specification will enable students to use Irish for communication purposes (in a wide range of real-life contexts)”.



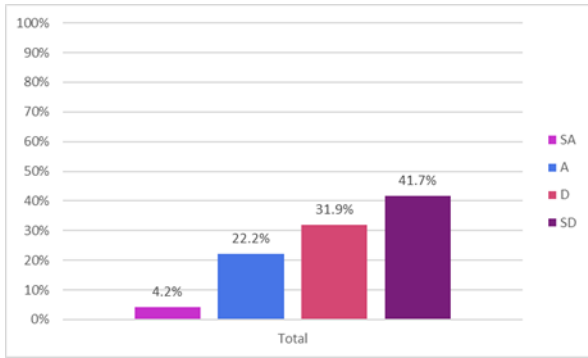
L1 survey



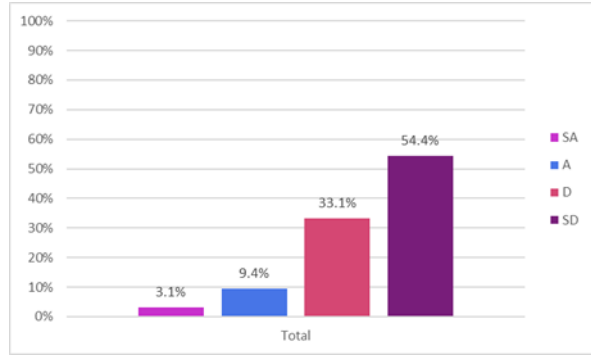
L2 survey

Figure 37: Responses to statement “The draft specification will enable students to increase their knowledge of the wealth and wisdom of Irish [in their local areas]”.



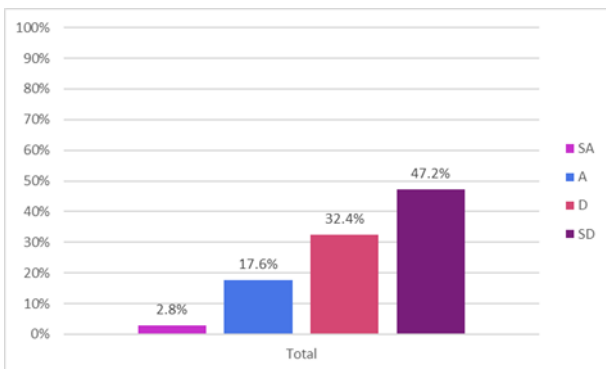


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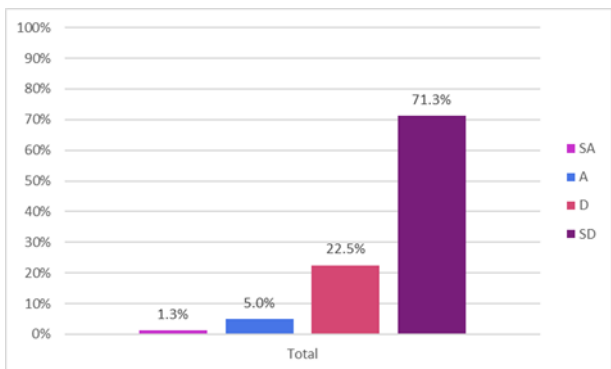


L2 survey

Figure 38: Responses to statement "The learning experience of the draft specification will encourage students to think creatively and critically through Irish".

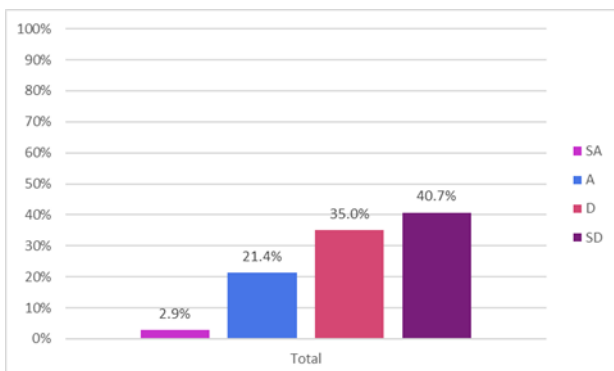


L1 survey

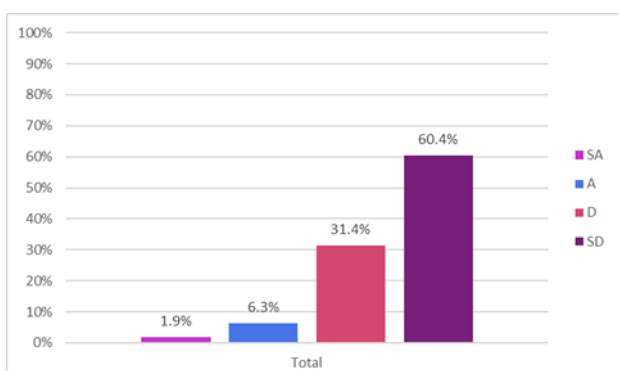


L2 survey

Figure 39: Responses to statement "The draft specification will encourage students to use Irish outside of the classroom [in their language communities]".



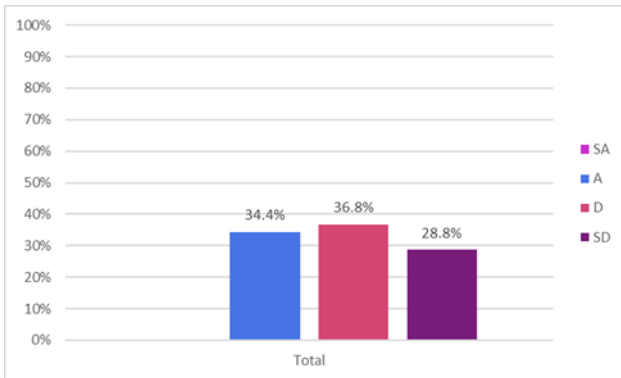
L1 survey



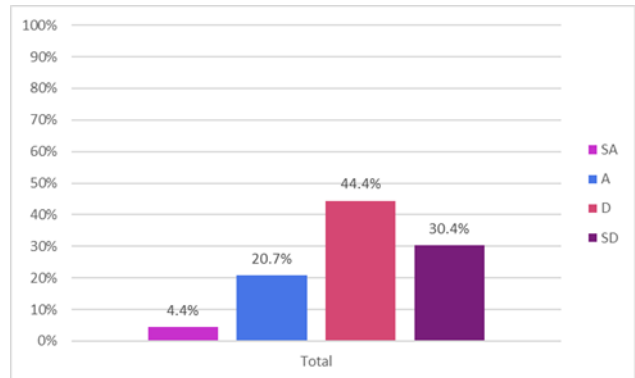
L2 survey

Figure 40: Responses to statement "The learning experience set out in this draft specification will support students to use the language effectively in the community and/or in an Irish-medium learning setting/workplace".

**Part 4 of the surveys – Learning and Teaching**

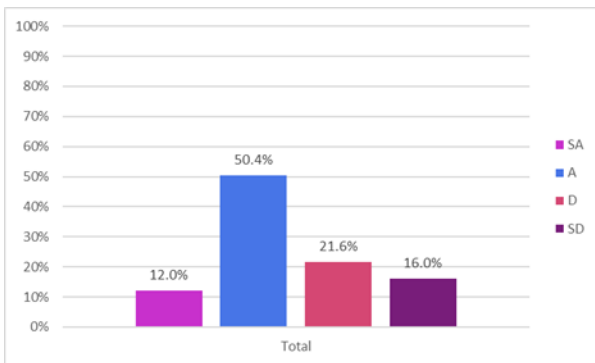


L1 survey

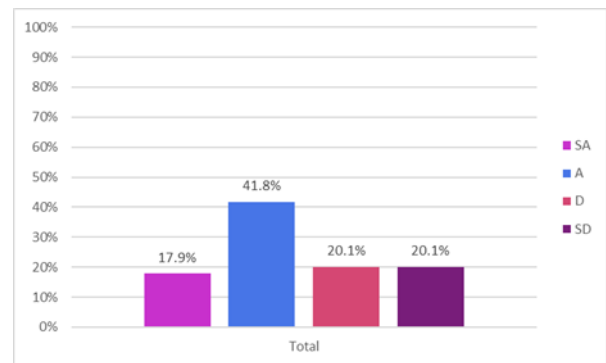


L2 survey

Figure 41: Responses to statement “This section gives a clear understanding of how the learning and teaching approaches are embedded in the strands of the draft specification”.

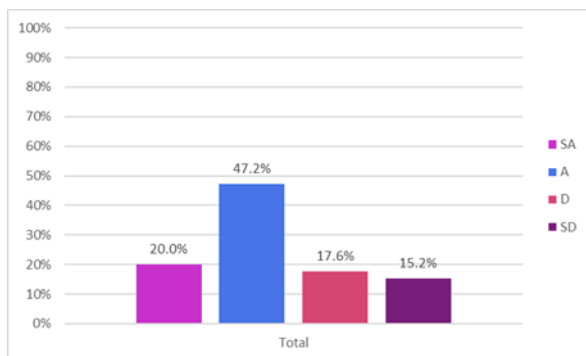


L1 survey

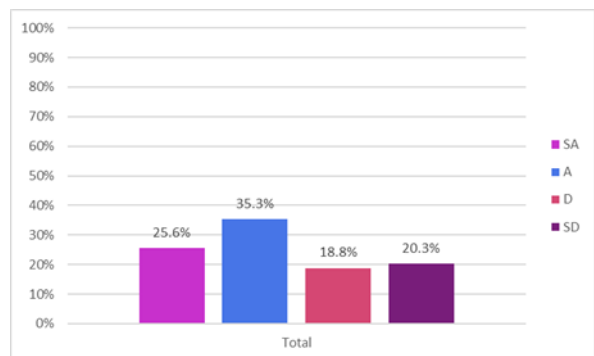


L2 survey

Figure 42: Responses to statement “The teacher helps to provide students with rich language input as part of the learning and teaching process”.

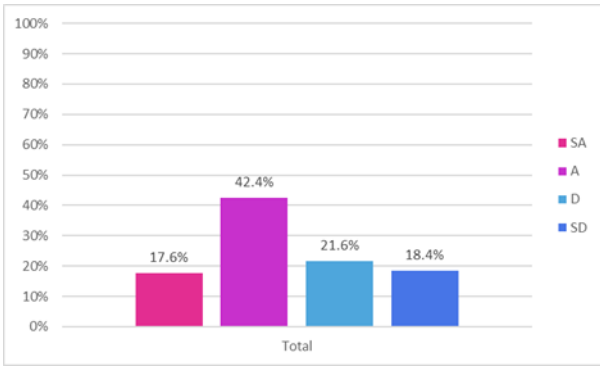


L1 survey

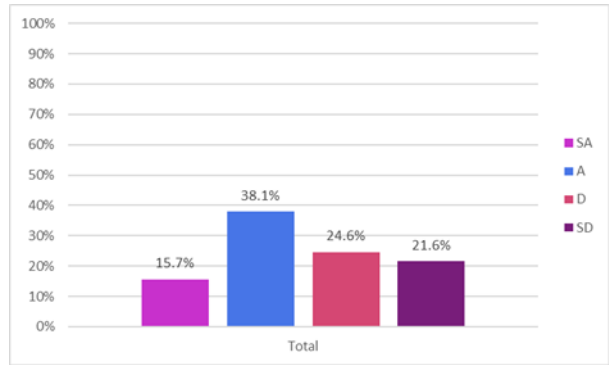


L2 survey

Figure 43: Responses to statement “Language use opportunities (outputs) in the language community are of considerable importance as part of the language acquisition process”.

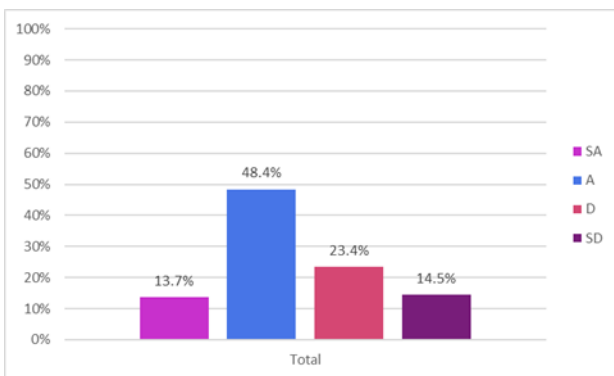


L1 survey

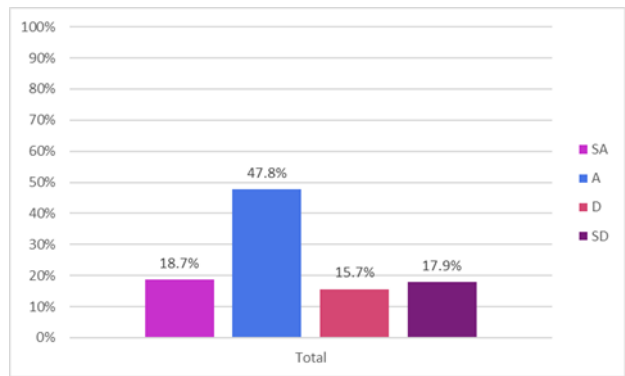


L2 survey

Figure 44: Responses to statement “Developing students’ literacy skills is of considerable importance if they are to become effective language users and successfully acquire the Irish language”.

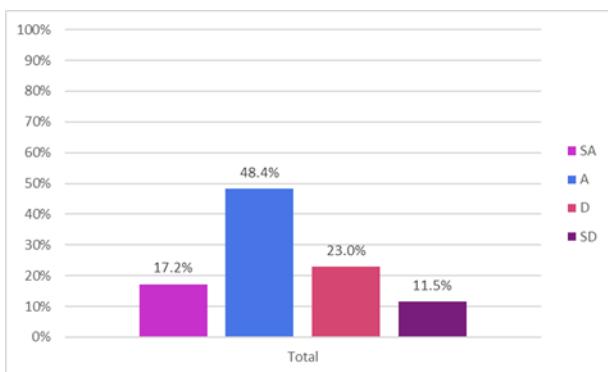


L1 survey

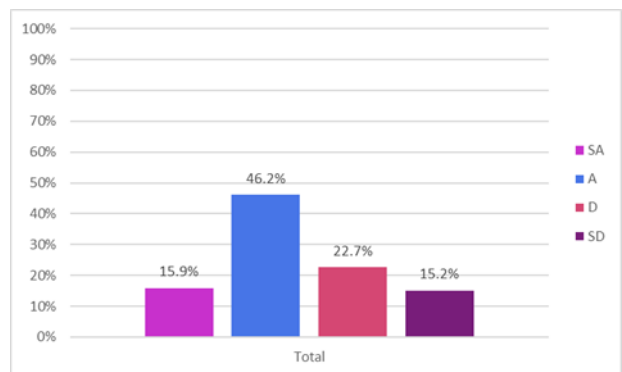


L2 survey

Figure 45: Responses to statement “Self-awareness as a language learner is one of the most important tools students have to make progress”.

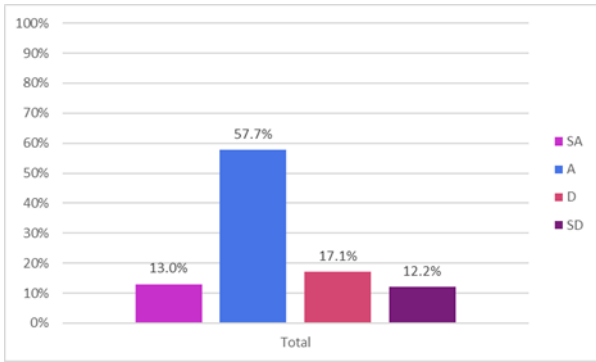


L1 survey

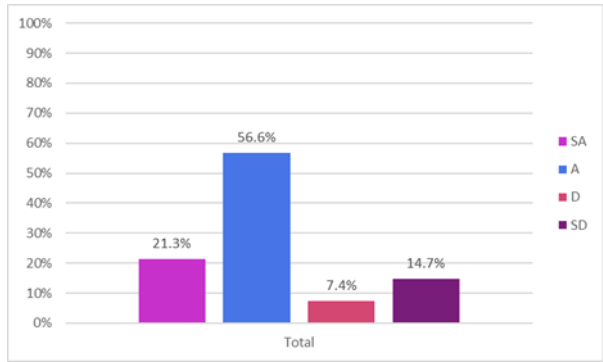


L2 survey

Figure 46: Responses to statement “Language awareness and cultural awareness support students to understand the importance of the language community, participate in it and identify with it”.

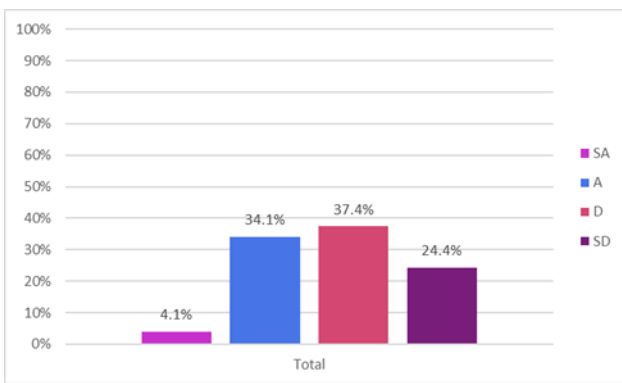


L1 survey

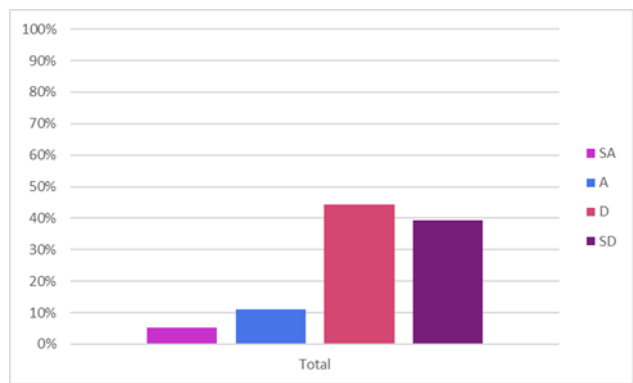


L2 survey

Figure 47: Responses to statement "Assessment plays a role in supporting learning as well as assessing achievement".

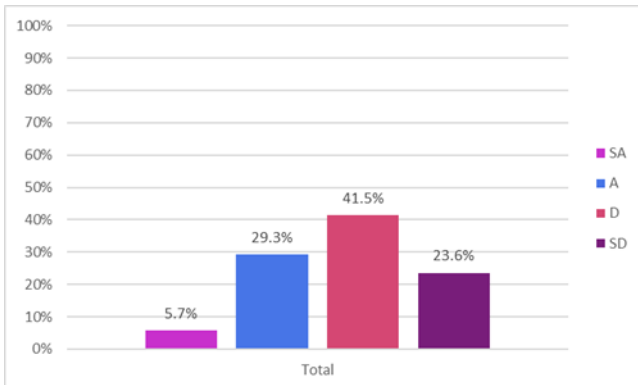


L1 survey



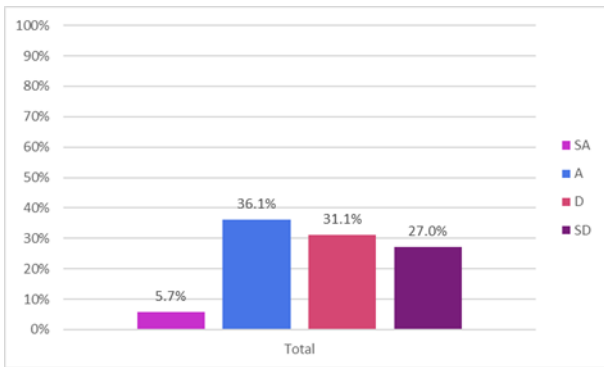
L2 survey

Figure 48: Responses to statement "The draft specification will help students develop language learning strategies that will be transferable to other languages".

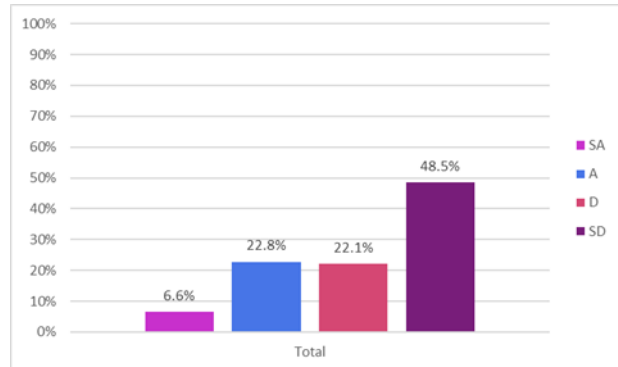


L1 survey

Figure 49: Responses to statement "Language learning (as set out) in this draft specification will help students to undertake other subjects of the curriculum through Irish". (This question was not in the L2 survey).

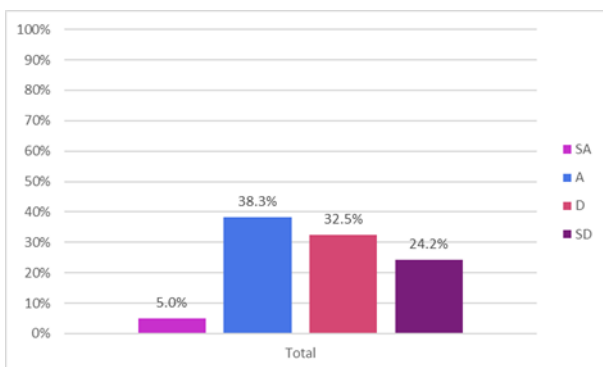


L1survey

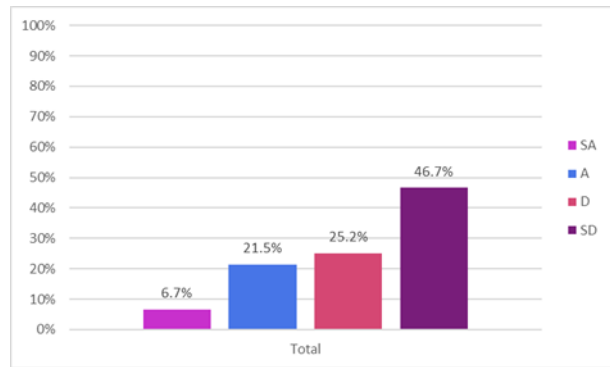


L2 survey

Figure 50: Responses to statement "The language portfolio is an important tool for learning and for formative assessment".



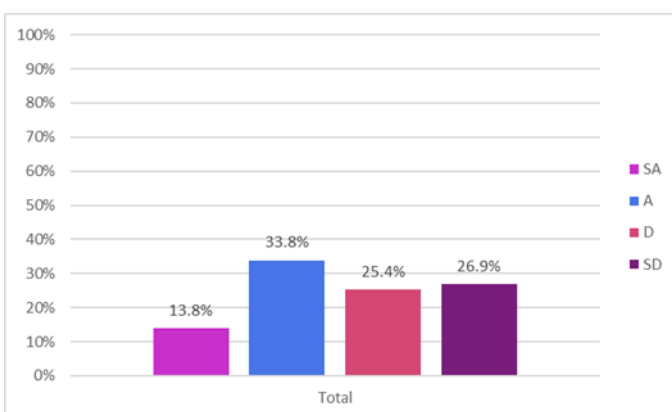
L1survey



L2 survey

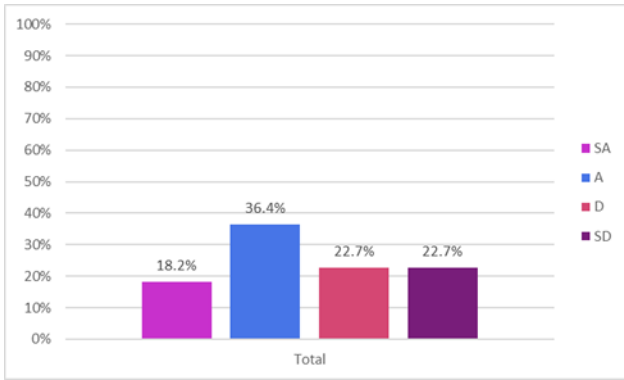
Figure 51: Responses to statement "The language portfolio is an effective tool to support students in developing their self-directed learning and reflection skills".

#### Part 4a of the surveys - Texts

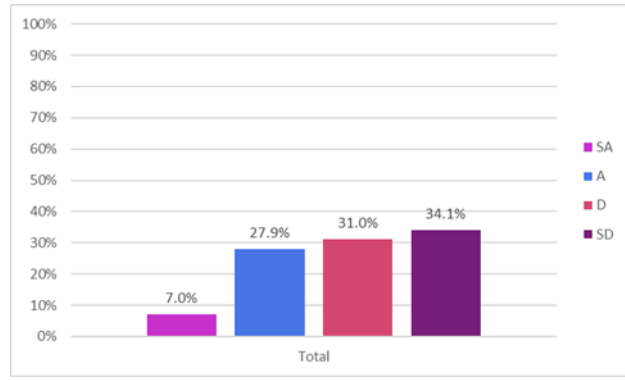


L2 survey

Figure 52: Responses to statement "The reading and exploration of Irish texts (literary and non-literary) support the development of the five communication skills". (This question was not in the L1 survey).

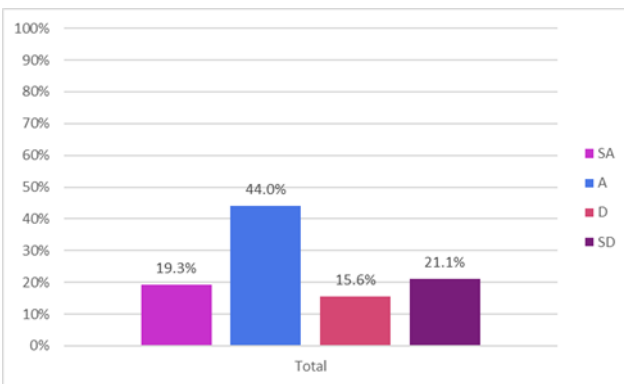


L1 survey

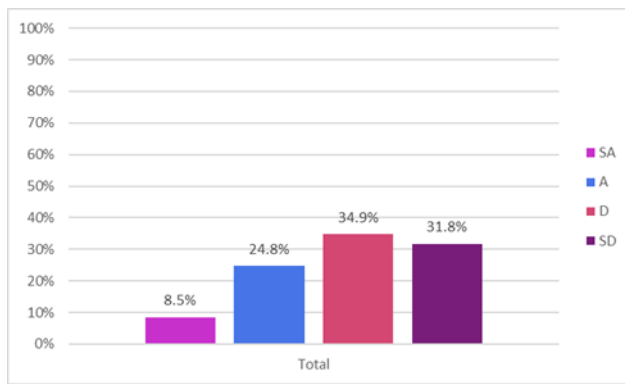


L2 survey

Figure 53: Responses to statement “By reading a wide range of literary and non-literary Irish texts, students are enabled to deepen communication, thinking and critical skills”.

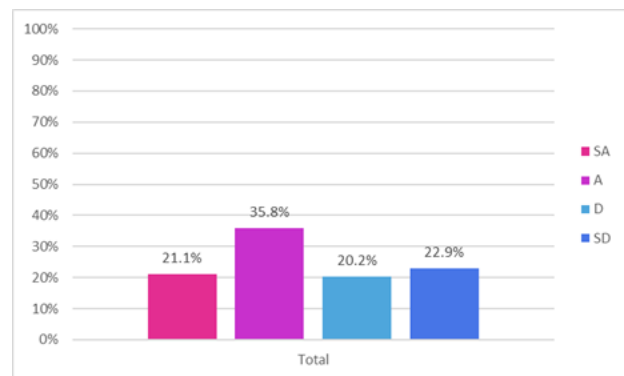


L1 survey

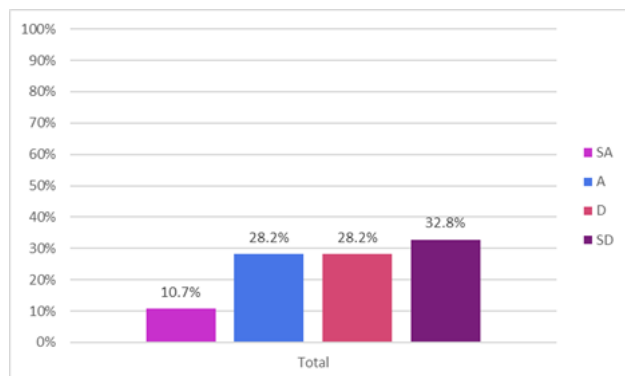


L2 survey

Figure 54: Responses to statement “By reading a range of literary and non-literary Irish texts, students gain insights into ways to use the language creatively”.

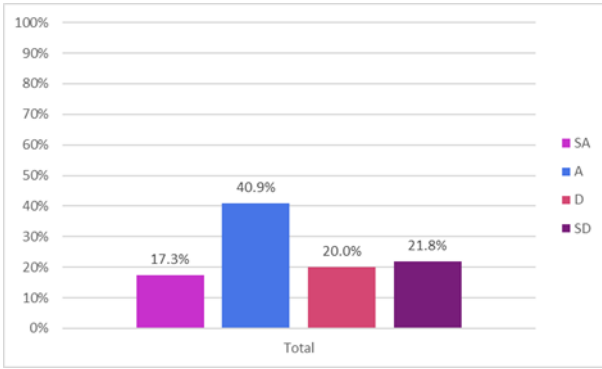


L1 survey

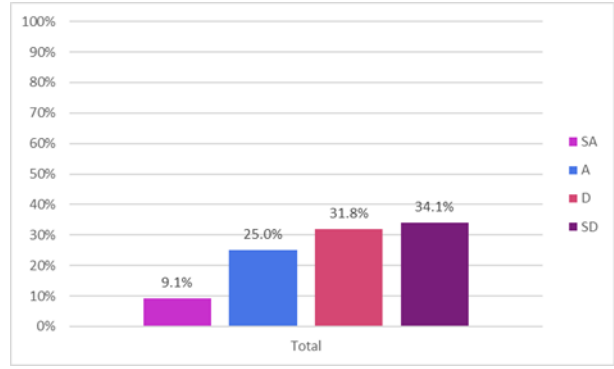


L2 survey

Figure 55: Responses to statement “By reading a range of literary and non-literary Irish texts, students gain an insight into ways in which the language can be used and will help to explore topics, ideas and concepts in other subjects of the curriculum”.

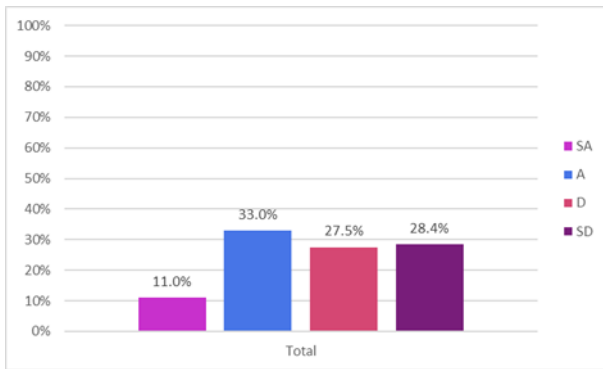


L1 survey

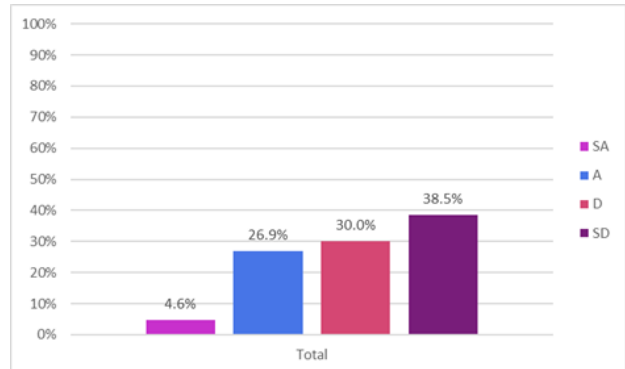


L2 survey

Figure 56: Responses to statement "By reading a wide range of literary and non-literary Irish texts, students gain an insight into the culture and language of their local area and other areas".

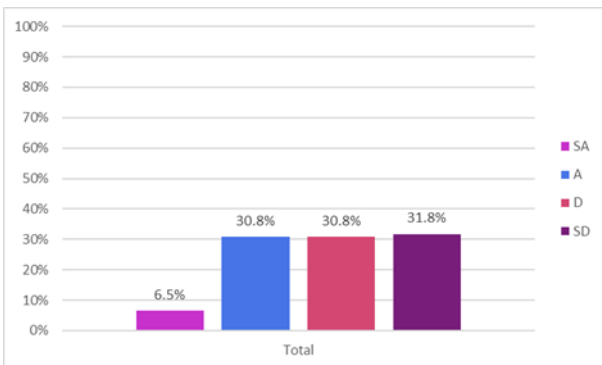


L1 survey

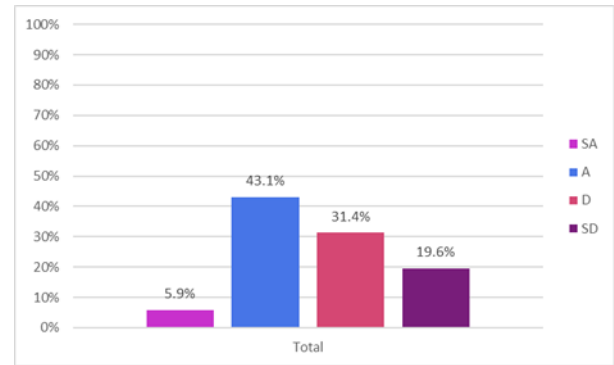


L2 survey

Figure 57: Responses to statement "The range of texts and the choice between certain genres gives scope to select texts suitable for students' experiences, contexts and needs".

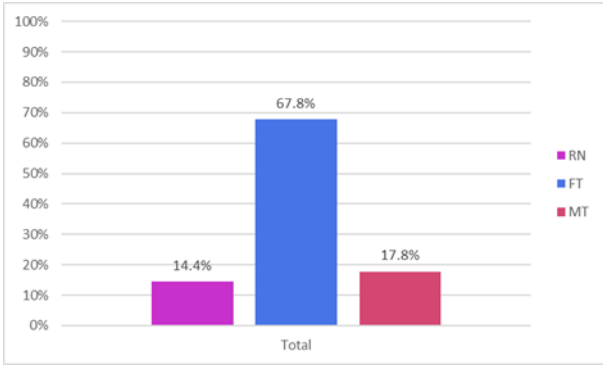


L1 survey

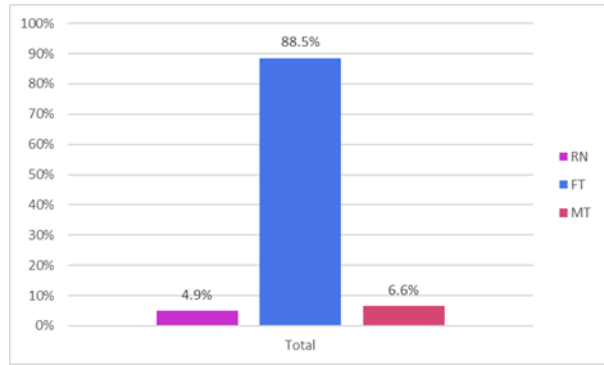


L2 survey

Figure 58: Responses to statement "Students are given an opportunity to engage with a suitable range of texts from the canon of Irish language literature".

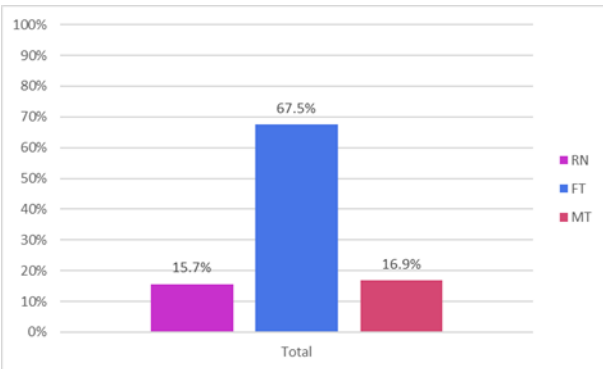


L1 survey

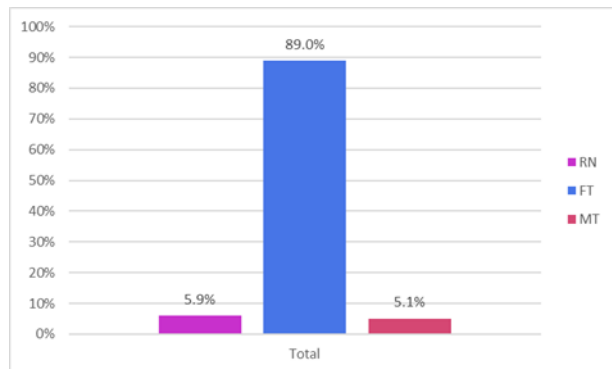


L2 survey

Figure 59: Frequencies for opinions on the recommended number of texts for Higher Level.



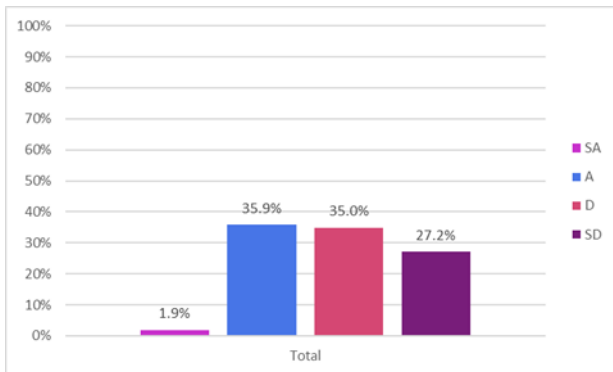
L1 survey



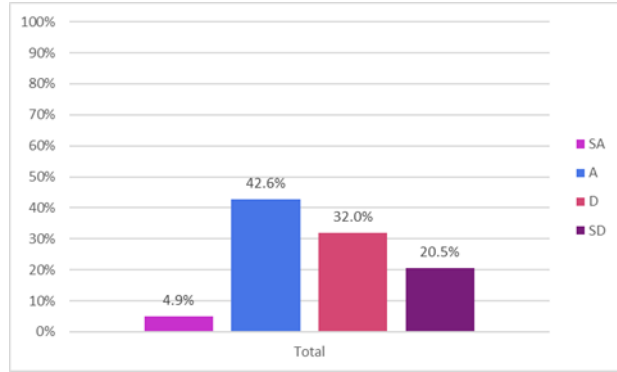
L2 survey

Figure 60: Frequencies for opinions on the recommended number of texts for Ordinary Level.

Part 5 of the surveys – Overview: Structure of the specifications



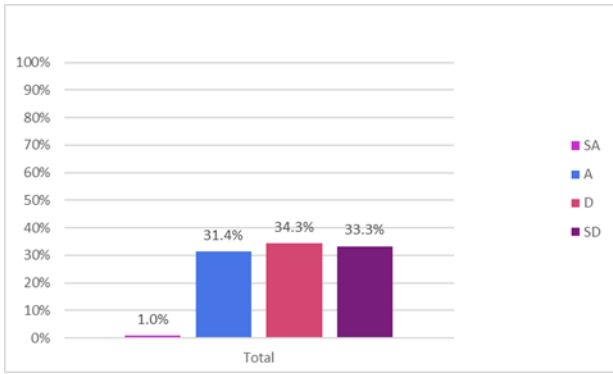
L1 survey



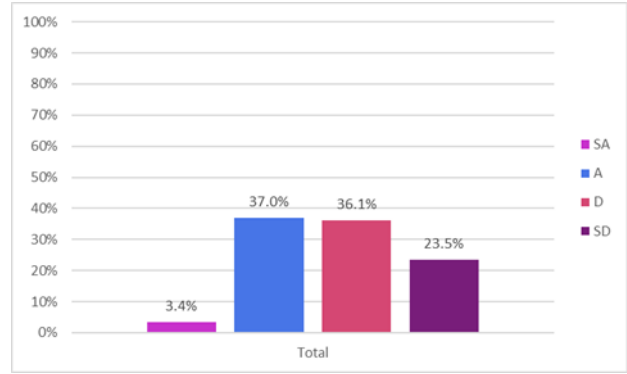
L2 survey

Figure 61: Responses to statement “The ‘Overview’ gives a very clear description of the structure of the draft specification”.



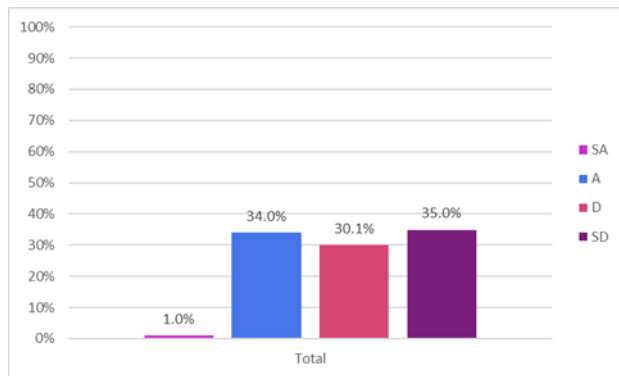


L1 survey

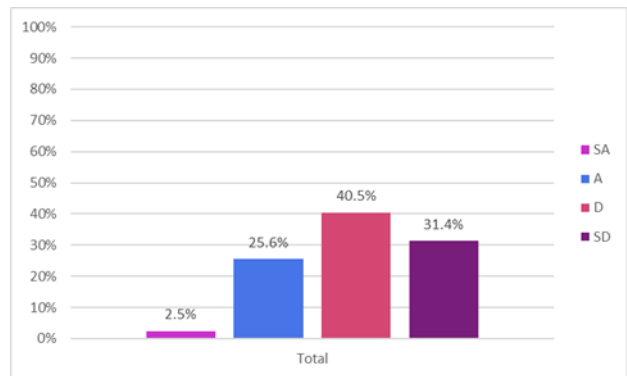


L2 survey

Figure 62: Responses to statement “The structure very clearly reflects the interdependence of the strands and how they support the integration of the key language skills”.

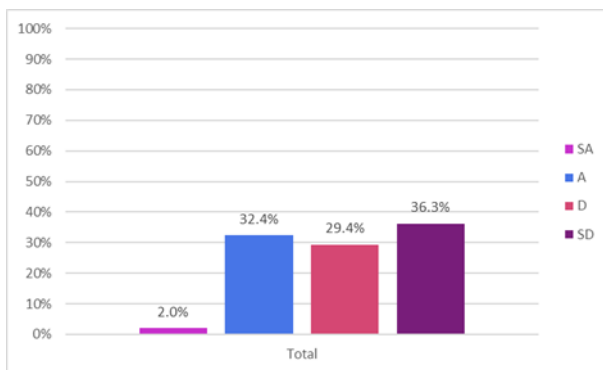


L1 survey

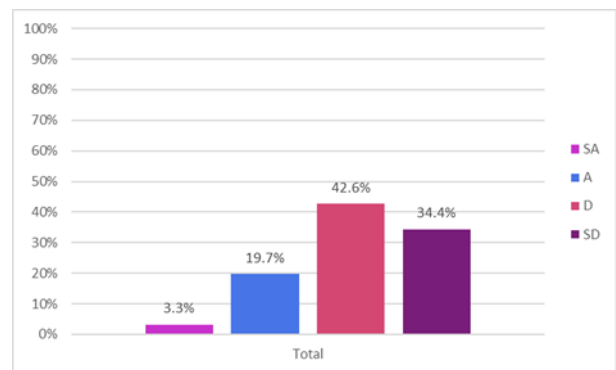


L2 survey

Figure 63: Responses to statement “The strands are very effective at highlighting the skills and competencies that are most important for learning and teaching”.

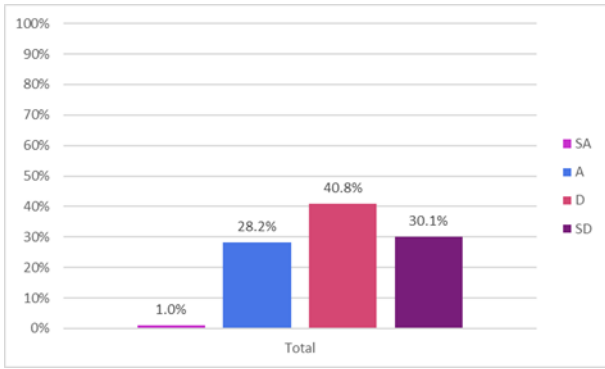


L1 survey

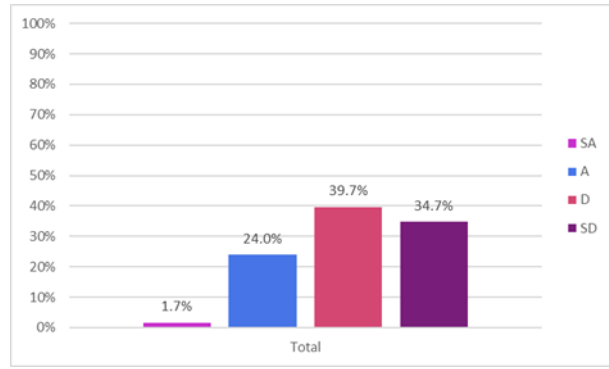


L2 survey

Figure 64: Responses to statement “There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of key language skills and competencies across the strands”.

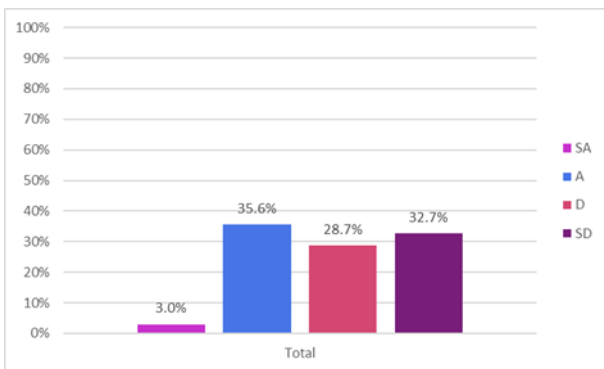


L1 survey

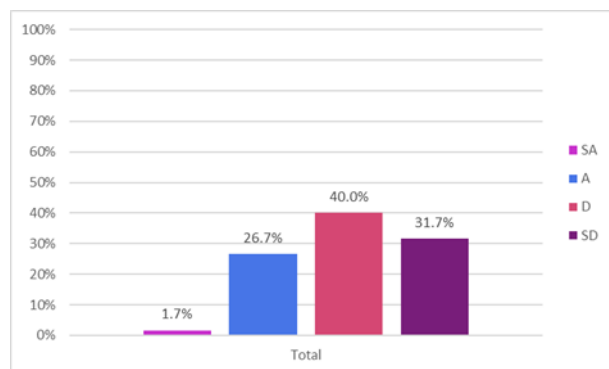


L2 survey

Figure 65: Responses to statement "There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of the students' creative competencies in the strands".

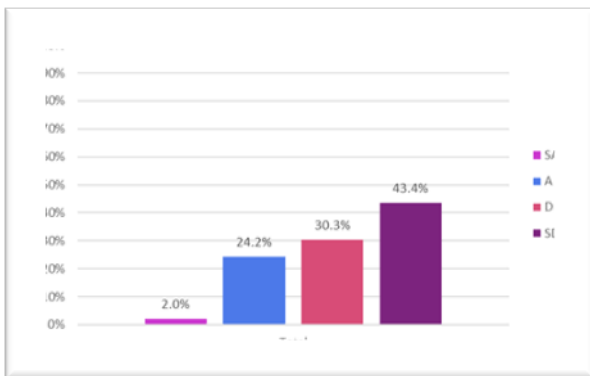


L1 survey

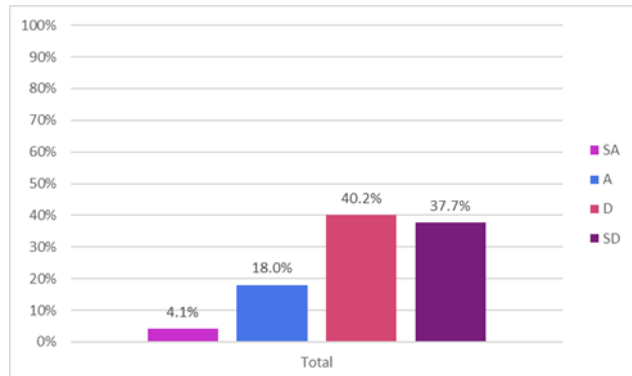


L2 survey

Figure 66: Responses to statement "There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of the students' awareness in the strands (language awareness, self-awareness and cultural awareness)".



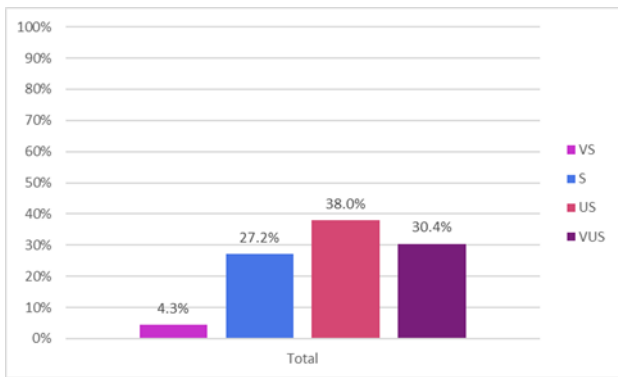
L1 survey



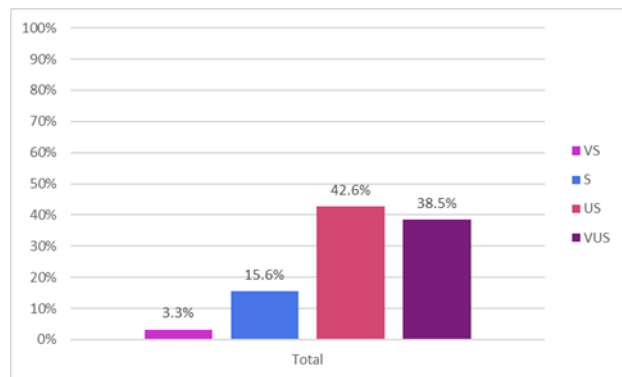
L2 survey

Figure 67: Responses to statement "The time allocation (at least 180 hours of class time) over two years of senior cycle is sufficient for students to achieve the aims of the draft specification".

Part 6 of the surveys – Learning Outcomes

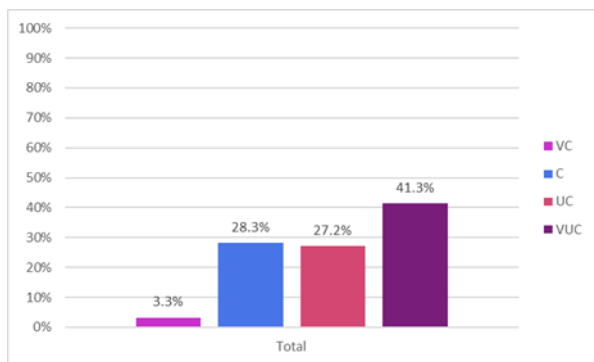


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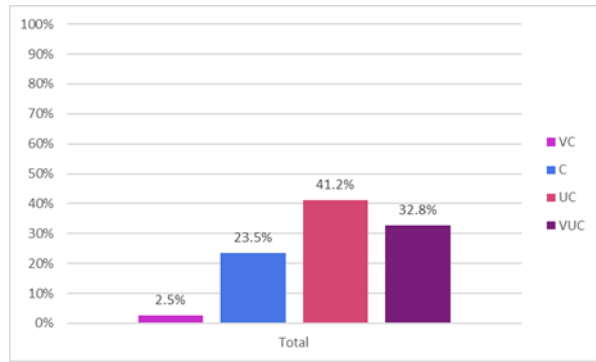


L2 survey

Figure<sup>4</sup> 68: Frequencies in responses about the appropriateness of learning outcomes for an L1/L2 student.



L1 survey

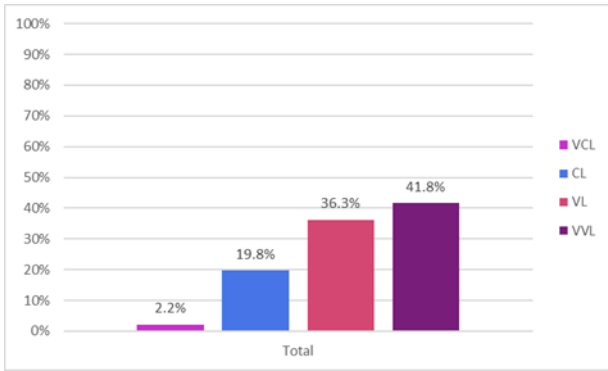


L2 survey

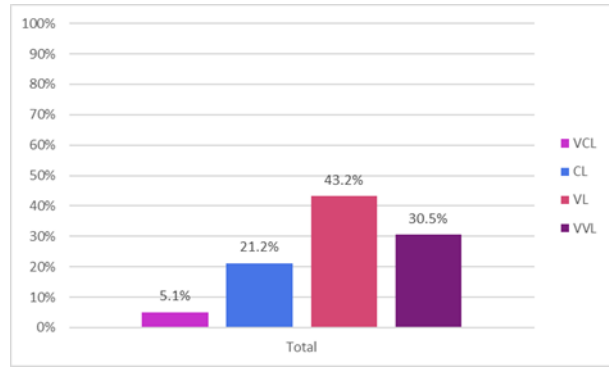
Figure 69: Frequencies in responses about clarity and intelligibility of learning outcomes.

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<sup>4</sup> Key: VS = “very suitable”, S = “suitable”, US = “unsuitable” and VUS = “very unsuitable”

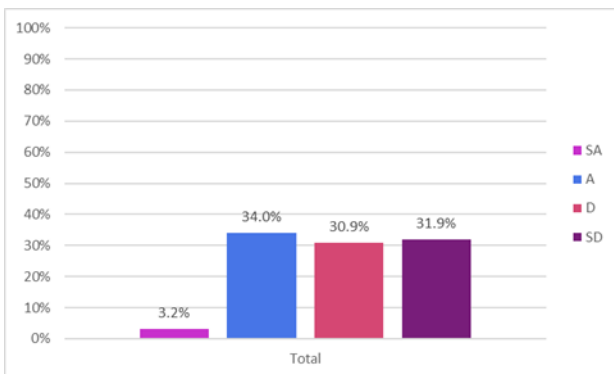


L1 survey

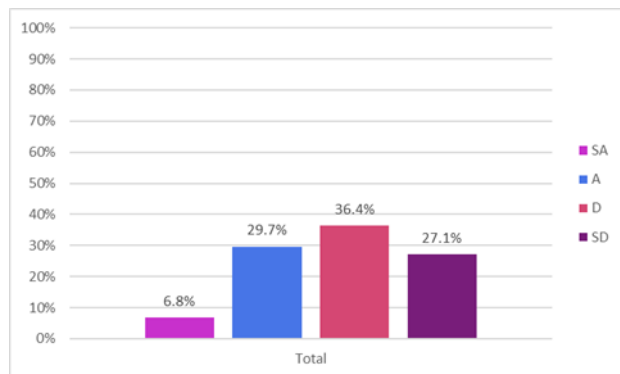


L2 survey

Figure 70: Frequencies in responses about clarity and intelligibility of learning outcomes.

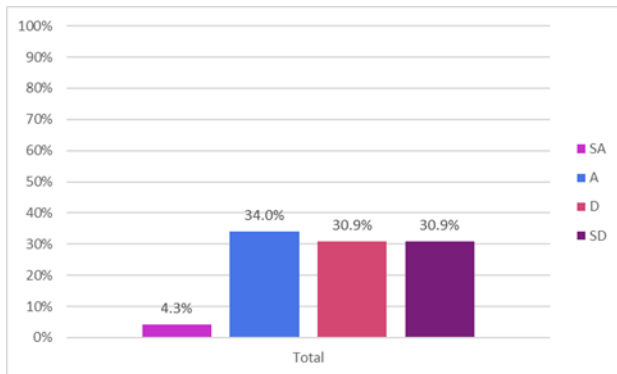


L1 survey

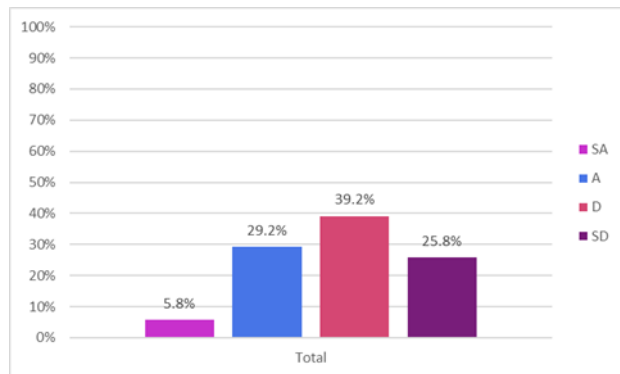


L2 survey

Figure 71: Responses to statement "The learning outcomes are clearly and appropriately divided in the 'Communication' strand between the five skills".

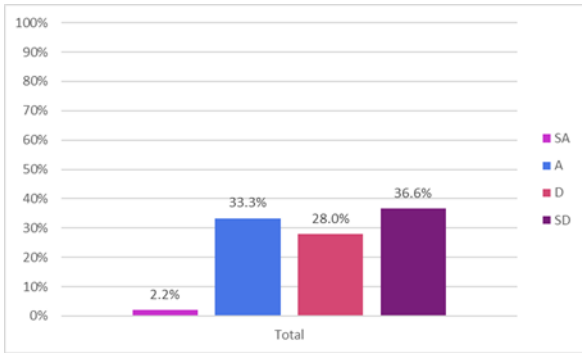


L1 survey

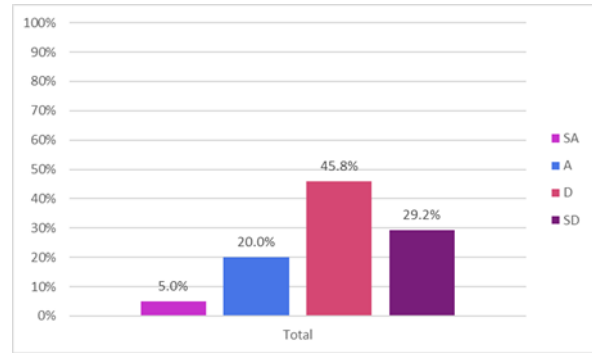


L2 survey

Figure 72: Responses to statement "The learning outcomes are clearly and appropriately divided in the 'Awareness' strand between the three elements".



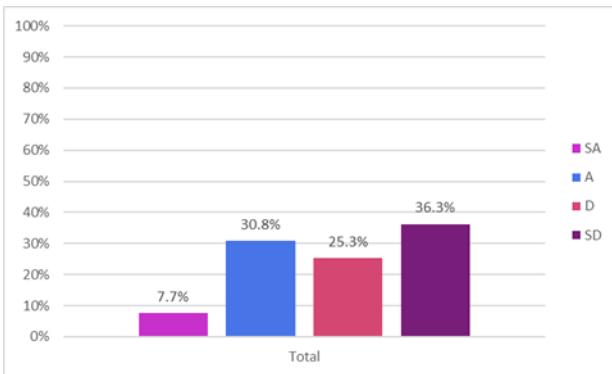
L1 survey



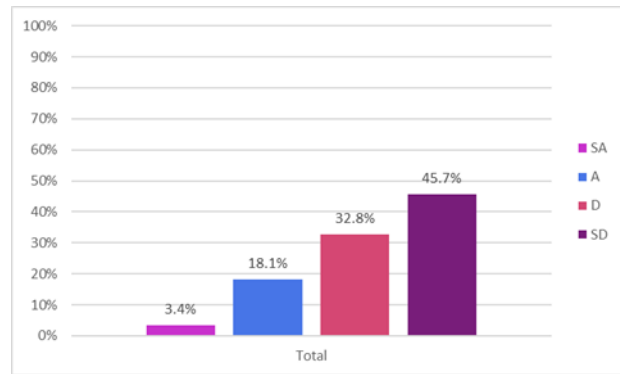
L2 survey

Figure 73: Responses to statement “The learning outcomes are clear and suitable for the ‘Language Creativity’ strand”.

Part 6a of the surveys – Communication

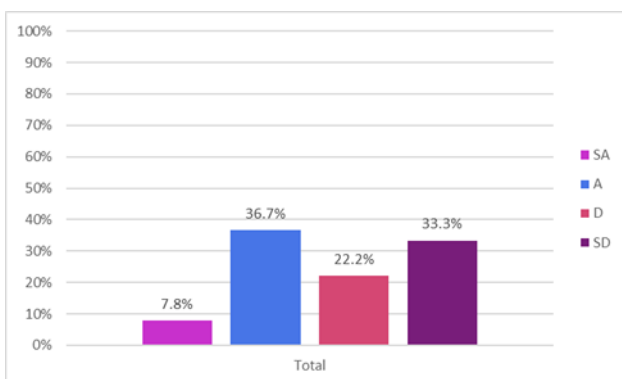


L1 survey



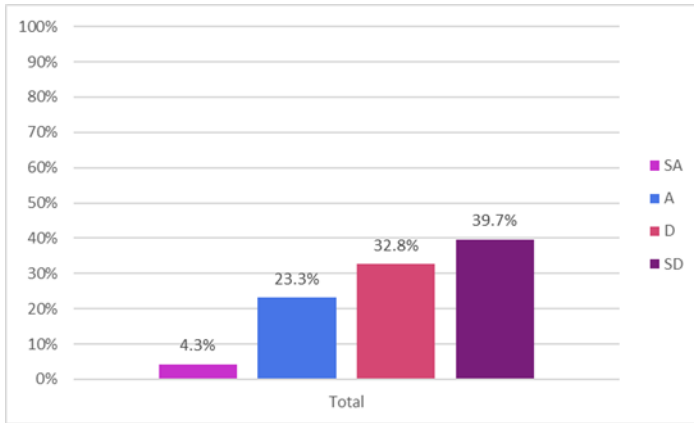
L2 survey

Figure 74: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “function confidently and effectively in interpersonal communication situations in the language community”.



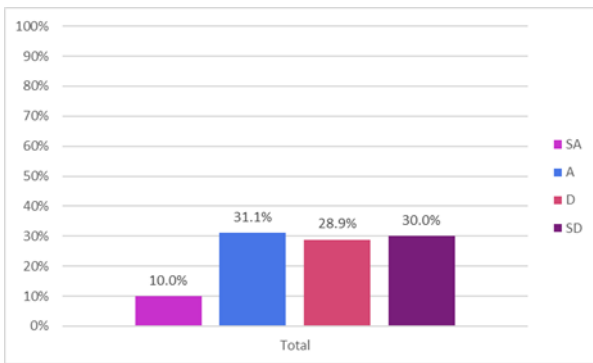
L1 survey

Figure 75: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “understand and use the everyday language at normal speed of their native language community, and other language users”.

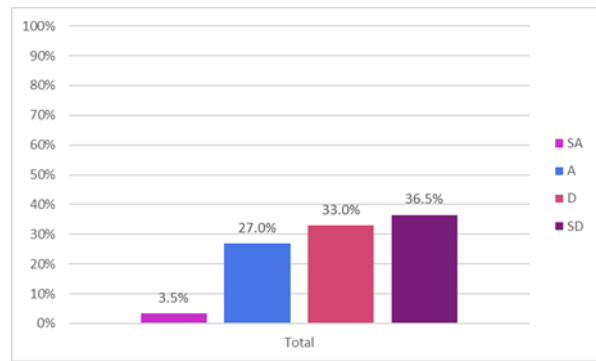


L2 survey

Figure 76: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “understand and use the everyday language at normal speed of the language community, and of other language users”.

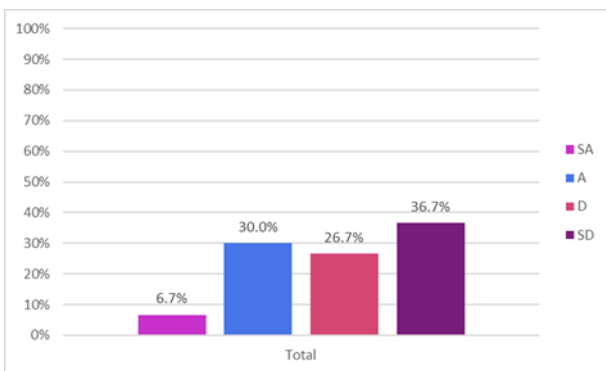


L1 survey

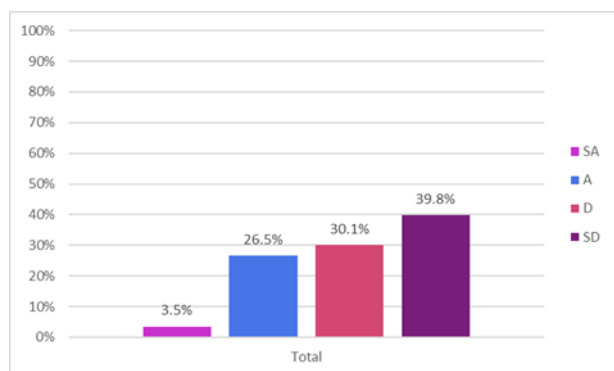


L2 survey

Figure 77: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “notice and use accurate and rich language in spoken and written Irish”.

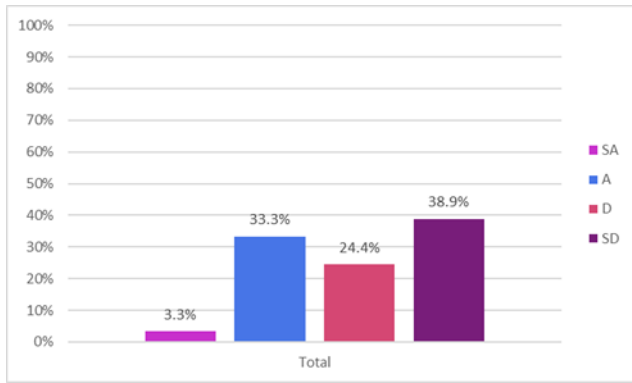


L1 survey

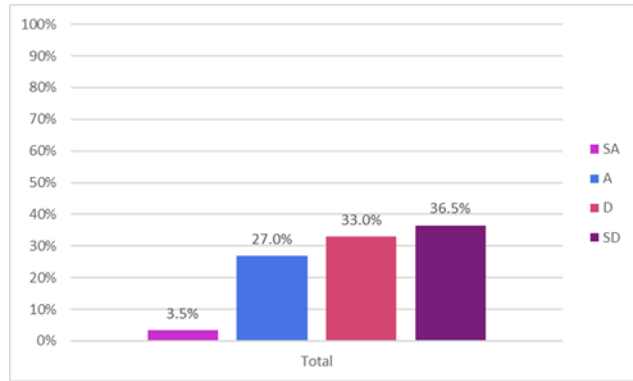


L2 survey

Figure 78: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “read a wide range of texts, including literary and non-literary texts, that are used in the language community demonstrating a critical understanding of the subject matter”.



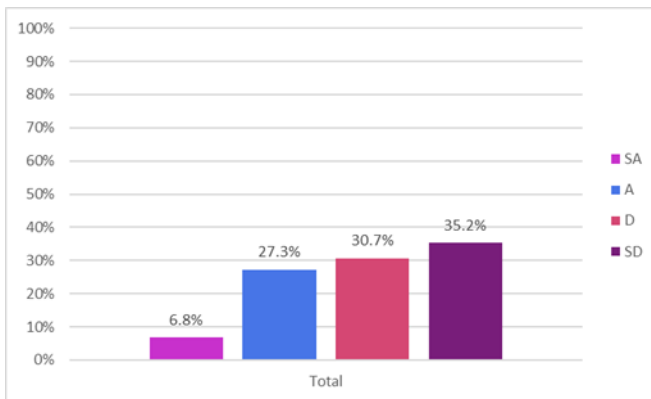
L1 survey



L2 survey

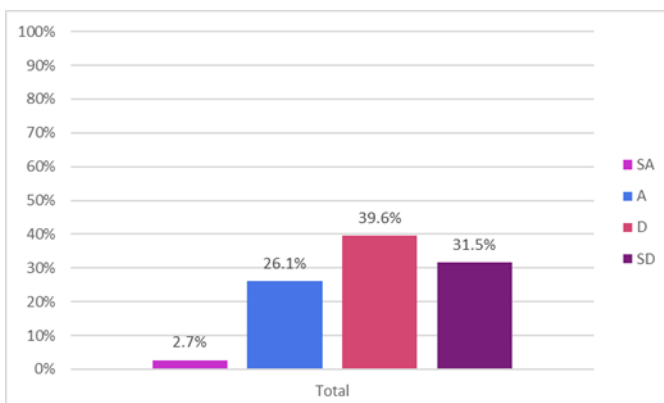
Figure 79: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Communication strand would support students “compose texts on areas of interest to them”.

Part 6b of the surveys – Awareness



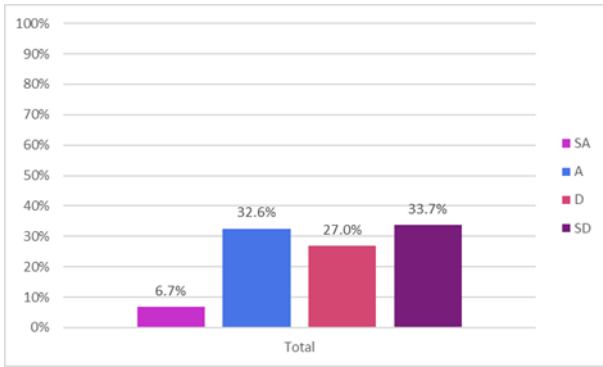
L1 survey

Figure 80: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to be more effective and more confident as independent capable language users”.

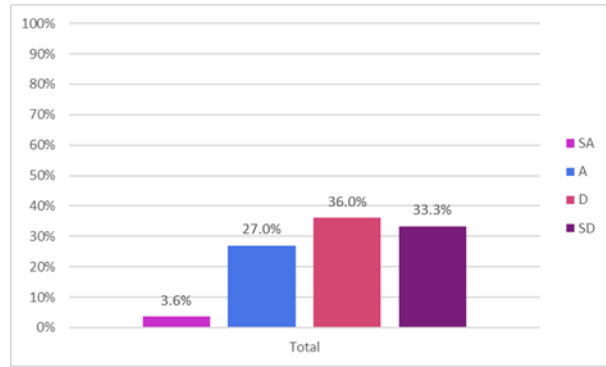


L2 survey

Figure 81: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to reflect on the progress they have made and the progress they need to make to become independent users of language”.

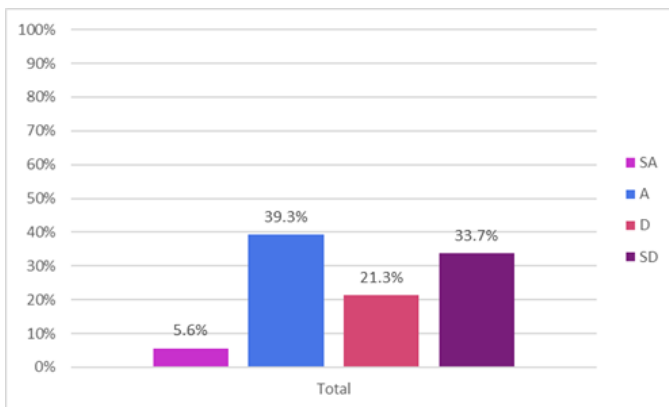


L1 survey



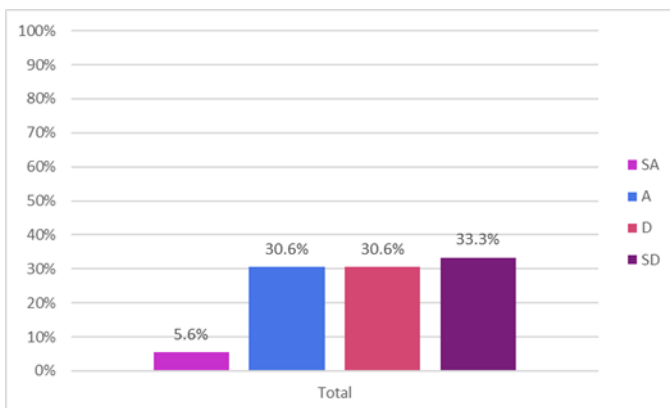
L2 survey

Figure 82: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to [recognise and to] use the appropriate language in various contexts”.



L1 survey

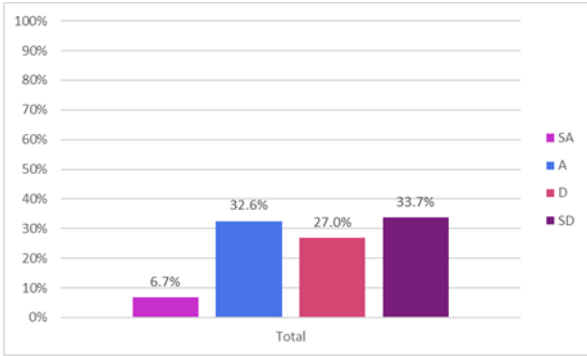
Figure 83: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to add to their knowledge and understanding of the systems and natural flow of Irish”. (This question was not in the L2 survey).



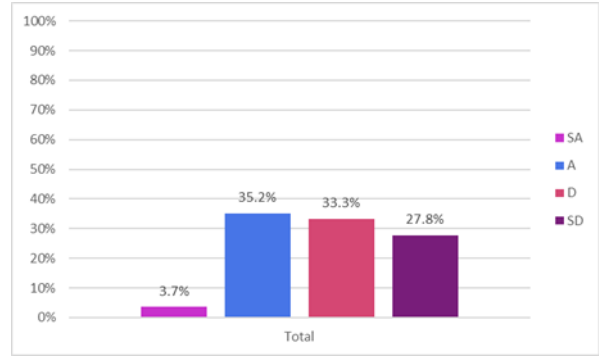
L2 survey

Figure 84: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to be accurate in the use of Irish”. (This question was not in the L1 survey).



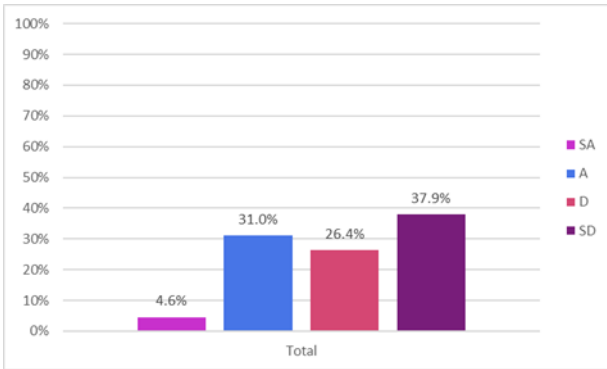


L1 survey

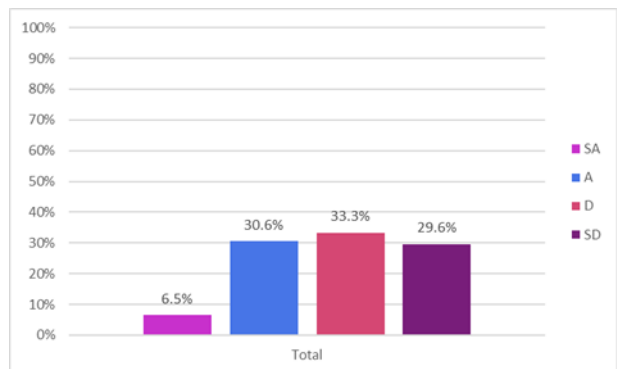


L2 survey

Figure 85: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students "to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the richness of Irish dialects / of the main dialects of Irish".

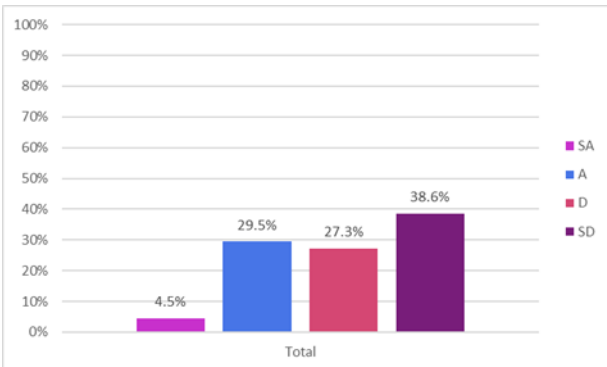


L1 survey

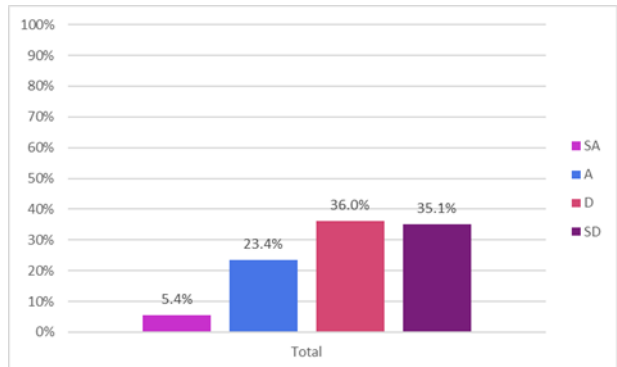


L2 survey

Figure 86: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students "to make effective use of feedback] and self-reflection as part of the language acquisition process]".

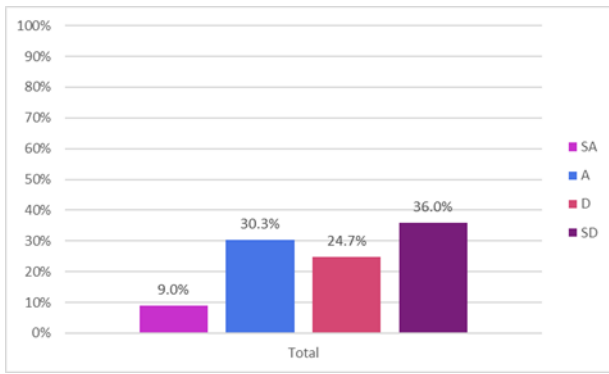


L1 survey

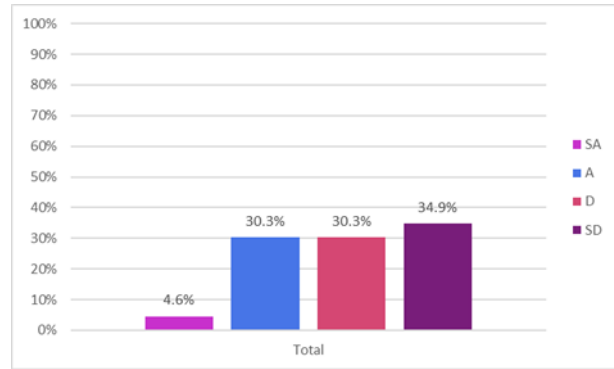


L2 survey

Figure 87: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students "to take ownership of self-directing their own language learning activities".

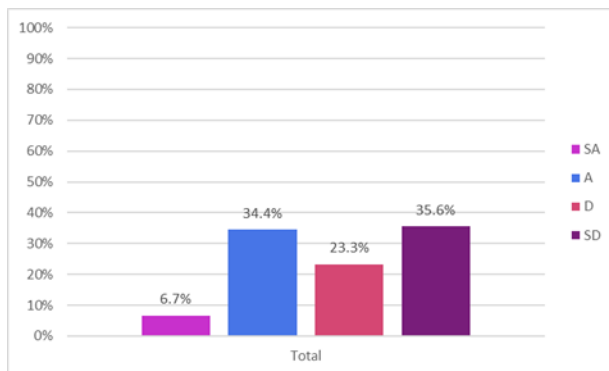


L1 survey

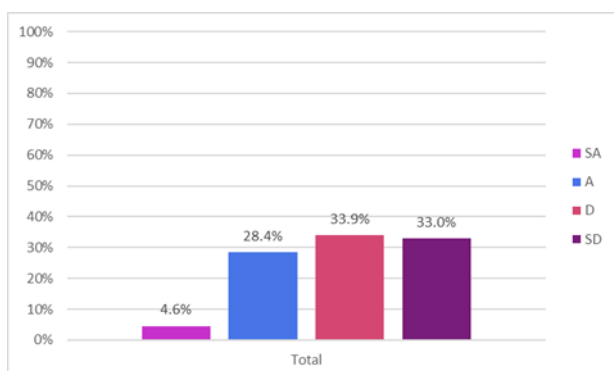


L2 survey

Figure 88: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to reflect and study elements of Irish language culture and heritage”.



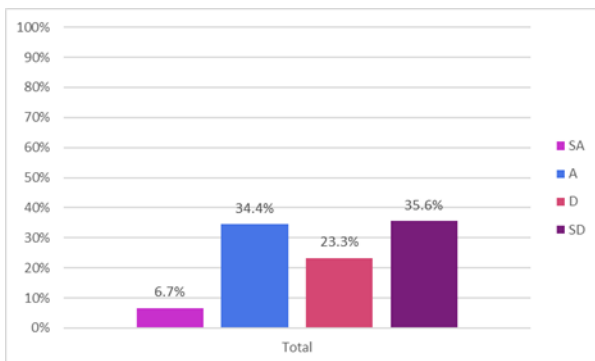
L1 survey



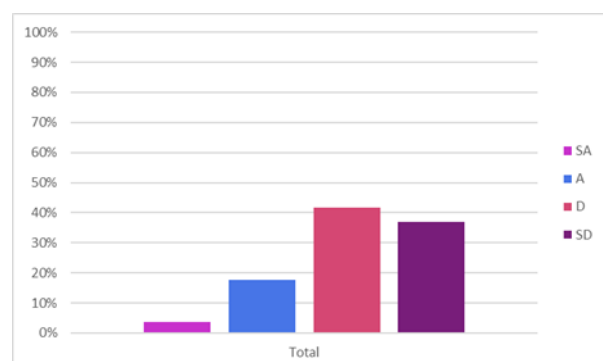
L2 survey

Figure 89: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the Awareness strand would support students “to reflect on their own culture, Irish language community culture, multilingual society, and other cultures”.

Part 6c of the surveys – Language Creativity

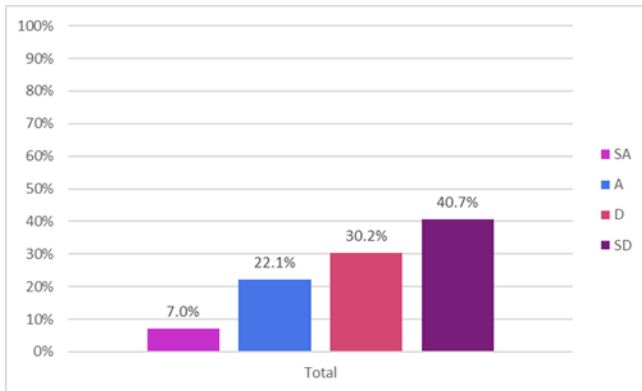


L1 survey



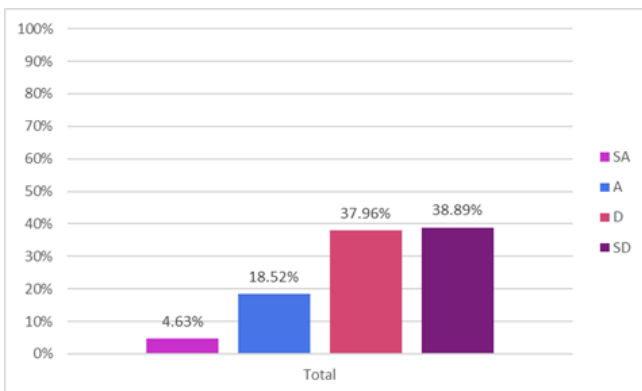
L2 survey

Figure 90: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities “to develop as [confident] critical and creative thinkers”.



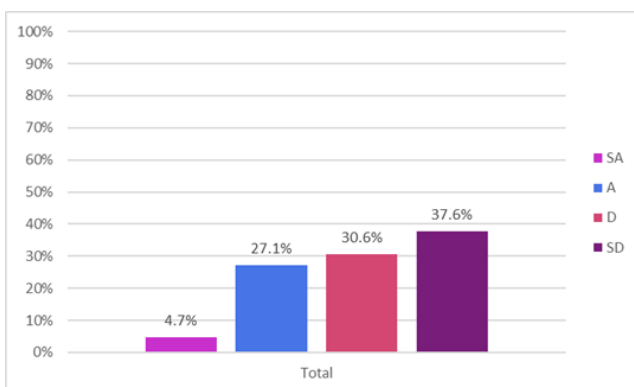
*L1 survey*

*Figure 91: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "to be innovative so that they can enjoy and progress their language acquisition".*



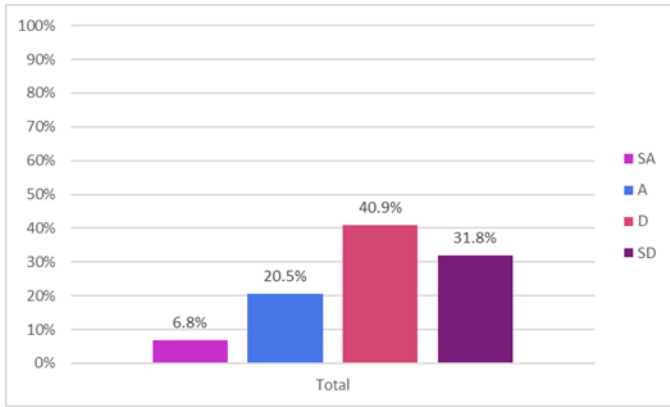
*L2 survey*

*Figure 92: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "to present and perform the Irish language in new and creative ways".*



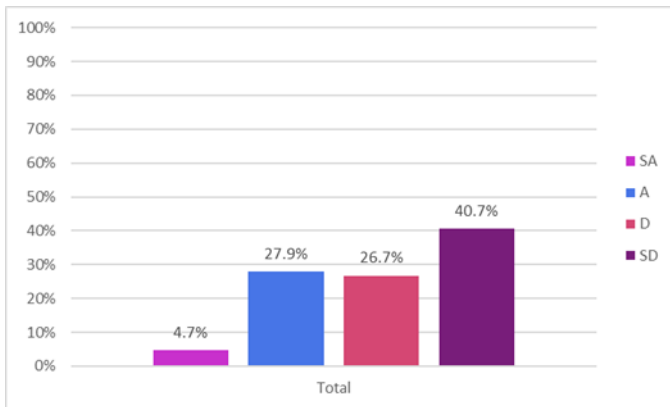
*L1 survey*

*Figure 93: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "to explore and use their choice of illustrative methods".*



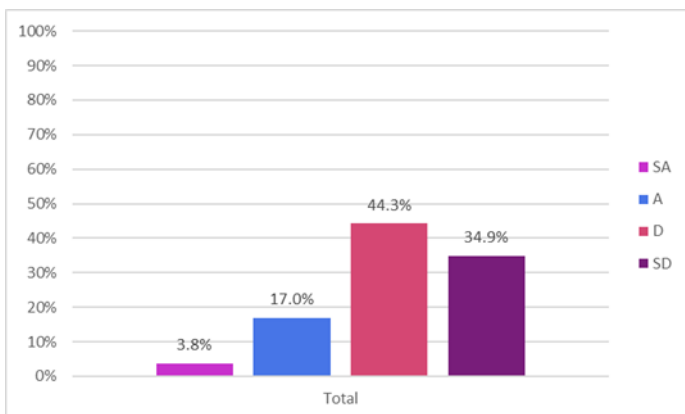
L2 survey

Figure 94: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "undertake learning opportunities creatively and imaginatively, individually or collaboratively".



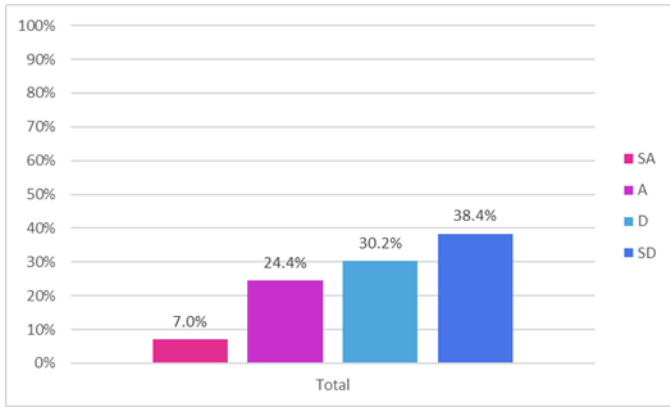
L1 survey

Figure 95: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "to take a chance and analyse various solutions to questions".



L2 survey

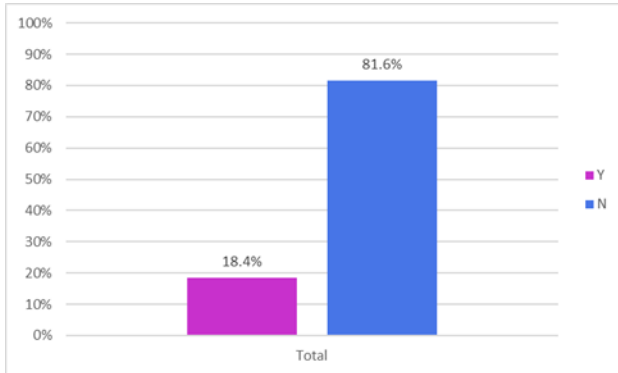
Figure 96: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "take a chance while using the language, to develop different ideas, and to carry out and revise critical analysis".



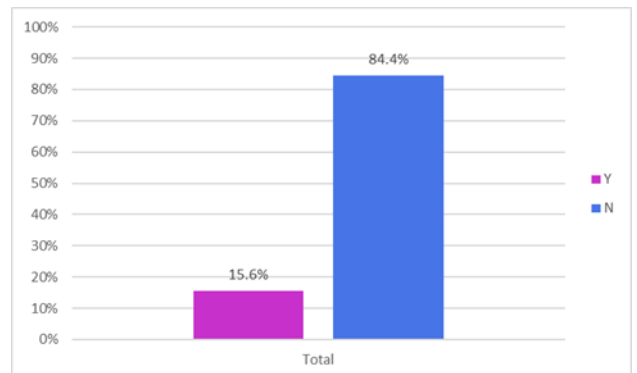
L1 survey

Figure 97: Responses to statement that the learning outcomes of the strand would support students' abilities "to use language in a creative, imaginative and playful way".

Part 7 of the surveys – Assessment



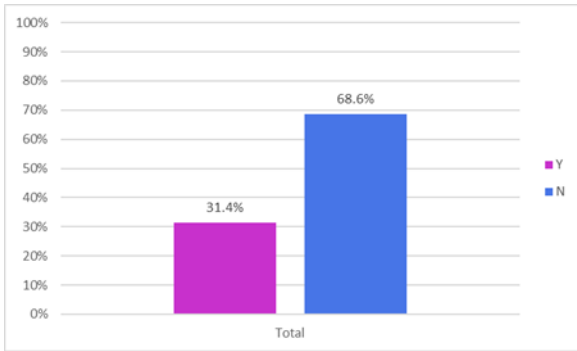
L1 survey



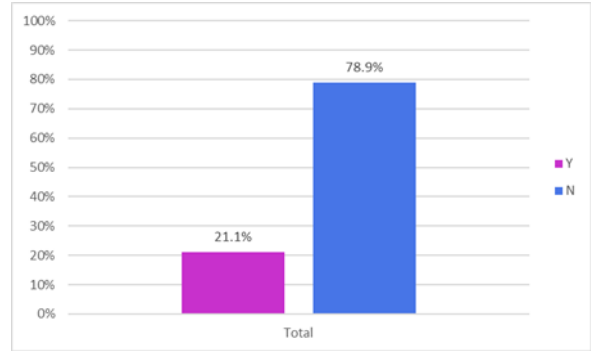
L2 survey

Figure<sup>5</sup> 98: Responses to the question "Will the assessment components as contained in this draft specification support the type of learning required by the Aim and Rationale?"

<sup>5</sup> Key: Y = "Yes", N = "No"

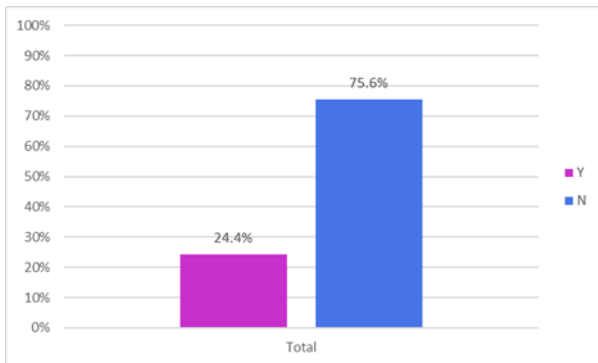


L1 survey

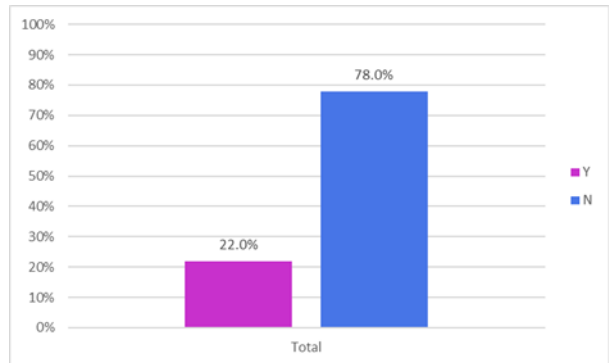


L2 survey

Figure 99: Responses to the question “Will the language portfolio support students to strengthen their self-directed learning and reflection skills while on their language acquisition journey?”

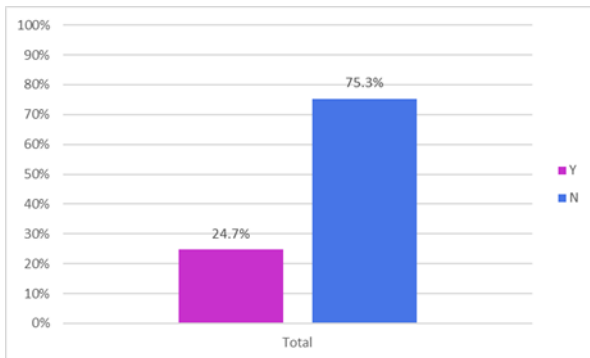


L1 survey

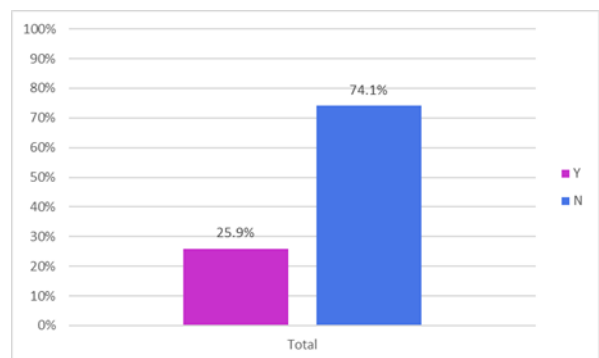


L2 survey

Figure 100: Responses to the question “Will the assessment as set out in the draft specification support the development of all of the key language skills, listening, reading, speaking, spoken interaction and writing?”



L1 survey



L2 survey

Figure 101: Responses to the question “Will this draft specification support the use of a wide and suitable range of assessment methods on a formative and summative basis?”

Response	Count	Pct
1	27	31.8%
2	12	14.1%
3	16	18.8%
4	14	16.5%
5	16	18.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

L1 survey

Response	Count	Pct
1	30	28.0%
2	15	14.0%
3	18	16.8%
4	12	11.2%
5	32	29.9%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

L2 survey

Figure 102: Response for rating the effectiveness of the oral test. The scale went from “very ineffective” (1 on the scale) to “very effective” (5 on the scale).

Response	Count	Pct
1	23	27.1%
2	12	14.1%
3	19	22.4%
4	12	14.1%
5	19	22.4%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

L1 survey

Response	Count	Pct
1	15	14.2%
2	20	18.9%
3	25	23.6%
4	22	20.8%
5	24	22.6%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

L2 survey

Figure 103: Response for rating the effectiveness of the aural test.

Response	Count	Pct
1	26	30.6%
2	17	20.0%
3	19	22.4%
4	12	14.1%
5	11	12.9%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

L1 survey

Response	Count	Pct
1	33	31.1%
2	25	23.6%
3	21	19.8%
4	19	17.9%
5	8	7.5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

L2 survey

Figure 104: Response for rating the effectiveness of the written examination.



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