



NCCA

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

Written Submission from Individuals

Consultation on
draft specification
for Senior Cycle SPHE

Contributions from individuals

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Contributor

Alan Donegan

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

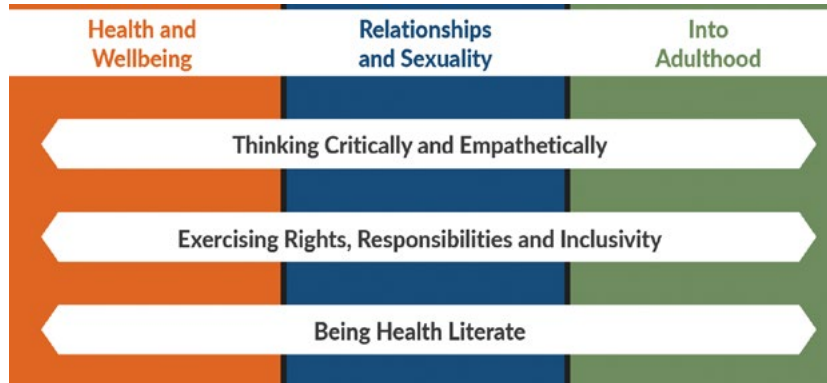
The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health

1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

n/a

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

Does this imply that there can be healthy 'online relationships'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

2.3:

Children should be responsibly educated WITHOUT agenda or ideological bias, that includes LGBT ideology. Give them the facts, they're not idiots. It's why we used to call it the facts of life, that's all they need.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

If by allyship you mean that we all must bow to the altar of Diversity and inclusivity then no, DEI is exclusive and extreme left interpretation of what is fair and right. Implement this at your peril because children are not fools and they will see straight through it.

'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

I do not think that asking children to "speak on behalf of others" is a good thing. Especially when it means they think they have a right to be offended on behalf of others. "Allyship" means I must go along with everything I ally to myself. Allyship by definition is divisive as it creates an us and them response to daily life. If you want to be truly inclusive, let children stand up for themselves and stop this lily-livered approach that creates victims and fosters weakness.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles**, responsibilities, characteristics...*

I do not believe in "gender", the whole theory is rubbish. Men and women act the way they do because we gravitate to what we are good at or better than others. To suggest that this constitutes a "social construct" is a deep misunderstand of the basics of how men and women get on and is mute testimony to the unsuitability of the NCCA's choice of NGO's and guidance on this subject.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender**, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'*

This is just nonsense. Sex is observed at birth. Gender is now used to bully people on the coattails of societal guilt for how gay and lesbians were treated. I refuse to play this silly, anti-social constructed game. Your definition is a strawman at best, and massively open to conjecture at worst.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality **diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'*

LGB are sexualities. T is gender (whatever that means) and is nothing to do with LGB.

Intersex people have nothing to do with being opposite sex attracted, irrelevant, remove. Also Clare Graham of the intersex alliance in the UK has written to numerous Trans bodies asking for them to stop using intersex people in their acronym because intersex has nothing to do with gender or sexuality.

Queer: Does anyone know or agree on what this means? I doubt it.

+: is just lazy and can mean anything so as a definition it's nonsense. Remove.

'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'

Gender ID (which explained earlier, is nonsense) has NOTHING to do with sexuality. As above, Gender doesn't exist; Sex is a fact. Remove Gender ID.

'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'

As above, gender is ideologically inspired nonsense that has no basis in fact. Some people are opposite sex attracted; some are same sex attracted. The rest of this definition is trite at best.

Social Norms...‘it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**’.

If you were to also say that it is very important to critique the moral and ethical standpoints of the social fringe too, then I would be on board with this statement. The definition is divisive and needs to be completely reworked in the context of what is good for society overall and not just a tiny, yet vocal and government funded, extremist minority.

The definition as it stands encourages teachers to attack and breakdown trust in the heterosexual family unit, it is deeply divisive and has its genesis in covetous envy. Nothing good will come of this.



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Contributor

Anna Annaloz

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their beliefs?

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



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In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

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2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships.

Does this imply that there can be healthy '**online relationships**'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

2.3:

I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I'm concerned about the leeway teachers will have. I would prefer to speak to my child about these topics when I feel the time is right.

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The 'sex is for pleasure' philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of '**sexual activity**' and '**sexuality**' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.'*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '**in all its forms**'.

*'**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.7:

This is directing students to explore pornography: how could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships.

The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the viewing of pornography** in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?

2.8

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples’ minds.

2.9:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or **‘sex in all its forms’**. This will require educating students on how to have ‘safe sex’, which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the ‘morning after’ pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

***Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *‘The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey’*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 ‘Assessment’).

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students’ rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
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3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

'LGBTQI+': an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'

– There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term *'diversity'* in the SC Specification.

'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'

-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.

***Social Norms...**'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**'*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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Contributor

Anne Harbison

I wish to submit the following comments on the draft Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum. I am both a parent and a qualified teacher. I have no objection to my being listed as a contributor and to having my submission published on your website.

Sex -v- Gender

The draft curriculum states^[1] that “students vary in their family and cultural backgrounds, languages, age, ethnic status, gender and sexual identity”. There is no mention of sex, which is remiss given that one of the main bases of distinguishing between schools in Ireland is the sex of the pupils. There is no definition of sex in the Glossary of terms. Throughout the document, references to sex – a scientific fact - are minimal but “gender” - a nebulous, fluctuating concept - is repeatedly referred to. By trying to supplant sex with “gender”, the draft curriculum undermines the teaching of the Senior Cycle Biology curriculum.

Gender Identity

The draft curriculum contains a definition of “Gender identity” as if it is a fact, ignoring the reality that it is an unevidenced and unscientific concept. Gender identity exists in the realm of fantasy, in a similar way to the concept of a “soul”. It is not a fact and should not be taught as one. Again, doing so undermines the Senior Cycle Biology curriculum.

The draft curriculum states^[2] that “Effective SPHE teaching provides accurate ... information”. This is not “accurate information”.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (“CRT”) is an illiberal idea which has emerged in recent years as a response to the historical problems which the US has with race and racism. CRT divides people into ‘oppressors’ and ‘oppressed’.

This document refers to something it describes as “Allyship skills”^[3], which pupils are supposed to be able to demonstrate that they have acquired. It says that “Allyship skills: refers to the actions, behaviours, and practices used to support, advocate and collaborate with others, in support of justice and equity. Allyship involves recognizing and **using one’s privileged status (for example, as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups**”.

According to the draft curriculum, if you are ‘white’ or ‘male’ or ‘Irish’, you are automatically “privileged”, regardless of any other factors such as historical discrimination, income, family circumstances, intelligence, etc.

The NCCA, by including this in the draft curriculum, is importing US culture wars into the Irish school curriculum, despite the fact that there has been no systemic racism in modern Ireland and, if anything, the Irish have historically, for centuries, themselves been the victims of racism.

Equity

The draft curriculum says that Irish pupils must learn “Ways to advocate for and create greater equity”^[4].

There is a very important distinction between “equality” and “equity”. Interestingly, although both words are used several times in the document, neither is included in the Glossary of terms at the end of the document.

Equality means recognizing that as human beings we all have the same value, the same rights and the same access to opportunities. It is about treating everyone in the same way.

Equity is about everybody achieving equal outcomes. It proposes that those perceived as less “privileged” be given more than those perceived as “privileged” in order to achieve equality of outcome and to compensate for the historical wrongs of systemic racism.

Equity is a licence to discriminate. It's not compatible with living in a meritocracy such as we have in Ireland.

The inclusion of the concept of "equity" in the draft curriculum directly undermines the formation of a stable identity, undermines resilience and destroys relationships, contrary to the stated aim of the course.

Compelled speech

The draft curriculum states^[5] that *"Effective SPHE teaching ... affirms diversity as an aspect of human life and human sexuality, enabling all students to be valued and included in the teaching and learning in their classrooms. **This includes using inclusive and affirming language**".*

Using *"inclusive and affirming language"* will presumably involve referring to pupils according to which "gender identity" they claim to have at any given time, and using the forms of address and pronouns those pupils demand.

But what happens to the teachers and pupils who do not adhere to the unscientific and unproven concept of "gender identity"? Are those teachers to be disciplined and other pupils penalized for not adopting a pupil's preferred pronouns? This would amount to compelled speech and has no place in the curriculum.

Finally, could I suggest that the authors of the draft curriculum investigate the difference between the words "practice", a noun, and "practise", a verb, and use them correctly?



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Contributor

Bernard Voortman

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school'*

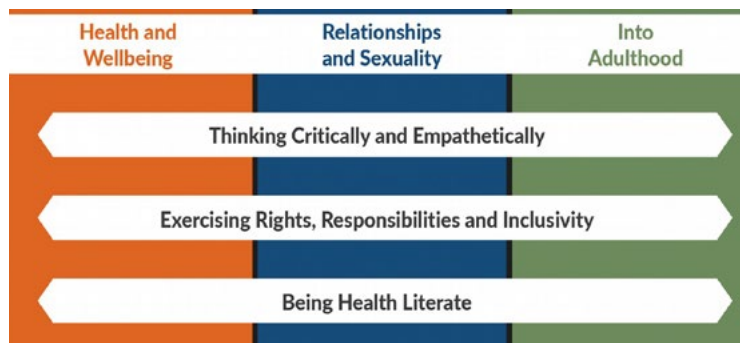
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

I agree with that aim and this is already part of the curriculum, however this seems to very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their core beliefs and religious beliefs?

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In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance

1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group as long as these do not contradict religious beliefs.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available

2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.3

I do not believe that discussing detailed sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools. It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I'm concerned about the leeway teachers will have. I would prefer to speak to my child about these topics when I feel the time is right.

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria? What about the core religious beliefs and its values in relation to this topic?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

‘Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary). The relation aspect is very important in relation to core beliefs. – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘**in all its forms**’.

‘Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.4: It is not explained what is deemed to be a harmful attitude in relation to gender. This section does not allow for a critical and potentially diverging mindset based on core religious beliefs. This section asks students to challenge this attitude and will require students to take a stand in relation to this, even if it is contrary to their religious beliefs. This attitude is non-inclusive as it will marginalize students that do not agree with the new gender ideology.

2.7:

This is directing students to explore pornography: how could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships. The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the**

viewing of pornography in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?

This section should include the harmful effects of pornography on relationships and the potential of addiction, signs of it and the effective methods of combating it.

This section will need to require the consent of parents in relation to the specific materials shown.

2.8

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse?** This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds. A clear definition of rape and all possible interpretations would need to be included in this section.

2.9:

The section “possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services” will need to include all avenues including the pro-life strategies as it is the primary aim for the curriculum to teach to think critically and be respectful of divergent beliefs, including religious beliefs.

***Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *‘The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey’*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 ‘Assessment’).

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of '*allyship skills*' under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading '*Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.*' The introduction to this section states– '*...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality*' – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.

– This is an outrageous imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students,

especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised**

definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

‘Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...’

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child’s physical biological sex.

‘Gender identity: a person’s felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth’.

– This is gender identity theory – that a person’s felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *‘a boy could become a girl, neither or both’* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false and unscientific.

‘LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people’.

– There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term ‘diversity’ in the SC Specification.

‘Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

‘Sexual Orientation: each person’s capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender’.

-This points to *‘intimate sexual relations’* with more than one person and more than one gender.

Social Norms...‘it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important’.

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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Contributor

Brad Allen

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

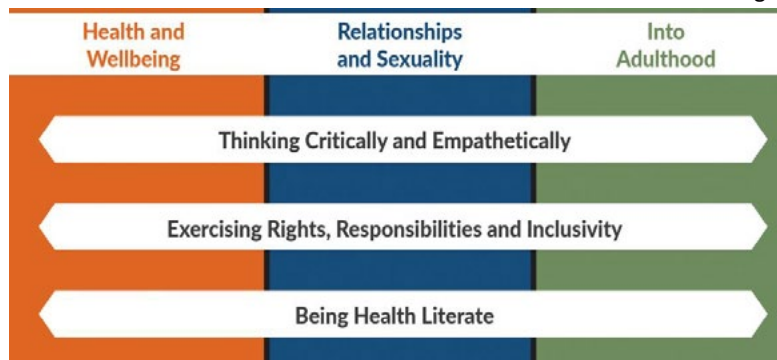
The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health

1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Strand 1.6 looks to be based on Psychological Safety. This isn't useful, promote victim mindset and re-prioritise self-agency.

Ref: <https://carolsanford.com/2017/11/why-psychological-safety-is-the-wrong-goal-for-business-and-bad-for-democracy/>

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

Does this imply that there can be healthy '**online relationships**'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

2.3:

I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The 'sex is for pleasure' philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of '**sexual activity**' and '**sexuality**' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.'*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '**in all its forms**'.

*'**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.7:

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

2.8:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or 'sex in all its forms'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

***Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *'The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey'* (Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of 'allyship skills' under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

*Allyship involves recognising and using **one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person)** to support individuals from **minority identity groups**'.*

- This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...***

- this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth**'.*

- This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'*

- There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations with**, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'*

-This points to *'intimate sexual relations'* with more than one person and more than one gender.

Social Norms...*'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**.'*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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Contributor

Brian Ó Raghallaigh

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Disagree.

Firstly, and quite crucially, the statement above does not include the full text from the draft specification document under the 'Aim' heading on page 7. The full text reads 'This course aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.' I am immediately concerned when a specification document on a subject like SPHE talks about developing 'dispositions and values'. A disposition is someone's 'inherent qualities of mind and character' according to Oxford Languages (Google's English dictionary). Therefore, I must take it that the course aim as stated above is to 'develop' students' minds and characters in a particular direction. This is clear from the 2016 and 2023 Junior Cycle Short Course documents for SPHE and their associated toolkits. Organisations like TENI and BeLonG To are given prominence in the toolkits which include BeLonG To's website and Youtube channels as resources for teachers. There is also a resource called 'Gender Identity and Gender Expression E-Resource for Second Level Schools' which was produced by the School of Education in the University of Limerick in collaboration with TENI. Section 11 of this is called 'Steps to Take in Facilitating a Young Person's Transition' and contains a video interview between Dr. Aoife Neary (Lecturer in Sociology of Education in the School of Education at UL) and Hannah Solley (Family Support and Education Officer at TENI). While discussing facilitating the social transition of a student in post-primary, Hannah Solley at 7 mins and 20 seconds, declares that it isn't necessary to tell parents of other students in the class/school that there is a student transitioning. She also states it isn't necessary to tell students in other years 'who may not even come into contact with the student'. I am sure many parents would find this kind of advice to be distressing particularly in the context of a mixed school where single sex spaces could be compromised by someone who now identifies as the opposite sex. In the same video, Hannah Solley goes on to say that if a student wants access to a toilet/changing room of the opposite sex, then that should be accommodated without question. How is that 'respectful' to the other students who may be uncomfortable sharing private spaces with a member of the opposite sex or to their parents?

Under the 'Senior Cycle' header on page 5, the document states 'Every student's identity should be celebrated, respected, and responded to throughout their time in senior cycle.' This is nebulous but if I am to extract a meaning from it where none is explicit, it is that regardless of a student's 'identity', it should be 'celebrated' – this appears to be another way of saying 'affirmed' although that word is used explicitly later in the document. School is a place where students should be

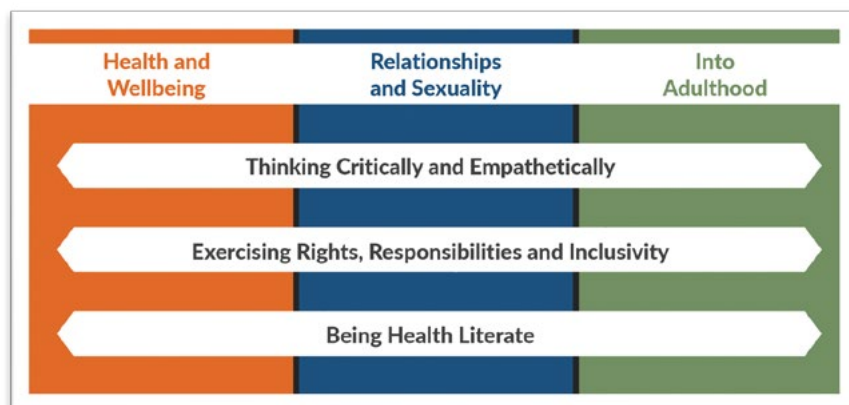
respected and accepted, I am not convinced of the need to 'celebrate' anything relating to a student's identity, particularly in a school setting. I wouldn't expect anything like that in my place of work either. Surely this creates a hierarchy of worth. How is that equitable? How does that 'nurture respectful and caring relationships?' What that is really saying is that certain things should be celebrated, i.e. sexual orientation and gender identity. I have first-hand experience of what 'celebrating' identity means in my own daughter's secondary school. There is a full week in November which coincides with BeLonG To's 'Stand Up Awareness' week dedicated to raising awareness primarily around homophobic and transphobic bullying. I have no issue with that aim in itself but how it is presented is where problems can arise and when groups like BeLonG To have direct access to the school setting, we as parents have no visibility of what our children will be taught or exposed to.

For example, there is 'LGBTQ+ Terminology' contained within BeLonG To's Stand Up Awareness Week Guide 2023 such as 'Sex Assigned At Birth' which is factually incorrect on a number of levels. It also includes 'LGBTQ+ Terminology and Language' such as on page 19 of the guide where it suggests replacing 'everyday language' like 'brothers/sisters' with 'siblings' or 'girl/boy' with 'person'? Then there is a 'Glossary of Terms' in their Stand Up Awareness week toolkit such as 'Top Surgery' which they euphemistically describe as 'gender-affirming surgeries which are carried out on the chest or breasts' - this is what is otherwise known as a double mastectomy which is life-altering and irreversible. Irreversible genital gross-sex surgeries such as a phalloplasty, in which surgeons harvest flaps of skin and tissue from the arm or leg of a female who does not identify as a girl or woman to create a surgically fabricated penis are referred to as 'bottom surgery'. On page 5 of the draft spec it says 'At a practical level, senior cycle is supported by enhanced professional development; the involvement of teachers, students, parents, school leaders and other stakeholders' - who are these other stakeholders? If I was to indulge in some conjecture based on the Junior Cycle curriculum toolkit, then should we assume it is organisations like TENI and BeLonG To? If 'gender identity' is to continue to be taught as fact (as it currently is for Junior Cycle and has been for a number of years) rather than as a belief system and the affirmation model is to be used, then that is going to undermine any attempts to properly help students with gender dysphoria.

On page 7 in the 'Rationale' section, it states 'SPHE thus contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.' Firstly, it would be interesting to know how many genders the 'all genders' refers to? An obvious omission here is the word 'sexes' and indeed the word 'sex' is conspicuous by its absence in a number of places in the document, notably the glossary. Diversity and inclusivity are mentioned a number of times throughout the document, but if we are to truly nurture this among the students then surely that means making them aware of treatments for gender dysphoria that are moving away from the affirmative care model that often leads to cross-sex hormones which have life-changing impacts on young people. Will desisters and detransitioners be 'included' in any discussions around gender dysphoria and gender confusion among young people? If not, then how can this course contribute to 'building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society'?

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

On page 10, in the 'Further characteristics of effective teaching and learning in SPHE' section, it says in one of the points 'Affirms diversity as an aspect of human life and human sexuality, enabling all students to feel valued and included in the teaching and learning in their classrooms. This involves using inclusive and affirming language.' The British Cass Review has already stated that the use of 'affirming language' in facilitating a social transition for example is not a neutral act. It calls it an 'active intervention'. Surely evidence-based approaches should be prioritised above well-meaning attempts at inclusion that ultimately do more harm than good to the individual student and any other gender-questioning peers. Research for statsforgender.org has shown that gender dysphoria recedes in 80% of cases if not actively affirmed. Students must be protected from accusations of bigotry and transphobia if they, for instance, draw attention to the fact that individuals who held a firm conviction that they had a trans or non-binary identity and took social or medical/surgical steps to 'affirm' that conviction stopped believing they had a trans or non-binary identity.

In relation to 1.7 above, it states 'recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed'. So, if a gender-questioning student was expressing anxiety, where would they be directed to? At the moment, based on existing toolkit resources, would it be TENI or BeLonG To solely? Or will non-affirmative options be considered and discussed with that student or with the wider class group?

In relation to 1.1 above (which comes after 1.9 so I assume is 1.10), it says 'discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.' Will one of these 'social situations' include a male student deciding that they now want access to female toilets or changing rooms in a mixed sex school? How might that be discussed and if a female student did raise a concern, would her concerns be disregarded as transphobic or not 'inclusive' enough?

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control

2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Why is this strand the only one with a specific 'Note' at the beginning? The Note states 'Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.' This instruction force-teams lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's experiences with those of the trans, queer, and + people. It suggests that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is an identity. Homosexuality and bisexuality are not identities. They are sexual orientations based on same-sex attraction. The NCCA must clarify if it uses sex and gender as synonyms or if the NCCA considers these words mean different things? Trans, queer, and + are not defined in the glossary. If this strand is to be taught with integrity it is essential that the draft specification define all the following terms:

- Sex
- Homosexuality
- Heterosexuality
- Gender
- Transgender
- Queer
- +

The current glossary defines 'gender.' It does not define sex, homosexuality, heterosexuality, transgender, queer, or +. Definitions of all terms listed will enable students and teachers to see the clear difference between sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) and subjective identities (trans, queer, and +) and to confidently address those differences. In centring LGBTQ+ the NCCA has elevated this group above all others. There is no instruction to fully integrate and reflect the disabled, economically disadvantaged, different ethnic groups, heterosexuals, or people of faith. In directing teachers to integrate the ill-defined LGBTQ+ group in all lessons, teachers are being coerced into teaching gender ideology and identity politics. Coercing teachers will inevitably lead to the indoctrination of students.

In 2.2 above it states, 'reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour'. Sexual orientation is not based on identity, it is based on sex and this should be made very clear. Gay and lesbian students are attracted to the same sex not the same gender. The glossary states that gender is 'socially constructed' and pointedly fails to define sex. This is a deliberate attempt to make students accept that sexual attraction is not based on our physical bodies but on what we 'think' about our physical bodies. This gives licence to heterosexual males to declare that they are girls/women and to assert that they are lesbians and coerce nascent lesbians into believing they are 'bigoted' for not accepting males who identify as lesbians into their dating pool. It gives licence to heterosexual females to assert that they are gay boys/men. This places those females in danger by convincing them that their perception of themselves as male is shared by society and encouraging them to enter male spaces where they may be targeted based on their female sex regardless of how they see themselves.

In 2.9 above, it states 'explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.' What are the 'possible responses' to an unplanned pregnancy? This is too vague and should be explicit. I assume that one will be abortion. What will students be told about abortion? That detail should be included in a draft specification.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

In relation to in 3.6 - On page 18 in Appendix 2 'Glossary of terms used in Learning Outcomes' it states for 'Allyship Skills', 'Allyship skills: refers to the actions, behaviours, and practices used to support, advocate and collaborate with others, in support of justice and equity. Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups.' Based on this definition, 'allyship' appears to be highly ideological and again something that doesn't belong in the school setting. 'Allyship' in this context is presenting dichotomy as the norm. What it appears to be saying is that you are either an 'ally' or an 'enemy'. It leaves no room for individual responsibility but instead compels the individual to adhere to a particular position regardless of their own convictions or beliefs. This is extremely worrying as is the example of being 'white' or 'male' or 'Irish' equalling being 'privileged'. 'Privileged' in what sense? Allyship does not promote tolerance; quite the opposite, it encourages a profound intolerance of dissident voices. The 'best' practitioners of allyship will be those who believe it is their ethical duty to bully and harass those who do not share 'approved' views. Allyship replaces concepts of tolerance with the endless search for opportunities to be personally offended or offended on behalf of someone else.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

I read the report on the 2022 Junior Cycle Consultation process which described perspectives that were critical of the curriculum content as 'petition style communications'. This appeared to be a thinly veiled delegitimising of valid concerns. I do not expect to see that same sort of dismissal in any report post this consultation process. For my part I have borrowed some detail from the submission of The Countess. In doing so, I am not attempting to scupper a public consultation process but rather show how 'public consultation' truly works.



NCCA

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

Contributor

Darina Allen and
Karen O'Donohoe

Darina Allen and Karen O'Donohoe

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Agreed - the proposed curriculum will provide the foundation for young people to achieve their full potential as active national and global citizens regardless of their academic abilities or achievements in core subjects and subsequent career/study/life paths.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their **physical, social, emotional and mental health** and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, **skills, techniques** and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1. 1	research the determinants of good health
1. 2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1. 3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1. 4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self

1. 5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1. 6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1. 7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1. 8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1. 9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1. 1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

- A. The learning outcomes provide clarity on expectations for learning**
- B. The learning outcomes listed above are relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today**
- C. Missing from this strand:**
 - a. Food Literacy as a primary determinant of Good Health (physical, mental and social - but also financial as young people learn how to budget for and value good food, avoid waste and cook nutritious food that is significantly more affordable than 'cheap' processed/imported food)**
 - b. Senior Cycle SPHE needs to include food education so that students can increase their knowledge and abilities in food skills - growing, cooking and eating healthy, nutritious and sustainably produced food - this is a foundation skill set that will ensure they can feed themselves, their families, friends and communities - skills that are sorely lacking in young people today**
 - c. Food education is an essential part of living - teaching food literacy and food empathy (food knowledge, skills, equity, sustainability and respect for food) as part of health promotion and self care to students will give them the knowledge and competencies needed to ensure they can nourish themselves to maintain good health. This in turn will support their ability to study in school and at home, socialise, work and achieve short, medium and long term goals. Food Skills are a cornerstone of self care.**
 - d. Food education promotes healthy eating patterns - a lack of which is linked to eating disorders and food addictions, chronic diseases (Ireland has one of the highest levels of obesity in Europe, with 60% of adults and over one in five children and young people living with overweight and**

obesity), absenteeism and presenteeism - and will help young people bridge the intention - action gap, knowing that one should eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily is not the same as having the skills and confidence to grow, source, prepare, eat, store and share the most nutrient dense, delicious, sustainably produced 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily. SPHE provides opportunities for students to bring their lived experiences into the classroom and connect their lives to learning - and vice versa. Including Food Education in the curriculum will provide them with knowledge, attitudes and behaviours around food that they can apply outside of the classroom to achieve lasting and transformative impact.

- e. **Eco-anxiety is an emerging condition - we need to develop emotional resilience in young people who are growing up in a world devastated by the climate crisis with increasing food insecurity - food education is a very simple but effective way to give young people a sense of autonomy and ability to take action - critical to managing eco-anxiety. If we create a dynamic and solution-orientated learning experience based on relatable subject matter such as food - something we have at least three times a day - our young people will feel empowered to affect change.**
- f. **Apply the socio-cultural lens to food and examine the social norms around food production and consumption - the abnormal has become normal - over reliance on processed food and drinks, unconscious consumerism, skewed definitions of food security, the real cost of cheap food etc. - there is an urgent need to engage young people in these issues - to create conscious consumers who can think and behave independently and not believe every You Tuber or Instagram Influencer's paid post promoting a food or drink that is harmful to people and planet.**

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Not our area of expertise so no comment.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
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3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
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3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

A) and B) yes

C) Food Knowledge and Skills needs to be included in SPHE:

- b. **Food education is an essential part of living, particularly for independent living - teaching food skills to students gives them the knowledge, confidence and competencies that will ensure they can feed themselves on their own terms**
- c. **Food skills are life long transferable skills with which the next generation can make food choices that nourish themselves, their communities and our planet**
- d. **Food education connects students to food systems that have a direct impact on their current and future selves - including it in SPHE will provide opportunities for them to understand, investigate and find innovative solutions to the intertwined crises of public health, climate change and social inequality - crises they will have to deal with as adults and as local and global citizens.**
- e. **A key element of SPHE is the celebration of joyful experiences and milestones which should include basic but de-prioritised achievements such as producing and sharing good food for ones self, family, friends and community - look at the long term impact not doing this has had to date and how little we value and support our farmers and food producers - generations of which go through the Irish school system.**
- f. **Food education in the senior cycle will inspire a new generation of food literate professionals - all of whom are critically needed to create a sustainable global food system.**

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

We are failing the next generation by allowing them to leave school and embark on the next chapter of their young adult lives without the basic skills needed to feed themselves properly. We focus on academic achievements, celebrate sporting wins, prioritise STEAM and digital skills, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship all without ensuring that these same young people can make themselves a healthy, nutritious, affordable and sustainable breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Without these skills our young people are denied the opportunity, we consider it a right, to make the very best food choices they possibly can. It is time, in fact it is high time, to do better.

We believe the Irish education system has a responsibility to provide a holistic education that fully understands and appreciates that our young people bring their whole selves to school and, in time to work, and it is their whole selves we must nurture and nourish - with a strong foundation of basic life skills and up. We want to be part of a curriculum reform that will ensure the knowledge and skills of Ireland's young people is relevant for their current and future selves. We can learn from other countries and apply their programmes to our system - let's explore the [Finnish School system](#), which is broadly recognised as the gold standard for education, where no child, boy or girl, can leave school unless they can cook.

Since 1983 the Ballymaloe Cookery School has welcomed students from all over the world to complete a wide range of courses - from the 12 Week Certificate Course to our half day Introduction to Fermentation course. Our students range from 18-65 years and arrive with varying levels of knowledge, skill and appreciation of good food. What they all share, and this is consistent, is that 'AH HAH!' moment - that moment when, theory meets practice, education becomes experience and suddenly the realisation of what can be done with and through good food dawns and a whole world of possibilities opens up. This is what we want for Ireland's young people. We want them to have the opportunity to have their 'AH HAH' moment and realise that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to have real autonomy over the food that they eat. - for themselves, their families, friends and communities.

Ballymaloe Cookery School has a track record of working with global and national partners such as Slow Food, Edible Schoolyards, Sustainable Food Trust, Food on the Edge, GIY and Farming with Nature. We also work hyper locally with 9 primary schools and have provided funding and resources to create edible school gardens to connect school communities with homegrown, seasonal food and the results have been incredible. We know that addressing the broken food system needs a top down and a bottom up approach with people of all ages required to change attitudes and behaviours around food. Ensuring a consistent food education through primary and secondary school is one way of keeping new generations actively involved in food matters whilst giving them basic food skills to support them from childhood to adulthood. Ensuring food skills are taught in all school will address the gender gap in food skills that is a direct result of the prevalence of single sex schools and a bias away from domestic science in boy's schools in Ireland - this is an opportunity to somewhat address this highly inequitable aspect of personal education in a systemic manner.

We will gladly work with the Dept of Education to create educational resources and will draw on our extensive network of subject matter experts to help build out this new, forward thinking yet back to basics SPHE subject.

There is an incredible range of jobs and careers in food all over the world for our young people to consider post secondary school - from apprenticeships in kitchens to academic positions in Universities, food production to food policy, food journalism to food economics, agriculture to tourism and more. Including Food Skills in the Senior Cycle SPHE not only gives our 5th and 6th students critical life skills, it also positions food as an exciting subject around which they can build a career both here in Ireland and abroad.

Being food literate means you have the freedom to choose the very best food that you can at any given time to eat and therefore have the freedom to actively look after your physical and mental health. Being food illiterate means you are dependent on an increasingly vulnerable global food system that puts profit before people and planet.

Generations of food illiterate young people can not continue to be a legacy of the Irish Education system. It is time for radical change.



NCCA

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

Contributor

David Maloney

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

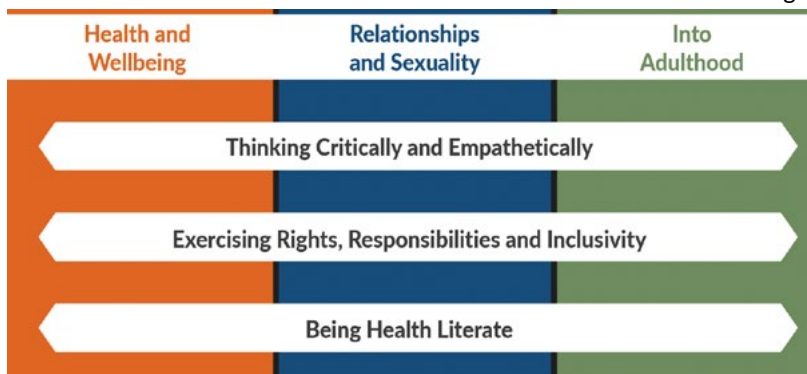
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Whilst the Aim is admirable, I do not believe teachers nor a school curriculum, as a whole, have the skills to teach this. You cannot study and get certified on how to teach Empathy, It's a moving thing depending on the situation one is presented with. For example, if one's daughter was kidnapped, raped, paraded around streets to cheering mobs and then beheaded, Would a teacher have skills on how to discuss this situation with students? How would they teach them the empathy that the parents of that daughter should have towards the girls attackers and what would be the aim of the lesson. I don't believe Teachers nor an educational curriculum, as whole, have the skills nor experience on teaching Empathy. It's a parental Role only. Resilience is a similar situation. Resilience is built, not thought in classroom. Resilience is built by defeating adversity. It's a parental role. Healthy has 2 prongs mainly, Physically and mentally. The state has utterly failed our children over the last 2 decades. Many many young people are now obese and overweight. I have no doubt schools will embrace terms like 'Plus Size' as an example in replacement for the word FAT. This is effectively more lying to children. If a child is fat the best thing to tell them if you want to help them, is the truth. The truth is sometimes difficult to listen to, but it's also provides the best outcome and teaches the child resilience. I do not trust the state to teach children that. So overall whilst the Aim in the wording above gives the appearance of a good aim, I don't believe the state nor teachers have the capacity to deliver and thus will end up doing more damage to children as has the SPHE shown thus far. We have students now in college and beyond, despite having SPHE in the curriculum through their school education, who still believe that there is such a thing as been born in the wrong body. This is a cruel doctrine to teach children. There is no such thing, the concept of something being Born incorrectly doesn't have a logical explanation or thinking pattern. The children that bought this rubbish and embraced transitioning with puberty blockers and even further to mutilating their bodies are now life long medical patients, most who won't be able to have children of their own. The struggle to know what toilet they even want to use. In Summary SPHE as a subject is dangerous and incapable of benefiting children as a whole.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to

2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships. I don't believe Schools should be promoting the concept of 'Healthy online relationships. When the children are adults they have the freedom, and hopefully awareness, to the potential benefits of using online technology to help them find suitable partners if they require. However If schools begin teaching children about so called "healthy online relationships" whilst they are still children then it will give the student a false sense of security and also give the impression that they are now skilled in online relationship meetups. This is completely wrong especially when schools should be promoting the ideal way to meet partners is real time face to face relationships. Due to the high probability that people lie whilst online as opposed to face to face, Schools should be hardening their stance that online relationships for all minors is a big no no under all circumstances.

2.2

Im concerned with schools or teachers mentioning anything around "Identity", Most people spend decades forming their "identity". Considering the use of the education system using the dangerous Lobbyisys called BelongTo and Teni thus far , Even Mentioning Identity is now a No No for me . When these Groups don't even know the difference between a boy and girl they are causing terrible confusing when discussing identity

2.3:

Discussing sexual activity is Inappropriate for students in Secondary Schools?

I am way more experienced with raising my own child and Sexual activity is not a classroom course. Understanding Biology differences between Male and Female, the reproduction system of each and keeping to the facts of humans and life is all that should be thought. Sexual activity is much more complex and not appropriate to be discussed with children by teachers.

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*‘**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’*

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘**in all its forms**’.

*‘**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.7:

Our children’s education systems should not be exploring pornography as part of the Curriculum. It implies that there is acceptance to pornography and it cannot be explored unless it is watched. ‘Jihad’ exists in the world but I’m sure the SPHE doesn’t propose that it is explored and maybe behead a few people to see what’s like and take some learnings from it. The education on pornography should be crystal clear. It’s bad, it teaches bad habits and bad things and keep away from it. Like most other things, if an adult wants to explore then the freedom to do so is open to them when they are adults but as children they must keep away.

2.8

On account of many teachers , particularly female ones, being radicalised by feminism and many of them thought to show disdain towards men as a whole, the risk is too high that many teachers will not teach or have the capability to teach the correct material when it comes to rape and sexual assault. I fear they will discourage boys in particular from engaging in healthy heterosexual relationships and will radicalise girls behave in a very anti-boy manner. No teachings in this area should be thought by teachers

2.9:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or ‘sex in all its forms’. This will require educating students on how to have ‘safe sex’, which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the ‘morning after’ pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

***Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *‘The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey’*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 ‘Assessment’).

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students’ rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, the right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states- *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...

This is rubbish. There are 2 x Genders. Male and Female. If an entire education system cannot work that out, Then that is the evidence that SPHE is out of its debt .

'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'

This is more Rubbish. There is no such thing as a wrong body. All children are beautiful and should be thought as much

*'LGBTQI+': an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'*

- There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'**Sexual Orientation**: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations with**, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'*

-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.

Social Norms**...'*it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important*

Reality trumps Feelings, across all aspects of life. If SPHE cannot teach that this is more evidence that the entire subject needs to be scrapped



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National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Contributor

David McWilliams

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: submission for review of the draft SPHE specification

You will no doubt have thousands of submissions so I want to make this very easy for the data collectors. Please add my submission to the list of parents who thinks SPHE should be banned.

I do not trust the specification or the questionnaire designed for parents to read. They simply list lots of fluffy aims while ignoring the three elephants in the room.

Elephant 1 Gender Identity

Senior cycle SPHE is a continuation from junior cycle and primary school. The HSE book “busy bodies” teaches children as if it were fact, (aimed at children who still believe in Santa Claus) that every person has a gender identity that can be male, female, neither or both. I haven’t been able to locate mine but then again I didn’t benefit from SPHE training. The senior specification makes no attempt to correct this erroneous learning outcome.

Elephant 2 Critical race theory and justice warrior training.

This specification states the aim that students entering into adulthood will become active members of society and facilitate change. What changes can we expect if the specification describes our children as privileged on the basis of their white skin colour, male gender and Irish nationality? This type of stereotyping is not a good start.

The specification also repeatedly uses the term “social justice”. This can be interpreted to mean “*a fair balance in the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society where individual’s rights are recognized and protected.*” This is straight out of a Marxist text book, and sounds lovely until you look at Russia and China.

Elephant 3 Consultation with parents.

The NCCA will say that parents were widely consulted. However, how many parents look up the NCCA website or facebook page? The previous report on the junior cycle referred to lots of parental submissions having a similar message as if that meant the messages were held with any less conviction. It also referred to a “*sub-set*” of parents as if they were a group of heretics that deserved a special category for their lack of obedience.

This specification uses terms like critical pedagogies. In what way is this document intended to get parents involved?

I have two recommendations to make.

1. Scrap SPHE immediately in order to focus on Mathematics, the Sciences, and Computer Programming, all of which are required by the Irish economy. (some Irish schools still don’t offer computer programming in 2023)

Schools should still teach children that broccoli is good, vaping is bad, and that it is ok to be gay. Feel free to use that sentence and free up six years of a child's life, unless the unwritten aim is to create an unthinking social justice warrior whose impact on society will be to extend Ireland's intended censorship laws and to continue letting men become female girl guide leaders because they have a form.

2. The "opt out" allowed for parents, should be extended to students who have the developed capacity to know when they are being lied to. This will develop their confidence. The time they save will allow them to focus on subjects that impact their leaving certificate results.

The skill of critical thought and the confidence to challenge an authority figure could be developed each time a child realises an adult is hiding the truth through the fear of losing their job. An awareness of the harm and fear of "cancellation" created by censorship and bullying at a corporate level, is an excellent learning outcome to be included in a subject's specification. That way a student could facilitate change in politics, and be equipped to challenge social norms so that this never happens again.

Please publish this letter and record my submission as an outright objection to this specification. In future please consult all parents with a campaign to raise awareness, in order that parent's wishes might actually determine what happens to SPHE and wake Ireland from this nightmare.



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Contributor

Declan Shaw

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to '*empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.*'

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

I must first make the point that as an Irish parent I have never been consulted about either the Junior or senior SPHE specifications and feel it is disingenuous to say that parents were actively consulted or their opinions canvassed by school's or TD's.

I think that the aim of empowering students is lost when the subject matter of gender and sex is not honest. If a child has to take part in a lie, and the child feels forced to express a view simply because it is being so actively pushed by the school in terms of flags, posters, content of text books etc, then the child has no power left at all in terms of forming their own views and developing the skills of critical thought.

The moment you lie to a child and state something as fact when there is no proof, you are guilty of indoctrination, not empowerment. This specification is dishonest. The only empowerment available with this specification is empowerment from joining a cult and becoming an activist. This is the polar opposite of inclusion and diversification. What discussion of views can we have when one of the teaching resources scores a school on how many months of the year it flies a transgender flag?

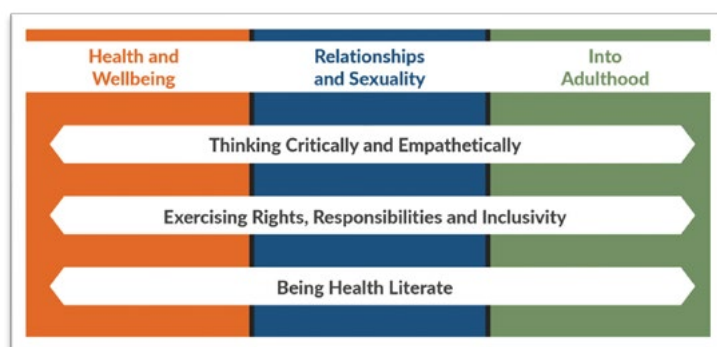
How do you think a child felt in Germany when all of their friends were joining Hitler youth and the schools were encouraging it by placing Nazi symbols in schools?

A cult of following a belief system that makes no sense has been embedded in this specification and it needs to be called out while free speech still exists.

Teaching this to school children, while describing alternative views as, "bullying", is sinister. This is lunacy!

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11-15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

A massive warning is needed to protect the mental and physical well being of children in terms of joining a gender cult. The teaching of gender ideology is proven to have links with castration, mastectomies, hysterectomies, and life-long use of hormones. This specification hides these dangers while validating behaviour and language that might increase the danger. This specification is unsafe!

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Students should be able to demonstrate alternative views on the media depiction of gender discussions, for example a person with traditional views, such as a view that biological fact is important, is often vilified and labelled a bigot.

Facts such as, the fact humans can't change their sex, and how these expressions are negatively addressed in the media should be placed in the specification alongside any learning outcome on how the media might react negatively towards transgender people.

Children should be empowered and have the confidence to criticise and discuss the media point of view, for example when a press story describes a sexual criminal as "her" when it is obvious to everyone that doesn't conform to a cult delusion, that the perpetrator is a man.

Not everyone agrees that compelled pronoun usage around someone's inner belief or fetish, is something that should be encouraged in front of children. Sometimes speaking the truth encourages openness and provides confidence for students, particularly for girls, to express themselves honestly when they are feeling threatened and vulnerable.

Children should be able to identify when the mainstream media is trying to influence and affect our grasp on reality, and to discuss what motives might be behind this, including, why the government thought it was ok to let a man stay in a Women's prison in Limerick until Nicola Sturgeon lost her career over such utter nonsense which alerted the public worldwide.

Why for instance was he not moved out of the prison in the first place as a protection and dignity right of women? Why was it the Scottish media and not the Irish media that forced the Irish government to behave? What does that say about the state of Irish media? and how can the next generation of Irish children help?

Of course the blatant bias demonstrated in this specification and the resources to go with it demonstrates an aim to consolidate gender cult gains that have already been made in Ireland. Critical thinking would not be a part of this plan, hence the one sided specification.

The specification should encourage debate that is free and not constrained by the redefining words such as "bullying" "diversity" and inclusion. Inclusion means everyone, even those that think in terms of facts

These are questions that students should be able to formulate. Unfortunately this specification and the pervasive school culture of flying flags in support of a single view, remove this learning opportunity.

Be careful what you wish for and unless you want society to implode. I suggest this specification be scrapped in favour of a reading list of George Orwell books.

Only once Irish society has re-learned how to facilitate multiple views, should this subject ever be re-visited.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and workplace rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

This specification should be scrapped and re-written with a factual only basis. Until then, all children should be withdrawn from this subject as a safeguarding issue, and all schools should protest the government on the basis that only a totalitarian state could enforce untruths onto the next generation and expect teachers to simply conform when we all know it to not be truthful.

The only reason this specification should remain in it's current form is if there was an agreement that the democratic skills of critical thinking were no longer needed in Irish society and if there was a desire for George Orwell's dystopian horror to become real. Irish people can facilitate this through ignorance and weakness or choose to object by waking up. An awake parent will always protect their children and the NCCA should be ashamed of themselves for taking advantage of those that are still asleep.

I say STOP this cruelty and let children develop their own minds before it is too late. I feel embarrassed to be part of a society made up of intelligent people, that has allowed this to get this far, but the onus still remains in the NCCA to act with honesty if they have any regard for child safety.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Stop it!



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National Council for
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Contributor

Edel Cullen

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here: Yes I agree very much with the above statement but it should be more than that According to international research, the single biggest factor affecting your wellbeing or happiness in life is the quality of your relationships. It is important that students are informed and can figure out what are the best life choices to make. What is life about? What does it mean to be human? How do I find happiness? we can all recognise the longing for love and belonging. What is love? These questions are very important for young people to ask themselves.

I believe it is also important that the aim of any curriculum should be to teach students that every person is equipped with their own inner compass we call your conscience – this is your capacity to see the difference between right and wrong choices, to make those choices, and to tell when you've gone off course.

I think an important aim of any curriculum should be to help young people to become the best version of themselves, for building good relationships and for making good decisions with regard to sex.

Any good curriculum should encourage young people to have high standards for sex, not to settle for anything that is not respectful to you or others, or that doesn't fulfil the natural longings of your heart for faithful love and deep connection.

The curriculum should reflect the core values and ethos of the school which in this country are mainly Christian they should present the rich Christian/Catholic vision for sex and marriage, along with the liberal-secular perspective prevalent in society today so that you can be fully informed and use your critical thinking skills to weigh up the reasoning behind the different outlooks.

The Church teaches that every single person is made in the image of God, loved by God and entitled to dignity and respect as unique human beings. It teaches too that sex and marriage go together. They are about union – loving another person so much that you are united with them, heart and mind, body and soul. Sex is an expression of the love that exists between a man and a woman who are committed to each other in the sacrament of marriage. For sex to be authentic there must be faithfulness, fruitfulness and it should be fulfilling and forever and promote lifelong wellbeing and happiness.

The call to love is written on and in the human body. There's an important sense in which when we look at the male and female body in isolation they are incomplete: as a species, it takes male and female working together to bring new life into the world. This is a sign of the love that God has for humanity, a love of joy and self-giving.

Sex can't be separated from the meaning it has, written into the human body, male and female. Although every human being is called to live in love, not everyone is called to an active sexual life as an expression of love. In our culture today, sex is often seen as a right that people have, but the Christian perspective is different – sex is a gift to be enjoyed within marriage for those who are called to marriage, helping to bring new life into the world and to bind couples together in faithful love as they raise their children and eventually even grandchildren, nurturing their relationship and serving their community.

Pope Francis said the following

“After the love that unites us to God, conjugal love is the “greatest form of friendship” It is a union possessing all the traits of a good friendship: concern for the good of the other, reciprocity, intimacy, warmth, stability and the resemblance born of a shared life. Marriage joins to all this an indissoluble exclusivity expressed in the stable commitment to share and shape together the whole of life. Let us be honest and acknowledge the signs that this is the case. Lovers do not see their relationship as merely temporary. Those who marry do not expect their excitement to fade. Those who witness the celebration of a loving union, however fragile, trust that it will pass the test of time. Children not only want their parents to love one another, but also to be faithful and remain together.” The aim of any good curriculum should teach young people virtues: life skills for a loving relationship. The skills they need to live an excellent life are called virtues, and like any sporting or musical skills, they require consistent practice to grow your proficiency, so they become habits. There are two elements to the virtues – the human effort we put in to develop them, and the extra help that God gives us to make the right choices. This is called grace. No one is perfect and makes the right choices all the time; we all fall short of this. But we can keep trying and keep aiming for excellence in our choices, and the grace of God gives us the ability to make great progress with this. Put simply, grace means shared divine life. When we’re genuinely open to God’s love and wisdom it gives us power to live under His truth.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour

1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

It is very important to help students explore the physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health.

I agree helping young people to have a healthy life balance, and help them have good attitudes to alcohol and drugs social media, positivity is an excellent thing to teach them, I think it is important to show them that you they are loved and of infinite value and unique in this world, no matter what has happened to you or what you have done, there is always a second chance, authenticity is lacking in our world today, fake information, ideological agendas, confusing young people, stressing them out , addiction is a real problem

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

I believe that schools should teach students the dangers of the online industry and educate parents on how to protect children from extreme content and regulate the online industry strongly.

There are no such thing as healthy online relationships especially for inexperienced vulnerable young people. We as adults, in the internet industry, parent's teachers and government need to take responsibility and protect young vulnerable, inexperienced young people from dangerous online content and as Kate Winslet said recently at the Bafta television awards "criminalise harmful content and in fact eradicate it completely," she said "families feel they are held hostage by the perils of the online world."

as Kate Winslet said at the recent awards "We want our children back, We need help from government in "raising teens in a world where screen addiction is a very real problem"

Prof. Mary Aiken Cyber Psychologist, academic advisor to Europol European Cybercrime Centre and an Associate Professor in the dept. of Law and Criminology at The University of East London, said that young vulnerable people should not be exposed to extreme content in the first place. She said you cannot unseen an image and exposure to an extreme image causes vicarious trauma and that preventing them from seeing the content in the first place is the key. She said there are a cohort on line of harm deniers that believe in generating resilience to extreme content. They don't want the net to be regulated, even with all the talk about safety and awareness raising. She said they (the harm deniers) say in order to develop resilience in a young child to have to expose them to extreme pornographic content, there is not a parent in this country who wants to educate their child by exposing them to extreme content and teaching them after the fact, and asking them "are you upset by this?"

"Something seen cannot be unseen, there is no command delete file for the brain. She said parents should make sure their children are not exposed to this extreme content

2.3:

I do not think it is appropriate discussing sexual activity with minors. These kind of conversations are for adults in adult relationships, Leave the children alone and stop sexualising them at an early stage. There is an over emphasis on sexual activity for pleasure, whereas the whole emotional aspect to sex is forgotten. What is the purpose of sex: bonding and babies. We need to teach young people about authentic love commitment, faithfulness, self sacrifice. is there any fall out from casual uncommitted sex? Is it sex with no strings attached? What if they get a STDs? What if she gets pregnant? Are they taught about the dangers and regret in abortion and the consequences? The definition of Consent according to who, what authority have they to define consent? This week I give consent because I think He likes/loves me but then He's off with my friend next week and I am left devastated. What about the consequences of sex, is it just pleasure, is there regret? feelings of being used and abused.? When we talk about consent I think it is disingenuous to leave out the emotional consequences and fall out from casual sex.

What was wrong with the traditional lifelong vision of sex without marriage? Are young people happy having casual sex? According to stats, there are higher levels of depression, mental health problems, suicidal ideation then ever before? Let's look at the science behind sexual intercourse, Hormones!! The hormone Oxytocin is released during sex, it is often called the bonding hormone (it is also released during breastfeeding, bonds mother and baby), so when you have sex your body is saying you

can bond with this person, you can trust this person and then when he walks out the next day after a one night stand the woman is left with feelings of hurt and rejection, often women become very depressed and are left with scares for life, sex is more than just a physical encounter between two people, it bonds two people for ever. There is no such thing as sex without consequences, Sex has a price tag.

We need to teach young people to “know their worth”, teach them to wait for the right person who loves them, who is committed to them. Teach them that they have the power in your hands to change the way things can be and that they don’t have to accept the often toxic culture of today, Your sexuality is a treasure worth preserving for someone who loves you. We need to help a young people be aware that someone putting pressure on them to have sex, doesn’t really care about them, they are using you for pleasure, and you’re not an object to be used and then tossed aside when you’re no longer of use. Sex is an expression of love. You are loved, of infinite value precious, unique and deserve the upmost respect.

‘Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’

This definition of sexuality implies that you can have multiple sexual relationships over time, so yet again highlights the highly sexualised nature of the new programme, with little reference to committed, lifelong, faithful relationships

2.7:

While everybody agrees that teaching the dangers of watching pornography is important. The manner in which it is taught is important? Will it be a cautionary approach to pornography detailing the dangers of watching pornography and how it degrades women and it is a violation of women and it damages the person watching it. Will they be taught to critically think if this is good for me and will it make me a better person or corrupt me if I view pornography, how will it affect my future relationships and how I view my future wife or husband. Will students be taught about the link between sexual violence and pornography or will they be taught about Porn literacy and Kate Dawson’s view of so called “ethical pornography”? which there is no such thing! There is a clear causation and link between hard core violent porn and sexual behaviour. According to the Rape Crisis Centre, the number of reported rapes has doubled in the last year. Or the view its happening anyway and they see it anyway so let them off, yet young people under the age limit drink but we still ban the sale of alcohol to underage persons. Why is it so freely available and why such a push to desensitise young people to Pornography, one simple explanation, It’s a multiply billion pound/dollar/euro industry globally. A1990 study done by the Los Angeles Police department said that 2/3 of the sex offenders had admitted to watching pornography.

Professor Mary Aiken Cyber Psychologist, academic advisor to Europol European Cybercrime Centre and an Associate Professor in the dept. of Law and Criminology at The University of East London, said that young vulnerable people should not be exposed to extreme content in the first place. She said you cannot unsee an image and exposure to an extreme image causes vicarious trauma and that preventing them from seeing the content in the first place is the key. She said there are a cohort on line of harm deniers that believe in generating resilience to extreme content. They don’t want the net to be regulated, even with all the talk about safety and awareness raising. She said they (the harm deniers) say in order to develop resilience in a young child to have to expose them to extreme pornographic content, there is not a parent in this country who wants to educate their child by exposing them to extreme content and teaching them after the fact, and asking them “are you upset by this?”

“Something seen cannot be unseen, there is no command delete file for the brain. She said parents should make sure their children are not exposed to this extreme content. Whilst it is a good thing to warn young people that circulating intimate images online is illegal and they can be prosecuted for doing so. I am concerned that highlighting the fact that the internet has extreme content and intimate photos or images online circulating is putting the very idea into the minds of young impressionable young people.

Pornography is more addictive than heroine, it rewires the pathways in our brain and hooks us and shapes our emotions and sexual desires, it changes expectations for relationships, particular for men, Pornography is not real and it doesn't reveal all the aspects of a person (mind body soul, heart, feelings) and it creates unrealistic expectations for women. Pornography taken in through the eyes- affects the brain chemically physically in a manner similar to that of illegal chemical substances. William M. Struthers Professor of Psychology at Wheaton College explains in his book *Wired for Intimacy: How pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* that pornography works “through the same neural circuit, has the same effects with respect to tolerance and withdrawal, and has every other hallmark of an addiction.” Donal L. Hilton MD, a practicing neurosurgeon at the University of Texas observes: Pornography is a visual pheromone, a powerful 100 billion dollar per-year brain drug that is changing sexuality even more rapidly through the cyber-acceleration of the internet. It is “inhibiting orientation” and “disrupting pre-mating communication between the sexes by permeating the atmosphere.” Porn kills love.

2.8:

So students will be taught safe sex?

There is an over emphasis on sexual activity for pleasure, whereas the whole emotional aspect to sex is forgotten. What is the purpose of sex: bonding and babies. We need to teach young people about authentic love commitment, faithfulness, self-sacrifice. is there any fall out from casual uncommitted sex? Is it sex with no strings attached? What if they get a STDs? What if she gets pregnant? Are they taught about the dangers and regret in abortion and the consequences? The definition of Consent according to who, what authority have they to define consent? This week I give consent because I think He likes/loves me but then He's off with my friend next week and I am left devastated. What about the consequences of sex, is it just pleasure, is there regret? feelings of being used and abused.? When we talk about consent I think it is disingenuous to leave out the emotional consequences and fall out from casual sex.

What was wrong with the traditional lifelong vision of sex without marriage? Are young people happy having casual sex? According to stats, there are higher levels of depression, mental health problems, suicidal ideation than ever before? Let's look at the science behind sexual intercourse, Hormones!! The hormone Oxytocin is released during sex, it is often called the bonding hormone (it is also released during breastfeeding, bonds mother and baby), so when you have sex your body is saying you can bond with this person, you can trust this person and then when he walks out the next day after a one night stand the women is left with feelings of hurt and rejection, often women become very depressed and are left with scares for life, sex is more than just a physical encounter between two people, it bonds two people for ever. There is no such thing as sex without consequences, Sex has a price tag.

What will young people be taught about how to deal with an unplanned pregnancy will abortion be discussed and also the consequences of abortion? will they be taught what abortion involves and the regret and guilt that some women have post abortion. It is teaching students that they can have sexual encounters with no commitment or relationship aspect with no consequences.

***Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: ‘*The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey*’(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 ‘Assessment’).

In what format will assessment take place? How will students be demonstrating what they have learned? And could this be violating their rights to privacy, if they are asked to reveal their opinions on these highly sensitive issues.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.6:

These terms are used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these terms are the main focus of ‘*allyship skills*’ under this heading, which includes transgender people. ‘*Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.*’ The introduction to this section states– ‘*...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality*’ – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

‘Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):

Allyship involves recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups’.

This is an unfair burden of critical race theory to place on students in schools, especially when the Irish were subject to this many years ago. It is also discriminating against men.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

The following definitions are **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised**. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles**, responsibilities, characteristics...*

- this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender**, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'*

- This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie 'a boy could become a girl, neither or both' – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'*

- There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations with**, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'*

-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.

***Social Norms...**'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**.'*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



NCCA

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

Contributor

Emily Pankhurst

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

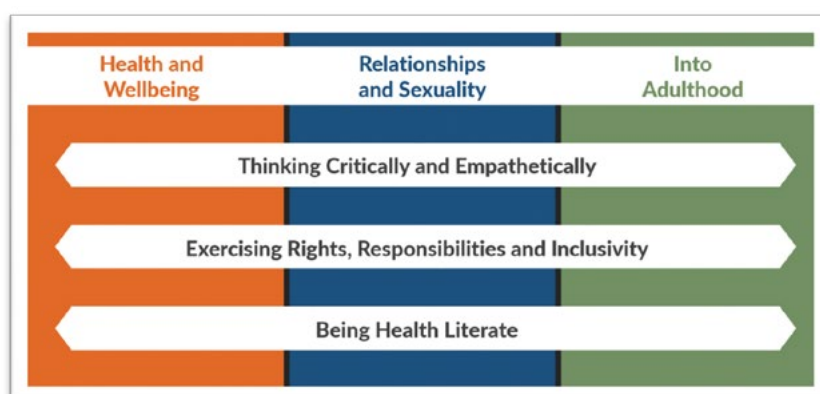
The aim of the updated curriculum is to ‘empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.’

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self

1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

The aims and outcomes listed in this questionnaire do not mention the fact that the specification, and the proposed teaching texts, the resources, and the learning outcomes, promote the idea that students should learn about gender identity as if it were fact. This is of course contrary to government circular 0043/2018 clause 9, if anyone cares to check. Nevertheless, everyone in the world that is capable of reason, knows we don't have an inner gender identity that can change, and float along a spectrum of infinite possibilities. It is not bigotry to not validate this delusion.

Nobody in their right mind would leave their daughter alone to undress in a communal shower block beside a man called Eddie who claimed to be Sarah now, because he was having a girl day.

Every parent of a daughter knows they don't want to see a man playing against their daughter on a rugby pitch. Every parent on planet earth will gasp if they let their 8 year old daughter into the toilets on their own, and then a 6 foot man dressed in a second hand curtain, follows her inside.

With these obvious and widely accepted opinions to mind, I would like to pose the following questions before this specification is finally adopted-

Q1) Why are parents allowing this specification to infect our children?

We should be teaching critical thought as this benefits society and also assists the safe guarding of children. Once it becomes illegal to call a man "he" then we are setting the foundations for harming our own children. This is not a simple school specification. This is a threat to our dignity and the safety of our children.

If the above statement is wrong, and this specification is somehow based on fact and therefore compliant with 0043/2018 clause 9, then-

Q2) why are the learning outcomes in SPHE not cross linked with the biology specification?

If this specification is based on biological truth, and gender identity is real,

Q3) Why are the proponents of this specification absent from the NCCA science consultations?

Q4) If we are now enlightened enough to realise the fact that we have a gender identity that is more important than our biology, then why did the recent science consultation only attract the following three groups, the institute of physics, the Irish science teachers association, and the science programme of St Angelas College, Sligo?

Could I be rude enough to suggest that gender identity theory is not really true, and the gender emperor is wearing no clothes!!!

Q5) Assuming that those of us not sleeping, will agree that gender identity theory has no place in science, Why then is it already in our schools and taught as fact?

Q6) Why, when we know there is no science behind the theory, is the true background to the term "gender" not covered in the specification? For instance, the fact the term was first coined by John Money in the 1950's and the role this man had in the development of gender theory, included experiments involving two naked twin boys conducting sex acts in front of him, which he photographed?

(If you want to look this up you better be quick before the government makes it illegal to have the truth stored on your phone)

Perhaps the teaching resources should encourage students to give a presentation on the ethics of Kinsey and Money before discussing the non binary status of Sam Smith.

Q7) Why does the NCCA not include a learning outcome that discusses why the proponents of this theory appear to be obsessed with children, and the age to which they can to self Id themselves into the other sex and attend "transgender camps".

Q8) Why does the NCCA not include in the key skill of “critical thinking” a module on the dangers of a school publishing a gender policy that advocates for a boy to sleep in a girl’s dormitory without any parents knowing, simply because the boy says he is a girl, but doesn’t want anyone to know just yet?

Q9) Why are so many people oblivious and sedate, around the obvious child safety problems created by adopting this specification?

Q10) Why are the public not aware that this is a politically drafted specification with contributions from lobby groups?

Q11) How do we stop this specification, and protect our children, and the Country?

Answer: WAKE UP!!



NCCA

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

Contributor
Emily Vogler

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to 'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'

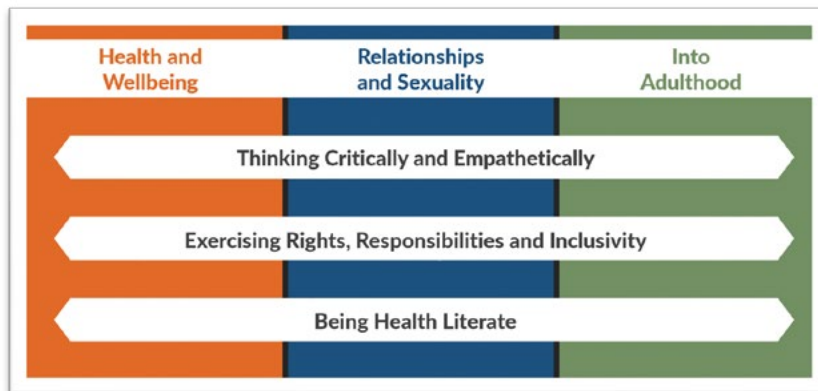
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

N/A

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour

1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

N/A

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Outcome 2.4:

Clarity: Who decides which attitudes towards transgender are harmful? Will it be religious parents who refuse to accept the reality that sex is assigned at birth and is fluid and can be changed, or will it be the progressives who refuse to accept the biological fact that sex is determined at conception by the developmental pathways triggered by the chromosomal contribution of the sperm to the egg and is binary and immutable (outside of rare developmental abnormalities)?

Is opposition to unisex or gender-inclusive toilet facilities in schools a harmful attitude? Which is more harmful- A transgender person forced to use the facility designated for the sex to which they were/was assigned at birth? Or an adolescent girl forced to tidy up a failure of feminine hygiene product in front of curious transgender girls who have no experience or empathy in dealing with a body that bleeds inconveniently on a regular basis?

There is a wide gulf between those who believe that mammals (humans, dogs, cows, sheep...) come in two flavours, male and female, and those who believe that human sex is fluid and independent of biological factors. To support one belief and label the opposing belief as harmful, evil or other such opprobrium puts the adolescent student into a full-blown culture war that is far from settled with adults with far more education and experience.

Relevant: The curriculum should address both belief structures without making any determination about which is correct and which is harmful, and also teach that all people should be treated with respect, regardless of their beliefs. I am curious though about how the biology curriculum addresses biological sex and its perceived fluidity.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and workplace rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

N/A

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Appendix 2 - Glossary of terms used in Learning Outcomes, page 18, Gender and Gender Identity: Gender is defined as “*socially constructed roles...so understandings of gender differ across contexts and over time*” while Gender Identity “*...may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.*”

These two definitions together conflate socially constructed gender with biologically determined sex and are only logical when sex is redefined as something that a doctor or parent randomly choose to enter on a birth certificate. Gender, which can differ across contexts and over time, is not the same as sex, which is determined at conception and immutable. The definition for gender is accurate, but the definition of gender identity should be changed to “*...may not correspond with the person’s biological sex,*” acknowledging the biological reality of sex. Or is the biology of human genetics and development avoided in the senior curriculum so as not to offend those who are offended by biology...



NCCA

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

Contributor
Geoff Briggs

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

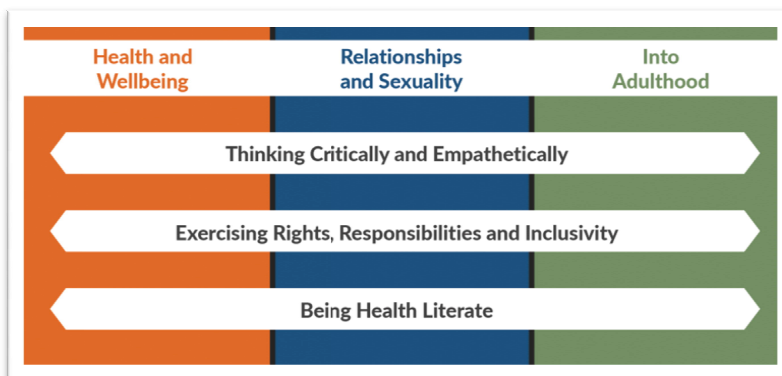
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Question 2: The Learning

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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

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2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

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Insert response here:

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

This response is based in an opinion on gender identity being taught as fact in schools. The draft SPHE document does not make many references to it, however, by including it and by providing it's own definition of "gender identity" the NCCA will, as a consequence of opening this topic, invite many books and other teaching materials to be produced that will seek to pursue an agenda based on affirming and promoting gender ideology. There are scores of teaching resources already prepared on the topic that will see the tiniest glimpse of a mention in the specification, as a green light to pursue this topic and promote the teaching of it as fact, as opposed to a point of view.

The **first mistake** that this draft specification makes is to provide definitions of "gender" and "gender identity" without qualification or by saying it is describing a view held by a number of people. If this topic is to be taught it should at least be taught in the form of a debate. For instance, a student should be able to ask why recent Irish law (the gender pay gap regulations 2022) still defines gender in Irish law, as only male or female? Very recent law is therefore at odds with the definitions provided by the NCCA. It is therefore not at all settled, and the terms should be not be defined as if it were a simple matter of fact or that a consensus has been reached. The definitions should be removed, or provided with a suitable qualification, to aid a student's understanding of the subject.

The NCCA has got this wrong and the NCCA will not have any consensus towards singular definitions of these terms as there is in fact no consensus in society or academia. There is no way of proving or disproving the existence of our gender identity in the same way we can't prove or disprove a human soul. When we read a specification or teaching aid for a religious class, we instinctively know that teaching religion is about teaching various views of a belief system(s) and different views and beliefs are to be expected and welcomed.

Therefore, the ***second mistake*** this specification makes is to not make it clear that the topic of gender identity is actually similar to religion, in the sense it talks about something that, despite the very strongly held beliefs of it's proponents, can, nevertheless, not be proved or disproved. It is simply a belief system that is vogue the moment and to encourage a trend to be taught as if it were fact is dishonest to students and dangerous to society as young people are more easily influenced than adults. (especially when the topic offers comfort to children with teenage angst, autism, and body and gender dysphoria)

Solution: The fact this topic is a belief system as opposed to biological fact, should be made very clear in the specification.

This response assumes that the very brief mention of gender identity in the specification presents a much larger problem than the coverage it received in the specification. This view is formed by viewing previews of new SPHE text books and other materials that have been written specifically for this subject. The onus of the NCCA is to specify what is to be taught and by introducing this topic at all, the NCCA has effectively opened the flood gates where schools may have difficulty in controlling the volume and integrity of the content used to assist its delivery. This can of worms should not be opened by the NCCA. The NCCA under the Education Act has a responsibility to design content based on fact and academic consensus. The design of a subject that includes contentious topics should be removed, or at least taught in the context of a debate, as opposed to fact.

The NCCA is in breach of it's duty of trust by providing contentious definitions without any qualification, and by encouraging a hotly contested topic into the classroom without making it abundantly clear that the topic remains contested. Schools are to offer a non-partisan education and to make it clear when a topic is not fact based.

The inevitably huge volume of gender ideology content that is now going to enter schools as a consequence of the door being opened by the NCCA, is the reason for this submission-

- 1) I think it is of vital importance that the specification around RSE and all resource materials clearly state if a topic is a matter of opinion, or a fact. The determination of whether a statement is fact or opinion, should rest with a cross check with the biology specification.
- 2) If a statement cannot be included in the biology specification as a fact, for instance claims that human beings have a gender identity, and one which sits on a spectrum, then these topics should be understood as topics for discussion and identified in that way.
- 3) Non factual content should not form part of an assessed learning outcome unless the child is being assessed on their ability to "critically think", debate and make informed opinions.

*(The specification does not make it clear that students are expected to discuss and respect alternatives views. For instance gender critical views based on facts receives no mention, such as the fact our reproduction is not caused by a spectrum of gametes and instead only occurs in a binary construct where only **two** gametes exist. The fact the human species still only has two sexual gametes, regardless of whether a human is categorised as male, female, intersex, or any other description, is a fact that might get lost when the term "spectrum" is frequently used.)*

- 4) An important learning outcome on the subject of gender studies should include an understanding by students of the origin of the term “gender”. In particular critical thinking of this subject must surely include learning about the research methods, and experiments of John Mooney and Alfred Kinsey.

Reason: to assist the critical thinking skills of the student and to be aware of how societal views and media coverage evolves over time. A useful learning outcome for a student would be that our biology remains unchanged, regardless of what is vogue or being taught in humanity degree courses.

- 5) The curriculum teaches about respectful relationships and gender based violence. This topic should be expanded to make it clear that everyone deserves the right to privacy when getting undressed and all children and adults have the human right to freely express themselves. This includes the right to object to any behaviour that makes a person feel uncomfortable. In the context of SPHE/RSE the specification should include a section on child safeguarding and include a legal references that explain how the equal status act allows for discrimination in education establishments under the gender ground. An awareness of rights and the law will help to protect children from being harmed when a child, or adult, of the opposite sex tries to explain by describing the law, and uses terms such as diversity, inclusion and transphobia, to justify their presence in the wrong single sex space. The truth about rights and laws should be taught to all students and not distorted by any commentary from lobby groups. This knowledge is necessary to protect girls and women particularly, and should be listed as a learning outcome.
- 6) The specification discusses health and well being. The health and welfare of a student into adulthood should be linked with the topic of gender identity and it should be expanded to include classroom debate associated with the risks of medical transitioning, such as cancer due to prolonged use of cross sex hormones, infertility, un-reversible body mutilation and the likelihood of a person wanting to de-transition once they become an adult.
- 7) Once students understand the difference between a provable fact and an opinion that can't be proven or disproven, a student should be invited to discuss the possible motives of why anybody would want to make an un-provable statement of fact in the first place and discuss the meaning of the word ideology.

Other possible questions for classroom discussion and inclusion in resource material:

- What does gender identity really mean?
- How many genders are there?
- If we all have a gender identity, why then does “agender” exist?
- If not recognising a gender identity is transphobic, was the government transphobic when it's recent gender pay gap regulations only included male and female, and excluded all other genders from the law?
- If non-binary gender is real, what is the safe level of units of alcohol for a non-binary person in a week?
- Should male sexual offenders be allowed to change their gender to be locked up with women?
- If not, then how can a gender recognition certificate remain a lawful indication of an acquired gender for everyone else?

- Should a grown man who fills out a form making him a woman, be allowed to shower naked with teenage girls? And why would any government in its right mind create laws that allow this?
- Should the NCCA not consider the role it has, and wait to see if the GRA Act is repealed before consolidating the tenets of gender ideology into the next generation?
- If sex and gender are not the same, and there are limitless amounts of genders on a spectrum, why does a gender recognition certificate only refer to changing between the sexes of male and female?
- How are students expected to know, and teachers expected to teach, the difference between gender and sex, if there is no difference in Irish law? How can this learning outcome be demonstrated or assessed?
- Should someone who is gender fluid, for instance "bigender", require a new gender recognition certificate every time they change from male to female and back again?
- If a student expressed their inner feelings that they were "gender fluid", could they play on the boys and girls football teams, or should they pick just one team?
- Does the SPHE teaching resources contend that a person can really change sex? In the case that the resource materials indicate that we can change sex, should schools accept this charade or be honest to children?
- And, is it right to accept a certificate as proof of a sex change? Or does it just refer to their gender?
- What is the difference between sex and gender again?
(Gender in Irish law appears to mean male or female, which is a completely different definition compared with the draft SPHE definition) Which version of truth are schools to adopt? Why can nobody explain or define it? How can this be taught and assessed when adults and the government can't agree on a definition?
- In what way do fandom groups and tumblr affect adolescent gender identities?
- What is a two spirit identify?
- Can a two spirit person choose two genders at once, or is this a form of "bi-gender"?
- What if a student wanted three gender identities? Could a "three spirit" identity be created online, and if so, should that be taught as fact also?
- Is a furry identity a valid gender identity and what would their pronouns be?
- What if a student was "bi-gender" and fluctuated between "two-spirit" and "transgender", how many gender identities would they have?
- Would they require a gender certificate or would that depend on whether their identities were legally recognised (male or female), or should gender certificates include all of the identities that are about to be taught in SPHE classes?
- A school teacher would never validate a child's expression of anorexia due to a risk of starvation, but at the same time, according to gender identity ideology, they are expected to validate an expression that might lead to castration,

mastectomy and hysterectomy? Is this a correct assumption of a teacher's role under the draft SPHE curriculum now that gender ideology is being taught?

- Is bringing gender identity into Irish schools and teaching the un-teachable in a factual way, an example of this Country finally losing it's mind?
- Would SPHE be more useful to children and society if the topic of gender identity was removed from the specification, at least until such time as this ideology and it's influence over our children's minds, subsides?
- Should the people responsible for including gender identity in the specification accept some shame, and start thinking about how Irish schools can help children, as opposed to opening schools to an obvious global contagion of utter madness?

Opinion: A child with gender dysphoria requires honest help, not a glossary of terms, and adults who validate their thoughts, before a surgeon finishes them off with a scalpel and a life of infertility and cross sex hormones. The specification should not open any doors to gender ideology theory at all, and it's inclusion, is by itself a child safe guarding concern.

- 8) In summary- the specification should add the word "fact" to all sections that are fact, and therefore make it clear to students and teachers that the topics without this pre-fix are to be debated as opposed to taught as fact. This clarity will facilitate critical thinking skills and help to protect young adults from insidious messages as they enter adulthood.

The teacher's section on learning outcomes and assessment should mirror the distinction between fact and debate. To determine if a statement is a fact or not, a simple test is to decide if it would suitable within the biology specification.

If students are expected to conflate fact with ideology, in order to meet the learning outcomes of the SPHE curriculum, the NCCA will have acted in gross breach of their duty under the Education Act. Close this door before it is too late!



NCCA

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

Contributor

George Frisby

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to '*empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.*'

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

This aim is not met, on the basis that the aim of **empowering** and creating **responsible** and **empathetic** qualities is completely removed when the specification and teaching resources promote these qualities without balance.

For instance section 11 of the "Gender identity and gender expression" resource provides a stand-alone template for removing the power and responsible behaviour of anyone promoting the privacy of girls in single sex spaces. It demonstrates a complete lack of empathy when a topic that involves opposing rights only discusses one side of the debate. In fact section 11 describes a blueprint for Irish schools to encounter class actions like the current case in England by ten parents who are claiming the school was negligent towards their children's welfare. The NCCA are actively endorsing and encouraging the exact same behaviour that is being described as the basis for a negligence claim against a school. Has the NCCA lost it's mind?

Perhaps the report "asleep at the wheel" should be provided as a resource that **empowers** girls to speak up against boys exposing themselves in their changing rooms and demonstrates **responsible** behaviour by adults towards the welfare of children, and **empathy** towards the genuine concerns of girls and women who want to, and have the human right to expect, that their changing rooms and sports teams remain free from biological males.

Education is vital to ensuring girls know what their rights are, before they are stripped away and this specification fails spectacularly by removing power from girls and their allies.

This resource is so one sided in terms of the best way to teach children about their development, that it is no surprise that the education officer of the government lobby group TENI received praise and thanks for helping with it's production.

Most parents are not supportive of this approach to teaching our children and that is not a transphobic thing to say, as it does not denote any hatred or fear, it is simply an expression of truth and how we wish our children to remain safe now, and into adulthood.

In fact, if the aim was to disarm girls in terms of developing the confidence and knowledge to speak out when they feel unsafe, and when they feel their sports are being infiltrated by biological males, then this specification and section 11 will have met that aim.

A bonus to this aim would be if the NCCA wishes members of school boards to be sued in negligent class actions as that is evidently likely when a brief look is taken at our nearest neighbour. Is the NCCA so stupid to not see these obvious risks? Is the NCCA's emperor wearing any clothes, and which bathroom is *they* in?

Until such time as the topic of "gender studies" represents a sense of reality and balance, as opposed to the wishes of a registered lobby group who have already recommended to the Irish Government that there should be no age limit for a child to change gender so long as a parent decides, then this specification is harmful.

If the group behind the resources to this subject got their way, a homophobic parent could certify their gay son as a straight girl, and the child will have no choice in law. TENI are organising transgender workshop weekends for children under 12 and their families!! And they have provided authorship to this curriculum.

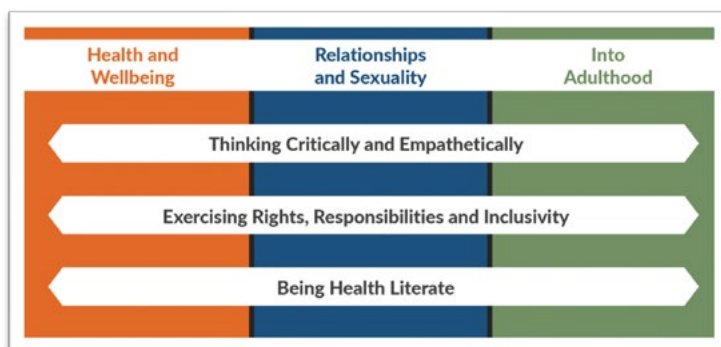
Given that this specification has been influenced by TENI, as the online resources bear their name all over the place, this is contrary to the requirements of the Education Act for schools to provide un-partisan teaching and to never teach contested views as if it were fact. Parents of Ireland should be warned to boycott this subject until such time as the NCCA regain their cognitive faculties and show some respect towards their responsibilities around child protection.

This specification is to my mind simply unlawful and will be shown as the disgrace that it is, over time. The least we can do as parents is to control what our children are taught and this specification is an abhorrent step aside from child welfare. The mere existence of this teaching resource sparks a suspicion of nefarious motives within a captured NCCA.

Children need to learn how to look after themselves, and to protect themselves, section 11 is a whitewash over the freedoms and rights of anyone that wants to support single sex spaces and the sporting rights of young girls.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

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Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

What use is any of this if girls are afraid to go to school once boys who wish to enter their changing rooms and sports teams, are given the green light by using empathy, inclusion and diversity buzz words?

How can you teach health and welfare to students when a pathway to genital mutilation and cancer causing drugs is being condoned by validating multiple gender identities as opposed to recognising biology as more important than adolescent feelings which always appear retrospectively trivial when someone reaches maturity.

Why validate what a child thinks when the truth is otherwise. If an adult is afraid to speak the truth, then how are we helping children. The SPHE resources are teaching adults and children alike to lie, despite what their instincts and eyes are telling them.

Why not validate an anorexic's feelings that they are fat and then act all surprised when they die of starvation?

The best way to succeed in the aim of promoting the health of young people is to recommend to them that they opt out of SPHE and study something useful instead.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.4 I think students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of how the subject of gender studies came about and be able to cite the actions of Kinsey and Money and their role. Once a student knows the history and origin then they are better placed to discuss how the media depicts “*harmful attitudes around gender*”.

In other words, a student should be able to discuss how the media chooses to hide important information if it is not vogue to mention it. This of course changes over time and now that some politicians have grown a set of balls the respectful right to disagree with gender identity theory is no longer off limits and alternative views will start to get more media coverage, notwithstanding their obvious absence in the SPHE specification.

(sorry for the gendered reference of balls, but now that women have balls it might not be offensive, although we need to refer to the compelled speech glossary of terms for confirmation if this gendered evolution of language is still allowed – actually please change that to “the politicians have grown a set of genitalia”, that is more gender neutral, although I think it loses some je ne sais quoi, in translation)

The SPHE specification makes no mention of the debate or the origins around the word “gender”, despite calling a whole section “gender studies”.

Most subjects would include a background section before launching into the subject. In this case the fact that the term “gender” was coined by a paedophile named John Money, who asked two brothers to perform naked sex acts in front of him (*one died of a drugs overdose and the other suicide*) as part of his failed experiment to prove his theory that gender is a mere social construct, is significantly missing. A fact conveniently lost on all other proponents of the claim that gender is somehow no longer linked to biological sex.

Whether we accept a new meaning to the word gender or not, it would be mere semantics if the debate remained honest about our biology. To ignore biology and to treat feelings with more value, we are reduced to cowering before a new religion and nothing else. That is why any criticism is so vehemently and nonsensically rebuked by those with hurt feelings, as is the case with most start up religions.

There is no obvious need for the topics of a humanity degree to be brought into schools. University students can choose to avoid these topics as adults but children are effectively captured. Therefore parents should be constantly reminded of their right to withdraw their child from this subject. Now that SPHE is demanded on schools the NCCA should be called on their decision to let a trans-lobby group design the specification.

If a student is unfortunate enough to have their time wasted in this subject because their parents are unaware of the right to withdraw from it, perhaps they could at least question it's tenets in the classroom, and then appraise the reaction as a social experiment. At the very least a potential victim might have the chance to "critically think" before their young mind decides their penis or breasts need to be cut off.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students should be able to	
3.1	explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
3.2	demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
3.3	explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
3.4	summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
3.5	consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise
3.6	demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

The NCCA should include a section on "de-transitioning" and treat the dangers of acting on knowledge gained from gender studies as the same as the dangers of learning about nutrition.

In other words some children have mental health issues and misunderstand what they learn and harm themselves. With food the risk is anorexia, and with gender studies the risk is genital mutilation, infertility and lifelong use of cancer inducing hormones.

If a child is anorexic nobody would affirm or validate their feelings so no warning is needed.

Alternatively, gender studies actively masks the obvious risks and disarms anyone who wants to help by teaching us that it is ok and normal to express alternative gender identities. The fact that validation and media praise towards inner feelings only leads to men cutting of their penises and women slicing of their breasts *after* they have left school, does not negate the responsibility of schools to not put the thoughts into school children in the first place.

If a school board wants to protect itself then, a very clear warning stating that “gender studies could be very bad for your health” should be provided before every lesson. All parents should sign a form accepting the risks and any child with autism, anxiety, anorexia, or a history of self harm should be advised to not attend.

On the other hand perhaps the NCCA should get a grip on reality and rewrite this specification without employing a taxpayer funded transgender lobby group as the author.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

If the NCCA and school boards wish to remain out of courts in terms of child negligence then they should simply scrap this whole exercise and start again with neutral contributors.

At the moment Ireland is about to become the laughing stock of the world and as usual, is about ten years behind everything good or bad that happens elsewhere. Being behind the curve offers an obvious advantage in terms of hindsight, yet this Country is so stupid that our schools will simply get sued ten years behind the schools in the UK. Ireland will have it’s own scandal and multi million Euro enquiry. The only difference between us and the UK will be that our scandal will have a harp on the cover and theirs will have a crown.

To the NCCA - Wake up and scrap this madness, take ownership and responsibility for the harm that is about to befall a whole generation of Irish children.



NCCA

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

Contributor

Gerry Kingston

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to ‘empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.’

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

The aim is laudable but the content of the SPHE Specification is so loaded with the focus on sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual activity that it would not achieve these objectives.

Resilience is not likely when students are taught to doubt their own gender or sexual orientation. Empathy in relationships is not generated with the excessive focus on self and sexual activity in the SPHE curriculum. The main focus seems to be preparation for sexual relationships, which is misdirected for this age group, rather than building the qualities like self-control and commitment that lead to fulfilling relationships and resilient young adults. Also sexual activity belongs in the context of committed relationships which ideally lead to marriage; nowhere is this referenced in the specification. Sexual activity is treated as a transaction between consenting people: this robs intimate relationships of their true meaning and purpose.

The objective to “empower students’ should not be to cut off Parents and their values from their children in the key area of RSE. Children of this age are considered ‘minors’ for a reason. Their parents should have the biggest role in determining what their children learn by following the provisions of the Irish Constitution. The importance of the role and rights of parents in educating their children seems to be absent in the document. This is a fundamental and glaring omission.

Strand 1 sounds positive and helpful on a superficial level, it fails to mention the positive influence that the established Christian and other ancient Religions have on the lives of young people. Many young people today seem to be prone to suicide and one of the big factors in suicidal tendencies is a lack of positive, balanced beliefs and hope in the future. By placing total emphasis on sex and sexual matters, when the latter fails, as it naturally must, there may be nothing else left to live for. The Christian Religion supplies that hope when properly ingested by youth. Schools can and must emphasise this, especially in a country where the majority of parents have been brought up as Catholics, as in Ireland and desire their offspring to continue with those positive beliefs. Comparisons with other countries as mentioned elsewhere ie New Zealand, Canada etc, are irrelevant as their traditions differ greatly from Ireland’s.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Students should be able to	
1.1	research the determinants of good health
1.2	discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance
1.3	critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
1.4	explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self
1.5	recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
1.6	draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
1.7	recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
1.8	discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety
1.9	explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
1.1	discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18-year-olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important needs to be added to this Strand.

Insert response here:

The learning outcomes look good but the values inherent in the course material and its over-sexualised focus will not create moral or psychologically sound young adults given the confusion and anxiety that it will create in young minds due to the uncertainty around gender identity and sexual orientation. These aspects impact the mental health of young people, so the mixed messages in the course material conflict with the aims of the curriculum.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand, students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students should be able to	
2.1	demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
2.2	reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
2.3	discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
2.4	examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
2.5	identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
2.6	explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
2.7	investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
2.8	discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
2.9	explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1 Can we speak of 'online relationships', let alone healthy ones? **The two things do not go together** – students should be warned about online contacts and so-called 'relationships'. I contend that 'online relationships' are especially dangerous to young people. They have no idea what type of person they are communicating with. How many examples do we read of where young people and not-so-young people have been tricked into sexual slavery, groomed for terrorism and many other unthinkable situations as a result of an 'online relationship'? Surely **the process here should be to steer youths away from 'online relationships'?**

2.2 Identity - There is an almost narcissistic focus on 'identity' in the curriculum. Could we teach young people to love and accept themselves without creating confusion with concepts of identity, **especially the false theory of gender identity?** Why is identity combined with sexual behaviour? **Everything seems to have sexual activity as a reference point** – this is pushing towards sexualising students.

LGBTQ+ identities, and relationships upon which this whole process appears to be founded and kindred ideologies, **should be excluded from schools except as in so far as these ideologies are shown to be unnatural.**

2.3 Discussing sexual activity in adult relationships is not appropriate for students who are below the age of sexual consent, and is leading them in the wrong direction. This is steering young students in the direction of sexual activity and normalizing it as part of relationships – thereby sexualising students.

The following definition of 'sexual activity' is given in the Glossary of Terms in the draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification: - '**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to **sexual intercourse (in all its forms)** which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities **can be solitary or involve other people**'. If consent is the major criterion, there would seem to be no morality relating to sexual intercourse.

The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here: – **no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary)**. Sexual activity is not just physical recreation without the relationship context. **This is a narcissistic focus on pleasure which is detrimental to the development of students**, as is the reference to sexual intercourse 'in all its forms' – sexual perversions are not something that should be taught to school children. The Glossary definition of SEXUALITY is such as to frighten caring parents from sending their children to a school with this ethos. Parents require their offspring's energies to be directed towards their studies and the preparation for life in a normal world, at this stage without the worries of sex and its problems and entanglements as emphasised in this course. **This is completely the wrong emphasis for students: the focus should be on commitment, trust, and communication** that are part of meaningful and fulfilling relationships, not just the focus on one's own pleasure.

The definition of 'sexuality' in the Glossary is also skewed in an unhealthy sexualised way – '... include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.' **This reflects a virtual obsession with the sexual aspects of a student's life and directs students in the wrong direction at a formative stage of their development.**

2.7 Investigate the influence of pornography. This is directing students to explore pornography: how could this be done without actually watching pornography? **which portrays a complete distortion of sexual relationships in a loving context.** The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material - in effect normalizing the viewing of pornography in this age group, with very detrimental effects: given how pornography depicts sexual relationships it is completely inappropriate. If some students aren't viewing pornography then the school will show it to them in the course of lessons. Thus, the programme is normalising the viewing of pornography in this age cohort. There is very simple and sound advice about this – **do not watch pornography** - an industry rife with exploitation and abuse which perverts the reality of the sexual aspects of loving relationships.

~~~~~

**2.8 Discuss image-based abuse...**what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these - There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image-based abuse?** This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms it could be a good thing – but **this element of the course is putting the very idea in young peoples' heads and getting them started on the practice in the first place.** As this idea comes from the school it will be seen as a good practice instead of the opposite being true.

**2.9 Explore sexual and reproductive health** - all of these aspects arise from sexual intercourse or 'sex in all its forms' – **this is hardly appropriate for 12-year-olds**. Educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which seems to be the objective, is a myth, as sex often takes place in less-than-ideal circumstances, especially for young people. The course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancies – **no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion - the killing of an unborn human being**. Is this what we want 12-year-olds to be taught and focus their attention on? The above learning outcome normalizes sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex so that there is no need for inherent caution about sexual activity.

The draft SC SPHE curriculum's new dimension in the SPHE/RSE -assessment of what the pupil has learned:

"The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey." (Full Specification in SC SPHE page 16 Assessment.) This seems to suggest that the student will have to experience sex and other actions learned and then show photos of these actions as carried out. Is this appropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in Strand 2 of RSE and is it not a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues?

To me, this section is making the case for promiscuity, especially for children of 12 years and older.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                    |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                             |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communication, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and workplace rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                     |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                          |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**3.6 demonstrate allyship skills** to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater 'equity and inclusion'.

Equity and inclusion are terms generally used by the NCCA to refer in particular to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories – 'minority-identified groups' - are the prime focus of 'allyship skills' under this heading. The introduction to the above section states - '...to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'. The 'Allyship skills' definition below is in the Glossary of Terms of this draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification -

**'Allyship Skills:.. Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.**

*This is an outrageous imposition of Marxist critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people. **This definition of allyship skills is strongly rejected.***

### **Question 3: Any further suggestions**

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

#### **Appendix 2 Glossary of Terms used in Learning Outcomes**

*Below are some controversial definitions in the Glossary of Terms which should not be included or radically changed in line with objective scientific fact -*

**'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...'**

**Comment: This is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical-biological sex.**

**'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'. Comment: These definitions are based on gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie 'a boy could become a girl, neither or both' – as set out in some of the NCCA SPHE resources.**

**This is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's biological sex, which is a scientific fact. Gender ideology has no place in a school curriculum which will only confuse children and should be removed.**

**'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'. Comment: There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQI issues and sexuality-related matters in the SC SPHE course, and this is generally what the term 'diversity' refers to in the SC Specification.**

**'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.**

**Comment:** *The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time; this is a far cry from the ideal of a committed relationship that culminates in marriage and family, the natural place for human flourishing, as shown by numerous social and mental health indicators. **This definition shows an almost obsessive focus on things sexual** – completely inappropriate and the wrong focus for 12-year-olds*

*when 17 years is the age of consent.*

**‘Sexual Orientation:** each person’s capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations** with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender’. **Comment:** *This points to ‘intimate sexual relations’ with more than one person and more than one gender and to a level of sexual promiscuity and experimentation which can only be psychologically harmful to children.*

**Social Norms...** *‘It is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**’.* **Comment:** *This points students in the direction of the primacy of their feelings, rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. It directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of heteronormative marriage, or at least of committed heterosexual relationships and normal gender roles.*

### **Assessment in SPHE**

*SPHE is not an academic subject and the content is ideologically driven. Assessment has sinister connotations of pressurising children to show that they believe the false ideology of gender identity etc. as shown by the focus of assessment (p.16 of Draft SC SPHE): - ‘...a change or confirmation of beliefs/attitudes/assumptions/values’. This shows clearly the objective of the RSE content of the SPHE curriculum is to **change children’s beliefs**, as gender ideology is a belief system which is diametrically opposed to the Christian view of men and women, or indeed a common sense view. Assessment is completely inappropriate and should not be undertaken – the objective seems to be to ensure that children have in fact been brainwashed with the false and unscientific ideology embedded in the SPHE curriculum.*

### **Conclusion**

*The Glossary definitions are a real giveaway of the highly sexualised approach to Relationship and Sex Education underlying the SC SPHE Specification. The focus of SPHE should be the normal formation of children at a vulnerable age who undergoing unprecedented anxiety. Knowing their gender should be one of their few certainties in life, but the focus on sexual orientation and the promotion of gender identity is likely to make them doubt even this. The logical follow-on to all the sexual activity which is the focus of the RSE content should be the happy ending of marriage, but this is not mentioned even ONCE.*

*The primary role of Parents in the education of their children, especially in the sensitive area of RSE, should be acknowledged. Parents have made huge sacrifices to bring up their children, and parents should be **involved** or **at least consulted** on aspects of the SPHE course that impinge on the moral and behavioural values that parents expect for their children, especially in schools that reflect the values of the parents – mainly Catholic schools. **Accordingly, the views of parents on the SC SPHE proposals should carry the most weight in deciding the final content of the curriculum.** The role of parents and their values in the education of their children should be reflected in the content of the curriculum*

**The question of the ethos or characteristic spirit of a school is not mentioned in the document** – this is very important for framing the overall values which guide young people in their dealings with others, and especially in their intimate relationships. Spiritual values are also absent from factors that are taken into account in the formation of children in RSE – this is the guiding light for the values of many parents and the ethos of Christian and minority religion schools and should be factored into the approach to RSE. The teaching of RSE should be within the context of the ethos of a school, and the teaching of Relationship and Sexuality Education should be subject to the values in the ethos of schools. The structure of the delivery of RSE should allow and enable this.

*I trust that on this occasion, unlike the consultation on the Junior Cycle SPHE specification, the NCCA will take on board the responses of parents and others who are concerned with the premature sexualisation of young children because of the excessive focus on sexual matters in various forms (including sexual activities, sexual orientation and identity) in the final version of the SC SPHE Specification.*



**NCCA**

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# Contributor

Gráinne Burke

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here: I agree as long as it is kept in mind that these children are still children under the authority and care of their parents.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |

|     |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here: On the surface these are good objectives. It would very much depend on the way it was taught. 16 to 18 year olds must be taught as the children they still are. Yes, emerging adults but they deserved to be nurtured as the age they are. They have rights, as we all have. However, with increasing rights come increasing responsibility and that can often be forgotten in the exuberance of youth.

Spiritual health seems totally neglected. I don't see it anywhere.

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |



|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1: Healthy online relationships?. Online relationships should be discouraged surely.

2.3: There is a lot more to sexual activity than mentioned here. I see no mention of commitment. This is a big part of sexual activity. Also no mention of sexual activity being most ideal within marriage .

2.4 I would assume that the children would be taught that gender ideology is not scientific fact

2.7 It would be imperative that it be emphasised the total negative consequences of pornography for both boys and girls. Pornography cannot be glorified in any way

2.9 I see no mention of sex within a committed married relationship as the safest sexual practice.

Also if LGPTQ+ families and relationships are to be included and incorporated into each strand then families based on marriage have to be given equal opportunity.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |

|     |                                                                                                                      |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.5 | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise |
| 3.6 | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

**I think the use of allyship is too close to critical race theory. Our children should not be taught any sort of white or male privilege. They should be taught to value, love and respect everyone. There should be no guilt for being who we are. Young boys are entitled to be white, male and straight .**

[Question 3: Any further suggestions](#)

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Be fair to all our children. Do not teach them gender based ideology as fact. Do not teach them that changing gender is normal. It is not and science backs that up. Allow teachers to be teachers and not have to venture into the role of psychology and treatment for their students. If teachers have concerns for their students they should be able inform the parents who will then assist their child. Never forget that parents are the primary educators of their own children and we are still dealing with children for most of secondary school.



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# Contributor

Gráinne Smith

## Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *‘empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.’*

Insert respol agree with the aim as all of the learning outcomes are relevant and relatable for students nowadays.

## Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, ‘me time’, and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one’s sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others’ health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Yes, I think the learning outcomes are very clear and are all definitely relevant in the lives of 16-18 year olds.

I think the following needs to be included:

- Social media education: internet safety, who to follow online, comparing self to others, dealing with feelings of not being 'enough', understanding that not everything they see on social media is real, dealing with body image and understanding that photos can be filtered, have good lighting, be posed etc. Also, the effect of social media on mental health and the brain, for example, increased phone and social media usage means having less connection and experiences in real life.
  
- Brain: the function of each of the parts of the brain which would explain the reason for some of the thoughts we experience e.g subconscious mind, prefrontal cortex (to protect us). Reading books such as 'The Chimp Paradox' by Steve Peters would be very beneficial.
  
- Emotions: what emotions are and how to deal with each of them, appropriately, with a focus on grief especially and understanding that choosing not to deal with emotions can be linked with excessive drinking and drug use.
  
- Self-awareness: students need to be aware of their thoughts and emotions so they can rationalise them. Introducing meditation to schools would be so valuable for students. Sharing other strategies such as journalling would also be useful.
  
- General health and wellbeing education on the value and effect of sleep, food, movement, connection with others (family, friends, community, hobbies), the breath and the importance of being in the present moment is necessary.
  
- Childhood experiences: with increased sensitivity and understanding of a variety of circumstances, children should be educated about how their home circumstances, past experiences have shaped them to be who they are. For example, the absence of love from parents can cause children to not love themselves. This can cause children to turn to alcohol and drugs or looking for love from the wrong people and getting into bad relationships. That's why awareness is so important! Similarly, this will help students understand other people's actions and how they are not the problem e.g understanding why a bully bullies.
  
- Positive relationships: understanding the importance of surrounding themselves with positive people who care for them and cutting out people who don't serve them.
  
- Self-limiting beliefs: bringing awareness to their beliefs and deciding which are true and which aren't.
  
- Spirituality: introducing students to spirituality and topics such as manifesting, the law of attraction might also be valuable.

- I think prescribing books/ podcasts/ audiobooks for students to go through would be extremely valuable. Some books I would recommend are: 'The Chimp Paradox' by Steve Peters, 'Lost Connections' by Johann Hari, 'Power of your Subconscious Mind' by Joseph Murphy, 'The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem' by Nathaniel Branden, 'The Mountain is You: Transforming Self-Sabotage Into Self-Mastery' by Brianna West, '101 Essays That Will Change the Way You Think' by Brianna West, 'Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself' by Joe Dispenza, 'Master Your Emotions' by Jacob King and 'Awaken the Giant Within' by Tony Robbins.

## Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I think all of learning outcomes are very clear and relevant to the lives of 16-18 year olds. I think how to deal with friendship/ relationship breakups is missing from the strand and also knowing when a relationship is not good for them and to break up.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

**Reiterating the fact that it's okay not to know what they want to do in the future career wise, what path to take and providing contact numbers and information for services that they can avail of if they need help e.g Jigsaw, Pieta house.**

#### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

I think there needs to be a huge focus put on developing awareness of thoughts, emotions and beliefs and coping strategies as this is what causes students actions. Education about emotions and how to deal with them appropriately is necessary and also childhood/ at experiences. Having increased my awareness of my emotions and childhood experiences, I have gained a deeper understanding of who I am as a person and why I act the way I act. I had to go through my self-awareness/ self-development journey by myself and it was very confusing dealing with some of my thoughts alone. However, having gained all the knowledge I have, I have lots of strategies for dealing with difficult situations, feelings or thoughts. I have learned so much through reading books and I think it's vital that all students have the knowledge, skills and strategies to deal with any situation they may face in the future.

A big concern I have is, if this content will actually be covered. When I was in school, we didn't have SPHE as a scheduled subject and it is probably the most important subject. Similarly, if SPHE becomes a scheduled subject, I'm worried that the content still won't be covered. In my experience, subjects that weren't examined i.e. CSPE and religion were often given as a 'Study class' or 'Free class' and this is common among many of my friends who were in schools across the country.

I think it is important to consider how we can ensure that the content is covered. Is there a form of assessment that can be agreed on that won't add pressure to students i.e. continuous assessment/ submissions of reflections to books/ podcasts?

I think all of the above learning outcomes and my suggestions/ opinions should also be covered in the Junior cycle. More teenagers are struggling nowadays which is reflected in the amount of young people taking drugs. They need support and more importantly relatable, relevant education.





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# Contributor

Jana Lunden

## Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their beliefs?

## Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                 |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                            |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.4 | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if                                              |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

### Insert response here:

I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and                                                   |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |

## Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and                                                   |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**2.1:**

**I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships.**

Does this imply that there can be healthy 'online relationships'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

**2.3:**

**I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I'm concerned about the leeway teachers will have. I would prefer to speak to my child about these topics when I feel the time is right.**

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*‘**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’*

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘*in all its forms*’.

*‘**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

## **2.7:**

This is directing students to explore pornography: how could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships. The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the viewing of pornography** in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?

## **2.8**

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples’ minds.

## **2.9:**

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or ‘**sex in all its forms**’. This will require educating students on how to have ‘safe sex’, which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the ‘morning after’ pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *‘The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey’*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 ‘Assessment’).  
-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students’ rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-                                                                                                                                           |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these                                                                    |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

#### 3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *‘allyship skills’* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *‘Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.’* The introduction to this section states– *‘...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality’* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

#### ***‘Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):***

*Allyship involves recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups’.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

### **Question 3: Any further suggestions**

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles**, responsibilities, characteristics...*

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender**, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'*

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'*

– There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

– The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations with**, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'*

-This points to *'intimate sexual relations'* with more than one person and more than one gender.

***Social Norms...**'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**'.*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



**NCCA**

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**Contributor**  
Jane Holland



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Is a reasonable and well-phrased aim.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

## Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Have the potential negative consequences been properly researched and risk-assessed? For example, this study which demonstrated that introducing therapy to teenagers *without* mood disorders, then appeared to result in many of them *developing* mood disorders. What is the legal liability for schools and teachers if a student develops a mood disorder following intervention or workshops by individuals who are not trained health professionals, and a parent then brings legal action suggesting that this was induced or encouraged by the school's intervention?

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0005796723001560?via%3Dihub>

## Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Why is it now the role of school teachers to have talks and discussions with underage students about sex, sexual relationships and sexual activity. This would have been considered inappropriate behaviour and possibly even grounds for accusations of grooming or certainly as recently as a decade ago. We are in a society where male teachers are vilified for unsubstantiated accusations of suggesting girls wear longer skirts, but talking to them about having sex is fine? This makes no sense.

In addition, the legal age for consent in Ireland is 17 – so why are children younger than this being educated, possibly even encouraged, to explore sexual activities and sex acts? It is illegal to show pornography to minors – except for the purposes of education. Which means that this loophole in the law now apparently allows teachers to show minors pornographic material – this would be illegal and subject to criminal prosecution if teachers showed this pornographic material to minors outside school. Why is it legal for them to show this material to minors inside a school building?

In 2.9 – why are schools teaching legal minors, who are below the age of consent for sexual activity, to access “sexual health services”. Why are educators and teachers taking it upon themselves to act as (untrained, unqualified & unregulated) health care advisors to minors? Again, where does the legal liability lie for schools (and individual teachers) taking over the role of advising children – legal minors – about issues such as consent, clinic referrals, and advice regarding mental or physical health issues? Will schools be taking out additional liability insurance, in case legal action is brought after a school (or individual) gives advice to a child and the child then has an adverse healthcare outcome? Medicolegal insurance costs, liabilities and payments are expensive in Ireland. Have schools received legal advice from medicolegal experts as to liability?

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Again, have the potential negative consequences been properly researched and risk-assessed? For example, this study which demonstrated that introducing therapy to teenagers *without* mood disorders, then appeared to result in many of them *developing* mood disorders. What is the legal liability for schools and teachers if a student develops a mood disorder following intervention or workshops by individuals who are not trained health professionals, and a parent then brings legal action suggesting that this was induced or encouraged by the school's intervention?

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0005796723001560?via%3Dihub>

### 3.6:

Why are Irish children, on an island that faced **centuries of invasions and colonisation**, where Irish people faced discrimination and depopulation because of their race, their religion and where their very language was BANNED, being told that they have "*privileged status*" *Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2)*.

**This shows a total disregard for the indigenous population of our island. It shows discrimination against the native ethnic population of our island. A population that has been steadily reduced and eroded by wars, by plantations, by colonisation, by famines and by emigration due to economic hardship.**

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

These changes appears to be very sexualised, which is not appropriate for legal minors under the age of consent. I think it is utterly inappropriate for be sexualising children, to be encouraging sexual activity in children or to show or discuss pornographic material with legal minors.



**NCCA**

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National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Contributor

Jean Bryan Loftus

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

**Insert response here:**

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below: Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

**Students should be able to**

1.1 research the determinants of good health

discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance

1.2

critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and

drugs

1.3

explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self

1.4

recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour

1.5

draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health

1.6

recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed

1.7

1.8 discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed

1.9

discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

1.1

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

### **Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

#### **Students should be able to**

- 2.1 demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict
- 2.2 reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour
- 2.3 discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
- 2.4 examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
- 2.5 identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
- 2.6 explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available
- 2.7 investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations
- 2.8 discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
- 2.9 explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.



Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**2.1: I do not feel that online relationship can be taken at face value/truly be healthy, a person can easily conceal or alter their true identity. There are predators who use this method to groom younger people. I feel schools should be discouraging such relationships.**

**2.3:**

As a parent I feel that discussing sexual activity is not appropriate for students in Secondary School. This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*‘**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’*

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘**in all its forms**’.

*‘**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

**2.7:**

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples’ minds.

## 2.8:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or 'sex in all its forms'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *'The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey'*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

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**Insert response here:**

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*Allyship involves recognising and using **one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person)** to support individuals from **minority identity groups**'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

**Question 3: Any further suggestions**

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...***

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth**'.* – This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'.*

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-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

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-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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# Contributor

Jerry Mellerick

## Questions to consider.

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to '*empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.*'

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here:

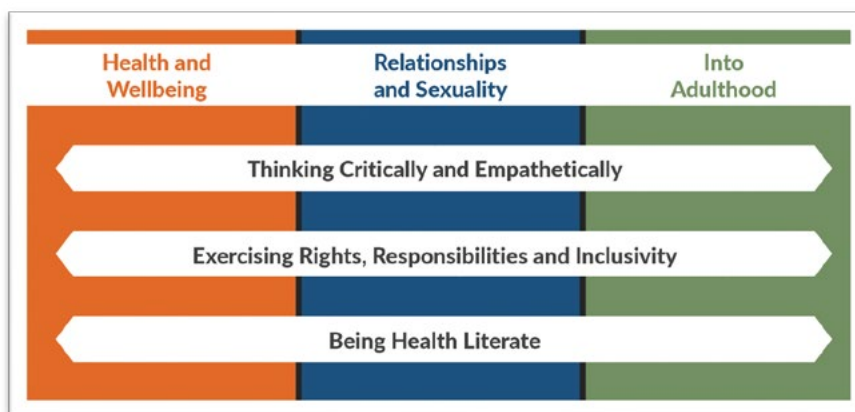
No, it does not, the detail provided is completely at odds with the Aim. In short, the Aim is misinformation.

The Aim as stated is filled with positive and wholesome objectives. However, reading the detailed the material attached it is obvious that the Aim is not at all what it purports to be. It includes items that are both controversial and divisive such as

Gender Ideology  
White, Male & Irish Privilege  
Teaching activism

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

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Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

#### Insert response here:

This section as it is written both in summary and detail I find nothing objectionable to.

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

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| 2.3 | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                            |
| 2.4 | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives        |
| 2.5 | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                      |
| 2.6 | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available     |
| 2.7 | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                              |
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**Gender Ideology is a highly controversial subject matter. People such as Professor Donal O'Shea have raised serious concerns over the concept. New studies are showing extremely high levels of correlation between kids with autism and those identifying as trans.**

**There are reports coming out of the US and Europe showing huge increases in the numbers of kids identifying as trans. There is a big school of thought that believes that this surge in numbers is due to social contagion.**

**It is simply not possible to change your sex. The DNA in the million of cells in each person's body can not be altered. To say otherwise it to deny basic biology.**

**Given the above three paragraphs I would urge the entire section be scrapped and revisited from the ground upwards. As things stand it would only add uncertainty to 16- to 18-year-olds lives.**

### **Strand 3: Into Adulthood**

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

#### Students should be able to

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1 | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2 | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3 | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4 | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |



|     |                                                                                                                      |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.5 | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise |
| 3.6 | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

Equity is a concept propagated by numerous Governments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Equity believes that all things across the board must be equal. Whilst laudable it is not at all achievable. Identical twins are not equal in all respects. The USSR, CCP China & others killed 100 million people in pursuit of the goal of equity.

Activism should not be thought in schools particularly when the activism is exclusively one side of the political spectrum causes. This is breach of the fundamental role of education to educate without becoming political.

Finally in respect of the concept of privilege and the accompanying identity politics embedded in the phrase. The last round of identity politics in the North saw 50.000 people dead or injured. In the North everyone is acutely aware of their identity, they even paint the colours on the pavements. Why are walking down this very dark path?

Why?

Based on the above observations I urge you to rewrite the entire section, and detracts from people of all ages.

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Re the concept of mis/dis information it should be noted that throughout history across all cultures the biggest source of misinformation has been the state. Phrases such as

1. War to end all wars
2. Smoking is good for you
3. Weapons of mass destruction
4. Soft Landing
5. 2 weeks to flatten the curve

The above should be built into the course to aid, facilitate and prepare young people to become truly critical thinkers.



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# Contributor

Joe Keegan

Questions to consider

Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

As relationships in this context include both romantic and non-romantic relationships, the distinction should be made between the two.

For romantic relationships the emphasis should not be only on 'respectful and caring relationships', but on nurturing 'loving and lasting relationships'. A truly loving relationship should, by definition, be respectful and caring, but it also should be more than merely respectful and caring. The need for long-term commitment should be regarded as part of a loving relationship, which is fulfilled in marriage.

Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

These outcomes appear clear and appropriate.

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Most of these outcomes are sound, in particular nurturing relationships, the effects of sexual violence, pornography and abusive relationships.

I find 2.3 to be quite reductionist view of sexual activity. It mentions mutual pleasure, respect, care, consent and intimacy, but has no mention of either love or long term commitment. This document appears to view sexual activity as a stand-alone activity, to be guided by the quite basic principles of consent and pleasure, rather than locating sexual activity within a broader, more-long term relationship which is guided by the higher principles of love and commitment. Human beings are called to a higher form of relationship than merely that which is consensual, caring and mutually pleasurable.

Outcome 2.4, which says a student should examine how 'harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media,' needs further clarification. There certainly are harmful attitudes to both men and women in society, particularly on social media, and this needs to be highlighted. If that is what is meant by outcome 2.4 then this is a reasonable outcome.

However, I fear that what is meant here is broader assertion, in which any acknowledgement of the differences between men and women are regarded as harmful. The inclusion of the feminist resource 'Through the Looking Glass' leads me to this view. If such a view is indeed what is meant by 2.4, it should be dropped.

2.9, on sexual health and pregnancy, should emphasise responsibility of both the man and woman to their partner and also towards any future offspring.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

In 3.6 students learn about ‘allyship’. This is a largely unknown term in Ireland, and is associated with political ideologies in the USA. In the glossary provided, ‘allyship’ is mentioned as ‘recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups.’

This is an utterly simplistic view of human persons and society, taken from French critical theorists and American politics, which promotes an unhealthy ‘us versus them’ mentality. Singling out white children, Irish children or boys in the classroom as having privilege is both morally wrong and factually incorrect. Plenty of white, Irish boys, whether they come from well-off or poor families, have serious problems in life, and it is wrong to claim they have ‘privilege’ on account of their sex, skin colour or nationality.

The term ‘privilege’ is used here in a manner that is different to the Irish understanding of the term. Children should be proud of their privileges, such as the privilege of having parents who care for them and work hard, the privilege of coming from a community where people look after each other, the privilege of living in a democratic society etc. Privileges are things to be celebrated, not things to be ashamed of. However, in the draft document the term privilege appears to be used according to a critical theorist definition, by which *your* privilege is an affront to, or even a contribution to, *my* lack of privilege.

3.6 would seem to lead to division rather than unity and solidarity among children from many different backgrounds. It should be removed.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

The document, particularly certain sentences in the glossary, appears to uncritically accept the philosophical principles articulated by gender theory and queer theory. These philosophical theories are not accepted by the majority of the Irish people, nor are they backed up by any kind of empirical science.

In the glossary, the term 'gender identity' read 'a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'. This is the philosophy of Judith Butler, which has no place in an Irish school. In reality, when a girl who has feelings, traits, experiences or ways of presenting herself, she is not secretly of the male gender; rather she is just a girl with more traditionally masculine feelings or ways of presenting herself. So too with boys who have more traditionally feminine feelings or traits. The artificial division of sex and gender, and telling children that they may be a different gender, is a frightening and cruel burden to place on children.

The glossary definition of 'Social Norms' states that 'In the context of working with young people it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms.' Which social norms should be critiqued? Again, the influence of critical and social constructionist philosophies seem to have an influence here.



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# Contributor

John Kelly



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

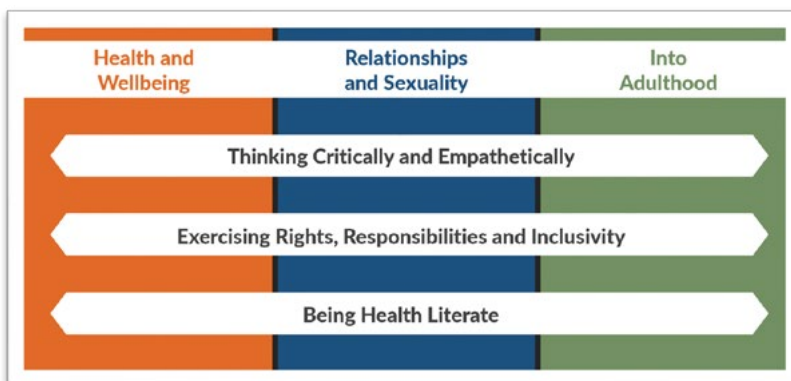
The aim of the updated curriculum is to ‘empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.’

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here: No. The purpose of schools is to impart academic knowledge, not to “empower students” to become anything. Such is the role of parents in the home.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, ‘me time’, and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one’s sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:** The content of this strand is not relevant to 16-year olds; it is age inappropriate and the topics involved would be more appropriately taught by parents in the home.

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here: The learning outcomes are not relevant to 16-year olds today as they receive sufficient levels of necessary education from their families in the home. This strand is completely age inappropriate as 16-year olds are below the age of consent and this strand will groom them for underage sex. Any discussion about sexual matters has no place in schools as it is unconstitutional and is a matter for parents to teach about in the home.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
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| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
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| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here: The learning outcomes are not relevant to 16- year olds as the topics in this strand are sufficiently addressed in the home. "Demonstrating allyship skills" is not a matter for schools, whose role is to impart academic knowledge.

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here: The entire SPHE curriculum is unnecessary as such education can only be beneficially imparted in the home. The RSE elements are unnecessary, unconstitutional, and age-inappropriate. Such elements have no place in schools, and are exclusively for parents to impart such information. It is of urgent importance that the RSE element is removed from schools forthwith, or else that children are vindicated in their constitutional right not to attend such classes.



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# Contributor

## Lazarus Ember

## Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

### Insert response here:

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their beliefs?

## Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                           |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.**

### **Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**2.1:**

**I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships.**

**2.3:**

**I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I'm concerned about the leeway teachers will have. I would prefer to speak to my child about these topics when I feel the time is right.**

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*‘**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’*

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘**in all its forms**’.

*‘**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

## 2.7:

This is directing students to explore pornography: how could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships. The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the viewing of pornography** in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?

## 2.8

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

## 2.9:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or '**sex in all its forms**'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: '*The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey*'(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

### **Strand 3: Into Adulthood**

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.



| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**3.6:**

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

***'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):***

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

[Question 3: Any further suggestions](#)

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles**, responsibilities, characteristics...*

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender**, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'.*

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'.*

1. There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

*-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.*

*'**Sexual Orientation**: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and **intimate sexual relations with**, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'.*

*-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.*

*Social Norms...*'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important'.**

*-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.*



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# Contributor

Liam Coughlan and  
Helen Coughlan

# Liam Coughlan and Helen Coughlan

Dear Sir / Madam,

Having read the draft Senior Cycle Curriculum for SPHE, we have major concerns as follows:

According to the Information Note (Page 3) provided by the NCCA, the Senior Cycle curriculum for SPHE will be mandatory. This ignores the fact that:

**(1) Parents are the Primary Educators of their Children**

Article 42(1) of Bunreacht na h-Éireann (The Constitution of Ireland) states that “The state acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children;

**(2) Parents have a right to expect their Children to be taught in accordance with a School’s Ethos**

No reference is made in the Curriculum to the Education Act 1998, which enshrines into Law the educational requirements set out in Bunreacht na h-Éireann. For example:

- (i) Section 9(d) of the Education Act unambiguously states that schools are obliged *to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school;* and
- (ii) Section 15(2)(b) of the Education Act, 1998 obliges the Board of Management of a School to *“uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school”.*

It is noted that one of the Guiding Principles of the draft Senior Cycle Curriculum for SPHE (Page 4) is Inclusivity and Diversity. Yet there is **no consideration given to, less still mention of Catholic ethos** or teaching in the Curriculum. Given that over 70% of the population describe themselves as Catholic (Ref. 2022 Census of Ireland), **this is blatantly exclusive** and totally contradicts the NCCA’s claim that the Curriculum is “inclusive in accordance with principles of equality” or that it is “inclusive of all religious beliefs” (Page 7). This anti-Catholic bias is also reflected in the membership of the NCCA Board for Senior Cycle, which has no member to represent the faith-based ethos of a substantial number of the country’s Secondary Schools.

In relation to Relationships and Sexuality (page 14), the draft curriculum states that “learning outcomes should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning”. It is **inappropriate to single out any particular minority cohort for special attention** in this regard and to direct that majority traditional beliefs should be ignored.

It is very concerning that the proposed curriculum sets out to **normalise gender ideology**. The idea that a person can simply choose their ‘gender’, rather than accept that they were born male or female, is to ignore reality and distorts the truth.

**Not to be clear that human beings come in two sexes – male and female – is simply a lie**, which inevitably leads to confusion. This is the very opposite of real education, which should always be to lead people, and particularly young people, out of the dark. The word ‘educate’ is itself derived from the latin word *educare*, which means to lead out (or enlighten).

It is out of concern and respect for the sufferings of others, including people with gender dysphoria, that speaking the truth is particularly important. It is in this light that we should see the condition of gender dysphoria as a problem that with sensitive care, may well be overcome in a manner which avoids severe negative health outcomes. Gender dysphoria should never be treated as a normal situation to be affirmed where it occurs in young people and puts them at risk of damaging hormonal and surgical choices.

To promote the lie that a person can choose their 'gender' is to exploit the vulnerability of teenagers while their bodies are still growing. It espouses sexist stereotypes, denies the reality of womanhood and promotes a so-called 'gender spectrum' as an alternative to natural male / female diversity. It also promotes the early sexualisation of young people and encourages almost limitless sexual experimentation as part of a young person's development.

None of this is healthy or in the best interests of children or young adults. Nor is it appropriate for the draft Curriculum (Page 17) to suggest that the teaching of 'Critical theory' is relevant in an Irish context. The statement that "Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups" should, therefore be deleted.

The teaching of this draft curriculum will inevitably lead to children and young adults regarding books with graphically descriptive and highly sexualised content as "normal". **This raises many child protection concerns** and these are not addressed in the curriculum.

In conclusion, the draft Curriculum for SPHE is seriously deficient in that it places no ideals in front of young people to aspire to. In particular, the centuries old institution of marriage, which has been the bedrock of civilised society, is ignored. Instead, the Curriculum promotes, encourages and celebrates personal pleasure as the lowest common denominator.



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# Contributor

Lidia Ryan

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

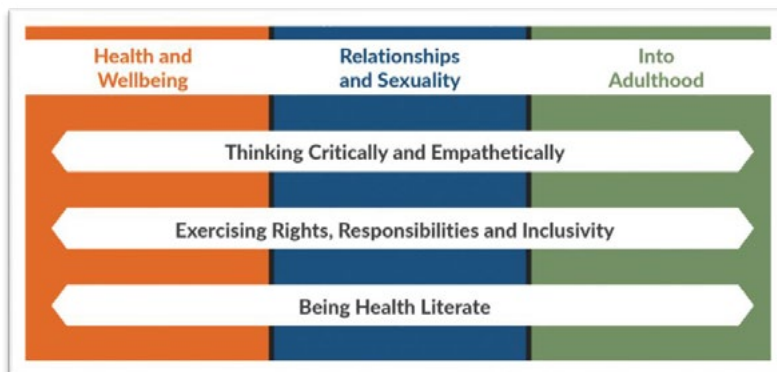
The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

**Insert response here: This statement sounds really good as every parent want their child to be healthy ,resilient etc etc BUT this 'empowering' has to fit around the values and morals that a child has already learned at home- it can not be something that goes in direct opposition to what parents have taught their children up to now.**

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

#### Students should be able to

- |     |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1 | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                         |
| 1.2 | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.3 | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4 | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here: The Health and Wellbeing module sounds good to me and I think students will benefit from this course.**

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |



Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:As a parent, I have huge concerns about this section .(2.7).I have been very careful to make sure that my children are not exposed to pornography. How are students supposed to ‘investigate’ the influence of porn without actually viewing it??How is this investigation NOT going to raise an interest for young people to view porn???I have worked with children in many capacities and am well aware of child protection standards which state that children –everyone under 18-are NOT to be exposed to pornography in any shape or form. So now its going to be investigated in schooltime-Im so angry even writing this !The only thing any child should hear in school about porn is that its addictive, harmful and totally degrading to men women and children and should be avoided at all cost. (2.3) My goodness, who came up with this one???ADULT relationships...why are these things discussed with students who are not adults yet ?And NO mention of love, commitment or marriage!!This is blatant sexualisation of our kids .Its creating a false impression that consent is all that’s needed to have sex. Also goes totally against everything ive taught my kids-values and morals...nowhere to be found in this curriculum.**

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here Critical race theory for Irish students??after everything the Irish have been through in 800 years of oppression? Totally discriminatory against white people and men in general. Foolish in the extreme.**

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here: Yet another falsehood which is part of this curriculum and which my child has already been exposed to is the lie that gender is not a biological fact but an individual experience. When I spoke to the teacher about this and how harmful it has been to young people to try to change their gender, she did not even know about current courtcases in the UK and Canada, where young people , mutilated by surgery to try and change their sex, are now suing hospitals and surgeons. So this incredibly harmful ideology is being taught to our kids as a solution for not feeling 'right' in your body ( something that 90% of young people go through anyway and grow OUT of) As adults we have a responsibility to look after children and to protect them. Young people don't have the same capacity to think through the consequences of something in the same way an adult can. I don't want harmful ideas imposed on our kids and especially not in a school setting, which is a place of learning. Teachers have a responsibility to teach our kids maths ,Irish ,Biology etc- stick to that and leave the sex -ed to parents.**



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# Contributor

Lorraine Doyle

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here: YES, I agree with above statement on the updated Curriculum

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

1.1 to 1.10 – I agree with all these aims for the students.

## Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1 How can a person have an on-line relationship and what boundaries are you referring to? What needs would a teen be expressing on-line and to whom? How can a teens safety be assured if you are promoting online relationships. Schools should not be encouraging children/teens to have online relationships, their safety in this matter cannot be assured.

2.2 and 2.3 I do not believe that schools should be discussing sexual activity, this can be intimidating to students and peer pressure could easily be put on some pupils to engage in sexual activity before they are personally ready, as other pupils may be discussing how sexually active they are. Discussion on sexual activity normalises and de-sensitises students, making them think 'well everyone seems to be doing it so why not me?' Teens are not adults and therefore need to be told that they are underage in the eyes of the law where sex is concerned. They are not considered mature enough to be giving full consent for sexual intercourse and therefore they should avoid it! These discussions indicate these students are sexually active or indeed that it is ok to be sexually active. This is the wrong message to be giving out to students and sex purely for pleasure is an unacceptable lesson.

2.5 I agree that teens should be taught how to identify an abusive relationship, and coercive control.

2.7 How will the pupils discuss pornography if they haven't seen any? Pornography cannot be shown in schools in any form. This topic would indicate that schools expect that all pupils are observing/viewing pornography in order for a discussion to be had.

2.8 To discuss image based abuse, images of abuse must be seen or shown. This desensitises pupils to these images, and even if the lesson is saying how wrong abuse is, the children viewing have been subconsciously desensitised and, in a way, have been abused themselves by having to look at the image!

2.9 Reproductive health and the physical workings of sex is taught in Science and while not all pupils do science, these lessons are positive. However, teaching 'safe sex' indicates that students of age 16 (fifth year) are ok to have sex, they are not, they are legally underage. Are they to be taught that Abortion is an acceptable way to cease a pregnancy? The subject of Abortion is very personal and a teacher could give a lesson which would encourage and normalise abortion in cases of unplanned pregnancies as this may be their belief and opinion.

General: When you are discussing Gender, I assume the DES intend to facilitate and discuss Gender Identity and LGBTQI+ in class. If the Curriculum is to teach that a male can become female and vice versa this is unacceptable. Even those adults who transition are still physically their birth sex, although I do understand that in their minds they feel differently. Of course, if there are students with body dysmorphia they should be respected and treated with dignity and included in all school activities. However, if teaching that certain pronouns should be used when referring to these people who have body dysmorphia, you will have to accept that many students may not be of the belief in this ideology either because of moral, religious or other values and are not willing to use alternative pronouns. These students too need to be respected, and included and cannot be demonised or excluded by a school because they will not re-affirm the persons belief. Everyone's values must be respected.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

3.4 Discussing age of consent is essential, there are reasons why we have an age of consent. It is because in our culture and country children are not considered mature enough to give consent to sex and sexual behaviour. Therefore, it is hypocritical to be telling children this on the one hand, and then discussing sexual activity, behaviour etc on the other hand. In your 'Assessments' in the draft policy the child is to outline their learning and growth in all of the above strands, is this going to encourage them to experience sexual activity before they are ready in order to ensure they have developed their knowledge and skills??

3.6 Allyship skills refers to recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups, according to your Glossery of Terms. If the DES are planning to impose critical race theory on White, Irish Students, that is unacceptable. It is in fact discrimination of men, white people and Irish people. Putting 'guilt' on this generation of students for things that happened in the past such as slavery is disgraceful. Irish people have always been welcoming, and inclusive and caring.

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:



**NCCA**

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

**Contributor**

Lynda Kennedy



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. Will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their beliefs?

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                           |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I agree that those learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.6 | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available     |
| 2.7 | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                              |
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships.

This learning outcome seems to imply that there can be healthy 'online relationships'. Schools be steering students away from online relationships, not encouraging them.

2.3:

I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools. It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I'm concerned about the leeway teachers will have. Topics may arise that I would prefer to speak to my child about.

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years this is entirely inappropriate. The 'sex is for pleasure' philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of commitment, trust, communication, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of 'sexual activity' and 'sexuality' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people'.*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '***in all its forms***'.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

## 2.7:

**I am vehemently opposed to this topic being explored in Secondary Schools.**

This learning outcome will encourage students to explore pornography. How could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships. The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the viewing of pornography** in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. **What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?**

## 2.8

I do not believe it is necessary to highlight image based abuse to Secondary School students. Intimate photos or images of young people are circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. It is worthwhile to teach this if it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

## 2.9:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or '**sex in all its forms**'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *'The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey'*(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

**-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.**

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

#### **3.6:**

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

*'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):*

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

**- This is an outrageous imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.**

Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other very controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised definitions in Appendix 2. I am asking that these are either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...*

**- this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.**

*'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'.*

**- This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie 'a boy could become a girl, neither or both' – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.**

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'.*

1. There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, **sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies**, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

*-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.*

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'.*

*-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.*

*Social Norms... 'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important'.*

*-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.*



**NCCA**

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

# Contributor

Mary Creedon



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here

The approach used to deliver the SPHE senior cycle specification is an approach that is heavily criticised by many . The sex for pleasure approach with consent being the only moral ground to be considered will not nurture respectful and caring relationships . The holistic approach which is cited in the “Research Paper on RSE in Primary and Post Primary Irish Schools 2018” “ as best international practise in sexuality education” is not suitable to achieve the above aim as this approach has “ abandoned a safeguarding first approach, significantly increasing the risk of child sex abuse and exploitation within and beyond the classroom. Cited from page 5 Executive summary of “ Comprehensive Sexuality Education A Review of UNESCO and WHO Standards”. Instead emphasis should be placed on an Abstinence approach that promotes temperance , self control and prudence, values that will empower students to stay healthy, resilient and responsible young adults leading to fulfilling and caring committed relationships. The definition of sexual activity as cited from Senior Cycle SPHE Draft Specification as “ a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.”, promotes a promiscuous approach to relationships and sexuality and not one that will nurture respectful and caring relationships. Promoting sex in all it forms is NOT Health Education but a complete disregard for child safety. Dr John Poller Director Of Sexually Transmitted Disease and AIDS programs in Colorado Springs has authored over 200 publications on STD’s His expertise says “The anus is an exit not an entrance , this is science. Nature put a tight sphincter muscle that stays closed at the entrance of anus for a reason “ This is medical science . Dr Miriam Grossman -Child , Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist speaks about the very dangerous impact that anal sex can have on gastrointestinal systems of young people . Doctors in the British Medical Journal have written the following about anal sex “The consequences include incontinence and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well as pain and bleeding because they have experienced bodily trauma while engaging in the practice, “ See link:[anal-sex-has-led-to-health-problems-for-women](#)

Dr Miriam Grossman in her presentation see link : [Your Teaching my Child What 1](#) has stated the human Papilloma virus can be transmitted through oral sex into the mouth and years later it can cause throat cancer.

So I am at odds to understand how “sexual intercourse (in all its forms) is “Empowering Students to become Healthy” when international research states otherwise . Leading Paediatricians such as Jane E Anderson MD ,FCP, Vice President of the American College of Paediatricians have stated that the young person’s brain is not developed enough to make decisions about sexual intercourse which may affect them for the rest of their lives . See link: [“The Developing Teen Brain”](#)

Dr Miriam Grossman (referenced above) has spoken at the UN Commission on the status of women and in Britain's House of Lords and states that when "sexual freedom reigns, sexual health suffers" Dr Grossman highlights the dangers of the "anything-goes condom based," approach to sexual health. With examples from research, she proves that sex is a serious matter, and can never be 'casual', especially for girls.

I am also confused as to why this specification would be promoting sexual intercourse to minors when the age of consent for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 Years

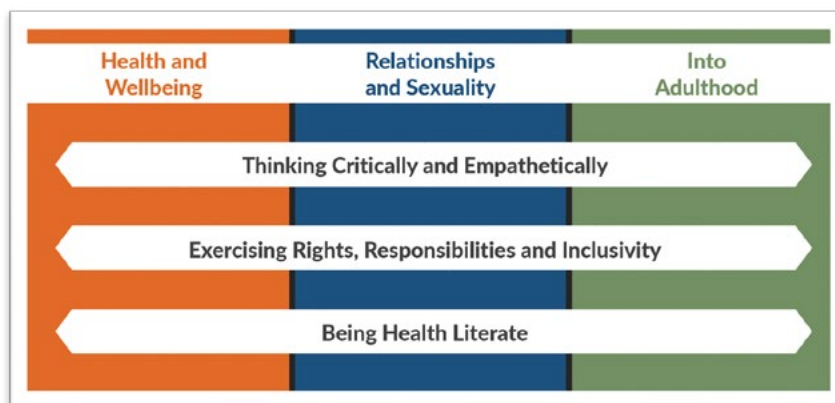
## Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below: Response

The use of the word "Inclusivity" below ( page 6 of the specification ) is not appropriate as the reality of being inclusive means forcing acceptance of the neo liberal secular viewpoint on Sexuality and Gender Identity which is not the viewpoint of parents and children .Looking at the recent census of 2022 up to 70% of the population are Catholic and to impose a secular viewpoint under the guise of inclusivity would be very wrong . I think the word " Respect " would be far more beneficial to use and more realistic.

In relation to "Exercising Rights" it would be far more beneficial to work hand in hand with parents using a cooperative approach to building a curriculum that is student centred led by adults rather than creating a barrier between children and their parents under the pretext of "Exercising Rights" Thinking "Empathetically" should not be an acquired outcome for students on this specification. Students are entitled to their own view point on " Gender Theory " and should not have to " share the feelings of others " (cited definition of empathy from Wikipedia) and show empathy to a student who is socially transitioning by using their preferred pronouns as in doing so is contrary to their Christian beliefs . Children under the guise of "empathy" should not be coerced into participating in the " Pretend " world of transgender people. I do believe that all beliefs Christian and none should be respected . I suggest that the word Empathy be dropped from the Specification .

Based on informed empirical research on the health consequences of anal ,vaginal and oral sex an abstinence approach should be promoted to both Heterosexual and homosexual young people to ensure their emotional, physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing . An Abstinence approach to "solitary" sexual activity and morals such as temperance and self control should be promoted .



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

The body, mind, heart and soul all make up the real person . All these parts are interlinked which influences the physical , social ,emotional and mental health of the young person. Therefore reference also needs to be made to the spiritual health of the students. The spiritual aspect is connected to the soul and leads to a more integrated approach to Health and Wellbeing

1.3 The physical impact of alcohol and drugs on young people should be the priority of this learning outcome . Are the origins and effects of social norms important or even relevant to this learning outcomes .If something is a "social norm "does this mean the medical impact be ignored . As a parent and a teacher I would see more relevance in the medical impact of alcohol and drugs on the young person's health .

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

2.1. I don't think it is wise and safe to be promoting online relationships to students if the relationship is referring to something intimate. As a parent and teacher I would caution students away from this type of online relationship as some children can be particularly vulnerable to the risk of being subjected to online grooming, radicalisation or other forms of coercion. "Nurturing" online relationships should not be encouraged and the wording of this learning outcome needs more careful attention as there is an obvious disregard for child safety. If on the other hand online relationships refers to etiquette when engaging with people on line this then needs to be stated more clearly.

2.3 discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure.

The key word here is "Adult" relationships. Young children are not adults and therefore is it appropriate to discuss sexual activity with them when the age of consent is 17?. Instead wouldn't it be more effective to discuss long term commitment such as marriage.

Resources produced by CEP (Catholic Education Partnership) state the following "Catholics believe that Jesus made marriage between baptised Christians a Sacrament. When you look at the male and female body it is easy to see how they compliment and join together in a unique and intimate way.... Our human biology is important only a man and a woman can be physically united in the deepest and most intimate way through sex" Module 2 My Relationships & Sex and Marriage. See link : [catholiceducation.ie/living-love-rse-resources/](http://catholiceducation.ie/living-love-rse-resources/)

As mentioned earlier in the 2022 census up to 70% of the population of Ireland are Catholics so the long term commitment of marriage should be on the senior cycle specification and RSE resources produced by CEP should be available for teachers in the SPHE toolkit

2.4 examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives

This learning outcomes is very misleading and needs to be redrafted for the following reason .

In an article posted by the Times in Mar 23 [referendum-on-womans-place-in-the-home-to-be-held /](#) the intention to hold a referendum on gender equality and removing a constitutional reference to a woman's place following recommendations from the Citizens ' Assembly on Gender Equality is a direct attack on women . Just because woman may be under- represented in certain professions this isn't an indicator of inequality and it isn't a reason to remove the " place of the woman " from the constitution as this wording gives women choice as to how they want to contribute to society . Women may choose to mind their children at home and may choose not to participate directly in the workforce. This is NOT a harmful attitude. Recognising the valuable contributions mothers and grandmothers make and have made in the past to Irish Society is NOT a harmful attitude to have .It is however Harmful of the Citizen's Assembly to disregard the valuable contributions woman and mothers make to Irish society. It is a harmful to think that Men and Woman are the same . Men and woman Are Different . Biology tells us so . Both sexes contribute differently to relationships and to society .So in my opinion this learning outcome 2.4 needs to be carefully rethought and reworded to show the uniqueness of woman and men and to celebrate that uniqueness and not refer to that uniqueness as Harmful .

Article 41.2 from the Irish constitution :“In particular , the state recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved .The State shall therefore endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home”

If gender in learning outcome 2.4 is in the context of multiple genders then this cannot be presented as fact. Many adults and young people believe there are only 2 genders . Gender identity as defined by the SPHE specification “ a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth “ is a belief system , an ideology , is categorically false and is not of God.

The Holistic /comprehensive approach adopted by the World Health Organisation is promoting Gender Ideology . This by no way legitimises it's teaching in schools, the schooling of children needs to be fact based. The definition of “Gender” on page 18 of the SPHE specification as being “socially and culturally constructed” is not based in fact and will not promote the wellbeing of students . As stated by Psychotherapist Stella O Malley Gender “ to affirm a child is in the wrong body can do great harm and could start them on the road to medically transitioning “ Stella O Malley Genspect conference Killarney 2023 . A new study by Drs Michael j Bailey and Suzanne Diaz examines the recent epidemic of teenagers and young adults identifying as transgender has been published and the findings strongly indicate that [social contagion](#) is a factor in this new phenomenon . Teaching Gender Identity as defined in the senior cycle SPHE specification will lead to social contagion as stated in the above article .

2.7 investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations

This learning outcome assumes that everyone in the class has already experienced pornography in one form or another which won't necessarily be the case and the exposure to porn will likely vary from very little to potentially a lot. As such, there shouldn't be any attempt here to "normalise" the exposure level of either the content itself or the nature of what was captured in the content and any discussions need to be cognisant of this.. Many teachers and parents were very disheartened to hear teacher Eoghan Cleary speak about the importance of children being “porn literate” on RTE Programme “Up Front with Katie Hannon” on 20/02/23 with Minister Josepha Madigan and Dr Kate Dawson on the panel where they had a discussion about teaching pornography in schools. Dr Kate Dawson NUIG sex educator is co-author of *The Porn Report 2018*, which stated that *'it's healthy and ok to watch the porn you want'*. “Ethical porn” as it is sometimes described is not the approach to take. Open discussions of acts people have witnessed when watching porn is not appropriate. It would be good to discuss the effect of pornography on the brain and how this can ultimately lead to addiction problems among other things. The conclusion ultimately has to be that porn is not good for relationships.

2.9 explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Again the holistic and comprehensive approach to sex education is very evident here. This sex for pleasure approach does have consequences. We have over 30,000 abortions in Ireland since the repeal of the 8<sup>th</sup> in 2018. This is very sad. This learning outcome needs to be redrafted to give a more prolife stance. Teaching students to access Sexual Health services to obtain an abortion is morally and ethically wrong. We are creating a culture of death. This negative attitude towards unplanned pregnancy needs to change to one where society supports and welcomes unplanned pregnancies. This could be done maybe through a national media campaign and reinforced with prolife values in the classroom. The government needs to introduce more income supports to woman and girls who find themselves in this situation. The impact of the tragedy of abortion on young woman and girls needs to be discussed on a national level and a more prolife attitude taken for the sake of woman and girls health and mental wellbeing.

The "sex for pleasure approach" promoted in this specification should give the medical facts as well as the emotional facts which will vary drastically between boys and girls, with girls being particularly vulnerable on both fronts. The "Biochemistry of Attachment" and the hormone oxytocin needs to be discussed with young people. The risks of sexually transmitted infections needs to be clearly outlined including the potentially long-term implications. Young girls are more vulnerable to such infections and the how and why this is the case in the context of the development of the female cervix should be covered. "The immature cervix should be at the front and centre of anyone teaching science based sex education" cited from. Dr Miriam Grossman -Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist "Your Teaching My child What?"

Any health based discussion must be in the context of biological sex given the very real differences between men and women.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                    |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                             |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and workplace rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                     |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                          |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and

whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

3.6 demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

The definition of Allyship skills as given in the specification and referenced in the introduction of Strand 3 Into Adulthood is an outrageous imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students . It is a discriminatory statement against men and white people . This has no place in the education of young people and reference and definition of Allyship skills should be rejected and not included in the Senior Cycle SPHE specification .

“Allyship skills: refers to the actions, behaviours, and practices used to support, advocate and collaborate with others, in support of justice and equity. Allyship involves recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups.” Senior Cycle SPHE Appendix 2 Glossary of terms used in Learning Outcomes

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Please take note that parents play a very important role in the education of their children. Parents are no longer the “dinosaurs” that are unable to talk to their children about relationships and sexuality . Parents these days are extremely educated are very capable of interacting with their children on a daily basis about what concerns their children , I think to use the excuse that parents are not able to talk to their children about sex is an untruth . Relationships and Sexuality education should be a cooperative approach where both the parent and the school work together to develop our young people into responsible adults that are able to participate and contribute to society .



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# Contributor

Mary E. Fitzgibbon



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to '*empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.*'

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

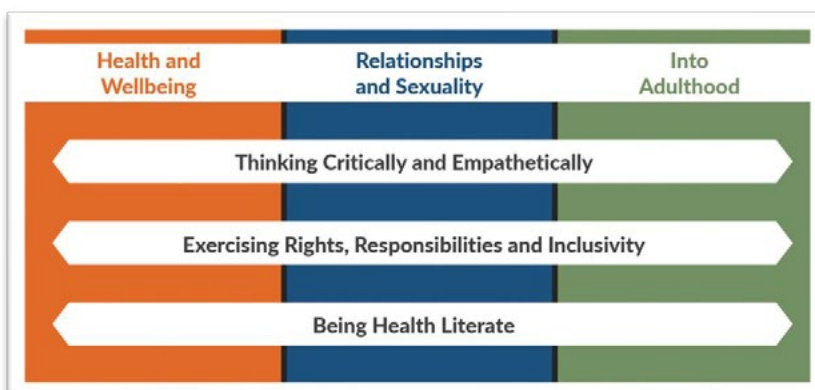
#### Insert response here:

*I agree however it all depends on context when the aim is to empower students to become healthy, resilient and empathetic young adults etc. From a Christian perspective we encourage people to grow in their Faith and to mature cognisant of the search for the truth however given the divergent viewpoints that often run contrary to the Christian ethos the aim may not be achievable. The overarching reason for this is the focus on gender ideology which is not based on fact and will lead to confusion especially among vulnerable teenagers. The ideal of marriage and family life is shared by many but this comes with responsibilities and boundaries but the focus is on consent without consideration of a loving committed relationship.*

*As parents we are the primary educators and we have a right to ensure what our children are being taught is in line with our moral and religious beliefs. Thankfully this is recognised by our constitution but ensuring our voices are heard and our concerns acted on is not what we have come to expect given the recent SPHE junior cycle curriculum rollout. Given this past experience we understandably have concerns about the consultation process and question the recent non-involvement of parents in an NCCA consultation day on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023.*

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

### **Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing**

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

### **Insert response here:**

*The outcomes are realistic but again what one person sees as healthy or unhealthy may be at odds with parental views. There seems to be a lot of attention given to stress and anxiety as if there is an expectation that students ought to experience these? It may well be that introducing gender ideology which has no basis in science into the classroom setting may lead to stress and anxiety for many students who worry that disagreement with this ideology will result in bullying.*

### **Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

### Insert response here:

*Reading the outcomes there seems to be quite a negative slant – this should be such an exciting time in young people’s lives and a lot of this material in my opinion is very heavy – it warrants lightening up as many of these children are not adults yet and the focus should be on healthy friendships, having fun, engaging in sports, drama, music and focusing on their education. Many parents do not want their children engaged in serious relationships at this age and diligently take the time to involve their children in activities such as sport and music etc. The discussion of sexual activity in adult relationships is not something I imagine any parent would want discussed by their children, many of whom will not have reached the age of 18.*

*Identity comes up a lot and again the undertones of gender ideology are apparent. Much of the content may not align with parental values and beliefs and is at odds with a Christian ethos where sexual relationships are to be experienced in loving committed marital relationships.*

*There is little or no mention of topics such as love, marriage or the idea of raising a family which is an ideal that many young people will aspire to.*

*There appears to be a reductionist approach to sexuality with a focus on pleasure without a focus on love and responsibility. Discussing pornography, I imagine, is not a priority for parents who are generally focused on their children’s academic attainments and future prospects.*

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

#### Insert response here:

I am concerned about section 3.6 and how this may be interpreted as allyship skills can mean different things and can lead to views on white privilege or critical race theory or queer theory and again it is open to being portrayed in a particular way by individuals who may be allied to certain views which may run contrary to a Christian/Catholic viewpoint.

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

#### Insert response here:

There are a number of terms that are open to misinterpretation and these include the definition of gender identity which does not correlate with biological sex, there appears to be an over emphasis on LGBTQI issues and sexuality does not appear to focus on love, marriage, responsibility or the gift of children. There is an overt focus on sexual relations which includes sexual fantasies and pornography. The appropriateness of this is highly questionable.

### **Assessment in SPHE**

Given that SPHE is not an academic subject such as Maths or English and many of the learning outcomes have an ideological basis the subject should not be assessed as the student may be open to ridicule for upholding a Christian perspective on these sensitive matters. We have already seen from research that Catholic children are the subject of bullying as they are now a minority in some schools. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/religion-teachers-believe-catholic-students-being-singled-out-for-bullying-1.4594365>

### **Conclusion**

*Parents are the primary educators of their children and we see that our Constitution and the Education Act 1998 uphold this view. As Christian/Catholic parents we are not in agreement with some of the proposals and are concerned about the ideological basis of some learning outcomes.*

We are very concerned about the lack of consultation with parents and given what has happened with the Junior Cycle Curriculum and the accompanying textbooks that have been produced to deliver the questionable elements of the curriculum, it is suffice to say we do not have much faith in this process. The consultation process has not been widely publicised and it is difficult to find it on the NCCA website. We believe there should be an opt in for students in relation to SPHE and the RSE element should be a standalone element. Parents have a right to be fully informed on what teachers will deliver in relation to SPHE and this should be provided in advance of classes. I note that resources on the website refer to BeLongTo who have been known to conceal from parents what is being discussed and to not ask for consent.



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**Contributor**

Maureen Sherlock

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to 'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'

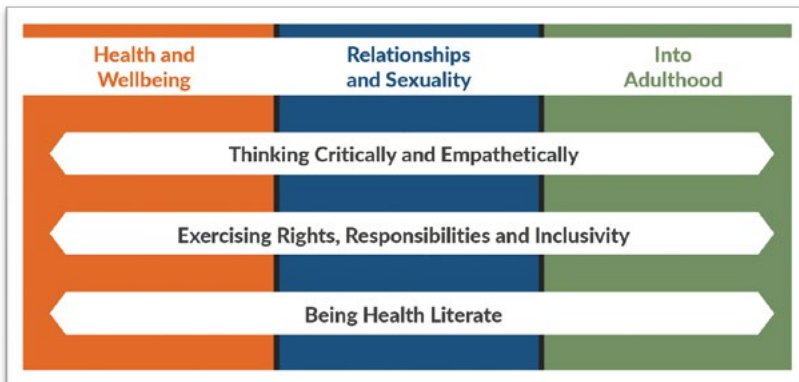
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Yes, I agree with this aim.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
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|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                           |
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| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

### **WHAT IS MISSING**

**In all discussions, replace 'What if' with 'Even if'.**

**Choice can be a heavy burden. Oftentimes our choices are not met. We get to live the life that is given us, not necessarily that which we wanted. We are only players in the Game of Life and have no control over it. 'What if' opens up all our fears and anxieties. 'Even if' empowers us to overcome all challenges.**

### **Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

### **WHAT IS MISSING**

I think in reading this entire chapter what was most prominent was the absence of the word 'love'. Indeed love is probably the word most commonly used by teenagers when discussing relationships. Love, as in 'Willing the Good of Other' is the foundation of all Christian thinking and the standard by which all relationships are judged. St Paul says if I do not have love, I am a resounding gong.

Love is patient, love is kind

It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things

Love never fails.

### Contraception

Following some high profile deaths from the Covid vaccine, it was revealed that by comparison the contraceptive pill had a much higher risk of thrombosis than the vaccines. This was a surprise to most people including the medical profession and is indicative of the very low level of knowledge regarding contraceptives. Numerous studies have been carried out but this research has simply not been made available. Teachers should have on-line access to contraceptive research with a priority to those studies involving adolescent girls particularly with regard to neuronal pruning and mental health, and high levels of depression. Also access to studies on Sexually Transmitted diseases and why the risk is higher in teenagers because they lack G mucus in their cervix.

### The Problem with Consent

Consent has become the primary basis for sexual activity, replacing love or even affection for its motivation. There are a number of problems with this. First, we are more than just physical bodies. Sex affects us psychologically and emotionally, due to the release of three chemicals into the brain and we cannot anticipate or know how this will affect us at the time of consent. Sexual consent is not between two equals. Men are physically bigger and stronger. It is man who generates sex and fathers the child, it is the woman as the receptor who must carry the child and also the responsibility. The male hormone Testosterone is classified for restricted use because of its volatility and aggressive behaviour characteristics. Oestrogen makes a woman emotional and more malleable. The 'Me Too' movement shows just how easily women can be pressured into making choices they later regret. This vulnerability is what turns female consent into male domination. The consequences of an action doesn't change just because it has been consented to. In the Elaine O'Hara murder trial, the fact that she had consented to Graham Dwyer's knife cutting sadistic passions did not lessen the physical and psychological trauma he inflicted on her. In the Belfast Rape trial, the two highly trained 200 lb male bodies would always pulverised the soft tissue of a woman's body, whether she consented to it or not. The absence of any public support for the victim in this case will have affirmed the validity of their action and will deter future victims from making a complaint.

### **Strand 3: Into Adulthood**

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

### Students should be able to

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 3.1 | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

**At first glance, the proposed curriculum is a very detailed and thorough programme incorporating every possible aspect of a student's well-being and development. However, there is no connection with the 'why' or purpose of education. The reason we educate children is that with an awareness of how past generations have worked to bring Society to where it is today, the baton is now passed on to them to maintain and build on those structures for future generations. Instead, there is an intense focus on 'self' as a primary interest, with just an addendum reference to responsibility for 'Others', lending itself to the danger of promoting narcissism. There is an emphasis on expecting life to fit their needs rather than on finding their role and contributing to Society. Work is portrayed solely as a career choice with an emphasis on congeniality, but no challenge given to the variety of roles needed to sustain a vibrant society capable of supporting itself. Those who labour for the good of Society in building and maintaining its physical structures, those in the Service industry with its shops, restaurants and hotels, those involved in Caring for the ill the young, the elderly, and particularly those investing in Society's future by being a mother or father are all excluded. The housing crisis has now revealed to us how badly we have neglected to include skilled labour in building Society for the future. What use is it to have so many university graduates and they have no homes to live in? Were it not for hardworking immigrants our service industry would also have imploded years ago. And like so many other countries, we are also facing a demographic crisis. As in the fable of the grasshopper, we are living only for today.**



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# Contributor

Michelle Kerrigan

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

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| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

Does this imply that there can be healthy 'online relationships'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

2.3:

I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years this is entirely inappropriate. The 'sex is for pleasure' philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of commitment, trust, communication, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of 'sexual activity' and 'sexuality' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people'.*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '***in all its forms***'.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.7:

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight image based abuse? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

--

## 2.8:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or '**sex in all its forms**'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: '*The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey*'(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

### 3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states- *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

*'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):*

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

#### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...*

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'.*

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'.*



1. There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

*-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.*

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'.*

*-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.*

*Social Norms... 'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important'.*

*-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.*



**NCCA**

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National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Contributor

## Pat Keating

## Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Agree

## Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Agree

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I am concerned about a number of proposals in the draft, specifically those relating to 'gender', 'gender identity', 'consent' and 'pornography'.

### **Gender**

**The draft specification defines 'gender' as "the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender is socially and culturally constructed, so understandings of gender differ across contexts and over time".**

**I find this definition takes for granted a contentious view of the word 'gender' that comes down too heavily in favour of nurture over nature. It appears to assume that any differences between male and female behaviour, even at a general population level, are purely down to 'social construction'.**

**A counterview to the one espoused by the NCCA is that 'gender' is primarily nature. To come down so strongly on the side of nurture, as the draft specification does, misleads students.**

**At a minimum, they need to be taught that there are competing views of what 'gender' is and any SPHE syllabus should give a full and balanced account of the nature vs nurture arguments.**

### **Gender identity**

**The draft defines 'gender identity' as "a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth."**

**We believe it needs to be made totally clear to parents what this means, and what the NCCA has in mind. Does the NCCA now believe that biological sex and gender are two totally separate things? Does it want Senior Cycle pupils to be taught this? Does it want pupils taught that to be 'male' or 'female' is simply a matter of self-identification and has nothing to do with your biological body? How does the NCCA want the words 'woman' and 'man' defined?**

**Does it believe that schools should be allowed to teach that a woman is biologically female, by definition, and a man is biologically male?**

**Exactly how many genders does it want pupils to be taught about? What does it want them taught about gender pronouns and their use? Does it want biological males who identify as female to be able to play in girls' sports teams in school?**

**Does the NCCA appreciate how controversial these topics are and that it is impossible to teach them in a value-neutral way? If the NCCA believes that gender is a choice and has no intrinsic relationship to our bodies, then it is taking sides on this issue in a way many parents might find unacceptable. To judge from the SPHE draft outline, the NCCA seems to have come down firmly on the side of gender ideology.**

**Parents need to be fully and comprehensively informed about what gender ideology is, and its implications. This must be done in a way that is true to both sides of the argument.**

## Consent

**Strand 2.3 says students should be able to “discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure”.**

**Will schools be permitted to teach pupils that consent alone is not enough, and that two people should be married first, before they become sexually involved? Will religious schools be allowed to teach that the ideal setting for sexual relationships is marriage?**

**Does the NCCA believe a couple does not have to be married before having sex?**

**The HSE website, [b4udecide.ie](http://b4udecide.ie) suggests reasons why young people should wait until they are older before having sex (although it only encourages they wait until they have reached the age of consent).**

**What do parents want their children to be taught. Do they think a consent-alone approach is enough? Do they want them taught about the importance of being married first? Parents receive only one mention in the specification even though they are the primary educators of children.**

## Pornography

**Strand 2.5 says SPHE will “investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations”**

**Some influential voices in discussions about RSE believe pornography can be positive as well as negative.**

This includes the 'Active Consent Unit' at NUI Galway which works in partnership with the Department of Justice and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. In a submission made in 2019 to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills about RSE, two members of the team, Pádraig MacNeela ( a senior lecturer at NUI Galway) and Siobhán O'Higgins (who has worked for AIDS West, also State-funded) said: “*pornography can have a positive impact in assisting with learning about sexual activity*”, although they accept that “the scripts [from pornography] for sexual activity and role models that young people are exposed to do not map well on to the WHO definition of positive sexual health”.

In 2018, a document called 'Porn Report' was launched by then Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor. It was written by Kate Dawson and the aforementioned Pádraig MacNeela and Siobhán O'Higgins. Dawson said: “it is not good enough to just say that 'porn is bad' because it is not, people really enjoy watching it, there are a lot of positive uses, but people need to have the skills to make their own mind up about the content they see because porn is so varied.”

The question therefore arises as to whether the NCCA believes pupils should be taught about pornography in a 'value-neutral' way that presents it as neither good nor bad as such but takes the approach that it can be either a positive or a negative influence depending on its content and how it is used?

Will parents be properly consulted about this?

**What is not in the specification; any mention of marriage or commitment**

One of the aims of the Senior Cycle SPHE this one will be replacing is to “discuss the role of commitment and relationship skills in marriage and other committed relationships, that help to support lasting relationships and family life”. (p. 28). Marriage is not mentioned at all in the new specification. Why is that? Marriage is not even treated as a distant prospect. It is simply ignored, and so is the possibility of having children. This ill-serves pupils and in the end fails the vital test of promoting their long-term wellbeing.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
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| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
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Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

Agreed

#### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Focus on stability of family life where parents are married as a life long commitment and the well established relationship between this and individual wellbeing



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# Contributor

Patrick Scully



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here: This statement is all 'Baseball, Hot Dogs, Apple Pie and USA' by which General Motors used during an ad campaign which claimed that their Chevrolet car (Chevvy) and the USA were one in the same.

In the same vein this stated aim above is equating the aims of the updated curriculum with those already in existence in any set of aims / Mission Statement, in any self-respecting school, in the country.

In other words, it is adding nothing to that which is already in existence.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

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| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
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|     |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                |
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| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I suspect a Trojan Horse here but, if parts of the new curriculum are, as actually set out above in Strand 1 then, as a caring parent and mindful of the dangers to the mental health of young people, 16 year olds and upwards, of drugs, alcohol and gambling then I believe Strand 1 should / would / could go some way to preparing young adults for these dangers that are around every corner particularly those of gambling and alcohol whose dubious 'attractions' are omnipresent in advertising carried by all media.

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
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| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

As a parent, Strand 2 is deeply disconcerting.

What on earth does the reference in 2,1 to 'nurturing online relationships' mean, I was under the impression that should be doing everything we can as responsible parents to discourage our children away from online relationships, yet, at the same time, schools will be doing the exact opposite.

Elsewhere, there is no mention, throughout all 9 sub-sections of Strand 2 regarding 1) that marriage is the cornerstone of society 2) the advantages of being in a trusting and respectful stable relationship and 3) of young adults being responsible for their own actions.

However, there is an overarching emphasis that if it feels right, and both parties (staggeringly maybe more) consent, then it is alright to indulge in 'intimacy' and giving each other 'mutual pleasure'!!

It all sounds fantastic, but, as an adult of many years standing I know there is no such thing as a 'free lunch'.....it is my life experience that every casual sexual encounter can leave a scar, a small one granted, but a scar all the same. In time these 'small' scars do add up and can lead to mental problems, not to mention increase the risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

The implication is that a person can have many sexual relations over time with many different people, or sexes, with little or no emotional, mental or physical impact only highlights the highly sexualised nature of this new curriculum SPHE with its reference to sexual intercourse 'in all its forms'!!!

*'Data to end Sept 2023 shows notifications for chlamydia were up 43% whilst those for gonorrhoea rose by 95% when compared to same period last year' per Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and reported in Irish Independent, Eilish O'Regan, on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2023.*

These figures indicate there is an epidemic of STI's in Ireland and the purpose of this SPHE course seems to me to be, primarily, about encouraging young people to indulge in sexual activity just as long as it is with consent, not need for it to be within a caring considerate relationship.

The whole 'sex is for pleasure' is the pervasive message of this strand.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

There is nothing here that addresses the scientific knowledge we know about the differences between men and women so there is too much emphasis on sociological differences rather than the evidence-based differences to say nothing about how both sexes complement each other.

‘Allyship’ is a word I am not familiar with.

What can /does it mean?

‘Allyship involves recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as a white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups’ (Allyship Skills – Glossary 2 of the SPHE proposal)

On investigation I now understand what it really means as it refers 1) to the LGBTQ+ community and 2) to a child’s, a young boy in particular, alleged privileged status as a white person.

1. The LGBTQ+ movement used to have Gay Pride Day, this has now renamed, Pride, and now lasts for a month. Pride has gone from the margins of society to the mainstream. Their rainbows are everywhere one looks in my child’s school.

Thankfully, these days, we live in a more open and tolerant Ireland. Our current Taoiseach and the last two Ministers for Children have been openly gay.

In such circumstances it is difficult to understand how the ‘gay’ community can still see themselves as ‘victims’, thus needing a more special place in Irish society than they now have.

Unfortunately, there is now a huge NGO support group built around the Pride who are continually pushing their agenda. At a recent Pride march in the US there were people taking part chanting 'We're here, we're queer, and we're coming for your children'.

As a parent of young children this is deeply deeply worrying.

Given all of the above its clear to me that the Pride community does not need special treatment over, and above, the rest of the community but that the rest of the community needs protection from the gay extremists particularly given the chant above.

2. Regarding white people 'enjoying' a privileged position in Irish society. Like most countries in the EU, the Irish population is, circa, 95% white so it is hardly a surprise that white people occupy most of the senior executive positions in the government. Having said that our Taoiseach is half-Indian showing that if one has the talent then, these days, it does not matter what colour one's skin is.

Being 'white Irish' has not much of an advantage for much of the last couple of hundred years as the white population has, in that time, had overcome famine, war, poverty and wholesale emigration from Ireland leading to the formation large Irish communities in the US (circa 40 million), the UK (circa 10 million), Australia and NZ (circa 5 million) and Canada (circa 5 million).

To put this in perspective, the native Irish population has still not reached the number it stood at in 1840, almost 200 years ago so talk of 'white Irish privilege rings hollow to many Irish ears. Indeed, my own family had to emigrate in the mid 1960's in search of a better life when there was nothing for us here in Ireland.

Therefore, this is an outrageous imposition of Critical Race Theory on Irish schoolchildren considering the long economic and political oppression their white Irish families have had to endure, with huge emigration and with many of us only managed to hang on living in Ireland by our fingertips.

The definition of allyship above is also hugely discriminatory AGAINST boys, men AND white people.

It is indicative of how much of this new curriculum is imported from the US, making it total inappropriate whatsoever to Ireland, and Irish schoolchildren, as it seeks to impose on these young children an ideological driven agenda which has no place in their education.

Final comments..

This Senior Cycle SPHE course, as proposes by the NCCA, undermines parents who are ,as recognised in the Constitution, the primary educators of their children.

It is being rushed through without proper, or indeed ANY, informed discussion with these same parents by politicians, with no mandate to do this, and certain NGO's who have an agenda at odds with most parents.

As a parent there is too much here for me to understand in the proposed new SPHE curriculum, let alone the innocent children.

My child's mother is employed as a Student Advisor in Third Level Education. She has attended courses organised by Belong To and TENI, both gay rights NGO pressure groups. In other words, the whole education staff infrastructure has already been 'softened' up, by vested interests, with weasel words such as diversity and inclusion.

It is imperative that this SPHE course is re-worked, this time in open consultation with parents to ensure that we are not presented with a fait accompli by insiders pushing their own agenda and gender ideology.



**NCCA**

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Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

**Contributor**  
Peter Carvill

Given Ireland's experiences of child sexual abuse and of the profound harm that it has caused, it is essential that we do not facilitate a new kind of abuse to happen on our watch.

The proposed curriculum risks creating heightened risks of exposure to and habituation to pornography; of sexual experimentation among minors, leading to peer sexual bullying, peer sexual abuse and even rape. This risk extends even to de facto grooming of children for sex abuse by peers or by adults.

A most dangerous aspect, given that a high proportion of those liable to gender confusion and dysphoria are autistic and therefore in a most vulnerable category. The risk in this case is that these young people may be persuaded to undergo forms of medical intervention and surgical mutilation that is not in the best interests of the young person, and that is likely to lead to extreme physical and psychiatric harm, in many cases irreversible.

There has been no risk analysis of this programme, regarding such issues as:

- High risk of harm to sensitive or on highly-sexed young people, and to autistic young people, whom studies show are particularly liable to gender uncertainty or dysphoria who may be persuaded to undergo forms of medical intervention not in the best interests of the young person, and likely to lead to extreme physical and psychiatric harm, in many cases irreversible.
- The "one size fits all" approach, which is quite unrealistic in matters relating to personal intimacy given the diverse personality types among a class of students.
- Failure to provide any role for parents in the sexual education of their children
- Failure to address the particular challenges facing teachers in a mixed sex class, where girls are significantly ahead of boys in their maturity.
- Bullying and teasing of children whose parents wish to opt their children out of the programme
- The inevitable message of social acceptability of pornography and the risk of more children being drawn into this harmful addiction.
- Increased risk of peer sexual abuse, rape and sexual bullying by minors and normalisation of genital activity among minors that is inherent in appearing to suggest that they experiment with different types of genital activity.
- Increased pregnancy among minors with abortion being the default option.
- Increased prevalence of venereal diseases.
- Corruption of children's personal growth in their understanding of sexuality and of love, respect, self-giving and partnership in enduring relationships and marriage and family.
- Failure to promote or provide for any concept of chastity and sexual self-mastery, which is essential to the development of maturity and respectful and caring sexual intimacy, and indeed the promotion of a merely hedonic attitude to sexual intimacy.
- Increased vulnerability of young people to grooming and to the manifest dangers of sexual abuse by adults
- The impact of the ambience which such a programme will have on the mental health and academic progress of students, and the substantial amount of time taken from the already pressurised Leaving Certificate timetable for this programme



- The risk to teachers who may be held responsible either to failing to follow the programme, for example on grounds of their ethical convictions and concern to avoid harming their pupils
- The intention to make this programme mandatory for schools and the failure to make clear and unambiguous provision for schools to present a programme that accords with the school's ethos.

This programme will expose teachers, the state and schools to the probability of future litigation by those who consider themselves to have been harmed by its pedagogy. There is no reference to or provision for such outcomes.

As the barest minimum, provision should be made for school governance to modify or replace the programme to accord with their stated ethos and religious or philosophical values, in accordance with our Constitutional rights and freedoms. In this there needs to be a central role for the trustees of the school.

However, more than that, it is essential that the programme be objectively reviewed to address and remedy many of the serious risks of harm to students that are inherent in the programme as it stands.



**NCCA**

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Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

**Contributor**

Rónán O’Cógigh

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to ‘empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.’

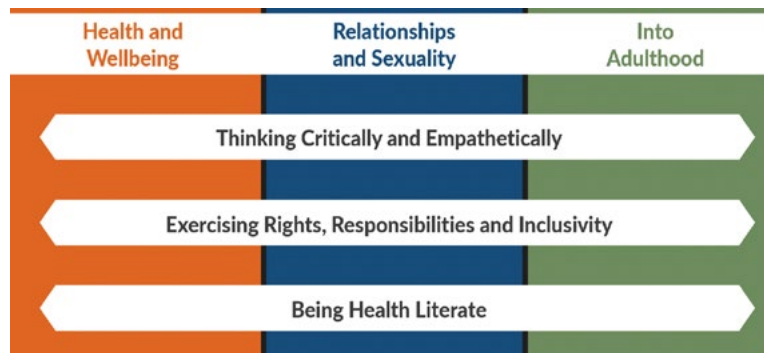
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here:

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don’t agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don’t agree with something that goes against their beliefs? If that is the case, then I do not agree.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, ‘me time’, and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one’s sense of self |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                           |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.**

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**2.1:**

I respectfully object to the suggestion of integrating online relationships education within the secondary school curriculum. This idea may inadvertently validate such engagements, potentially diverting from the core educational goals. It's crucial to acknowledge that online environments can pose serious dangers, including exposure to malicious predators, making online relationships particularly perilous for young, impressionable individuals. On the contrary, promoting face-to-face relationships can contribute to a safer and more humane social milieu. Furthermore, I am of the view that relationship education should encompass interactions among individuals of the same or opposite gender, recognizing only the traditional gender identities of male and female.

**2.3:**

I hold reservations regarding the appropriateness of delving into sexual activity discussions within the secondary school environment. The idea of such topics being introduced to my child at this stage contradicts my personal beliefs, and I am apprehensive about the extent of discretion allotted to educators in this regard. I would rather take the initiative to engage my child in these conversations when I deem it suitable.

The current approach seems to desensitize young individuals towards discussing sexual activity, inadvertently normalizing and sexualizing the topic among students. The emphasis, as observed, predominantly lies on the intimate and pleasurable aspects of adult relationships, sidelining essential facets like consent, which becomes particularly **concerning given the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years**. The 'sex for pleasure' narrative permeating the RSE curriculum overlooks the profound significance of commitment, trust, communication, and the overall quality that forms the bedrock of meaningful relationships. It also raises moral questions around sexual intimacy, where consent appears to be the solitary criterion.

Definitions of '**sexual activity**' and '**sexuality**' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.'*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '**in all its forms**'.

*'**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

**2.7:**

This proposition seemingly nudges students towards exploring pornography, posing the question of how they could evaluate its influence without engaging with pornographic material directly. Such a directive could spark curiosity among young individuals about the portrayal of sexual relationships within pornography. The underlying assumption appears to be a generalized notion that all school-going pupils would be exposed to pornographic material, inadvertently normalizing such exposure within this age demographic. This also sends a message that sexual activity is a commonplace expectation in relationships. The potential benefits of students investigating pornography are elusive, especially when the emphasis should ideally be on guiding them away from such material.

## 2.8

While there might be a semblance of merit in addressing the aforementioned issues, the necessity of spotlighting image-based abuse raises questions. This primarily concerns the discussion around the circulation, or the threat thereof, of intimate photos or images of young individuals on social media platforms. If the objective is to caution students against engaging in the act of capturing and sharing intimate selfies on social media, it could indeed be deemed beneficial. However, there's a lingering concern that introducing such topics may inadvertently plant the seeds of such ideas in the minds of young individuals.

## 2.9:

The aforementioned topics are primarily rooted in discussions surrounding sexual intercourse or 'sex in its various forms'. This necessitates an educational focus on practicing 'safe sex', a concept often deemed misleading, particularly given that sexual encounters among young individuals frequently transpire under less than ideal circumstances. It's indicated that the curriculum would encompass addressing unplanned pregnancies, likely extending to discussions on emergency contraception and abortion. I am opposed to the notion of imparting such knowledge to 16-18-year-olds. This learning outcome tends to normalize sexual encounters devoid of the contextual framework of relationships or commitment, potentially conveying to students an erroneous assurance of safe sex, thus undermining the importance of inherent caution in such matters.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: *'The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey'* (Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

## Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

### 3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of 'allyship skills' under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading '*Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.*' The introduction to this section states- '*...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality*' – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category and no one else.

#### **'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):**

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

#### **Question 3: Any further suggestions**

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be removed:

*'Gender: gender means the **socially constructed roles**, responsibilities, characteristics...*

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's **felt internal and individual experience of gender**, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.'*

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie '*a boy could become a girl, neither or both*' – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people.'*

– There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'*

-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.

***Social Norms...**'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of **what people actually feel is important**.'*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.





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# Contributor

Sandra O'Connor

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here:

I agree with that aim, although it is very broad and there are many hidden details here e.g. what does empathetic mean? Empathetic towards whom? e.g. will a student be required to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning and have to call them by their preferred pronouns even if they don't agree that a person can change their biological sex? Will they be accused of bullying or discrimination if they don't agree with something that goes against their beliefs?

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                           |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                             |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                 |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                  |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

I agree that these learning outcomes are relevant for this age group.

**Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**2.1:**

**I do not agree that it is necessary to teach secondary school children about online relationships.**

Does this imply that there can be healthy ‘**online relationships**’? Shouldn’t schools be steering students away from online relationships?

**2.3:**

**I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? It goes against my conscience for this to be taught to my child and I’m concerned about the leeway teachers will have. I would prefer to speak to my child about these topics when I feel the time is right.**

This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; **as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years** this is entirely inappropriate. The ‘sex is for pleasure’ philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of **commitment, trust, communication**, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of ‘**sexual activity**’ and ‘**sexuality**’ is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*‘**Sexual activity**: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.’*

– The NCCA ‘sex is for pleasure’ approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse ‘**in all its forms**’.

*‘**Sexuality**: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.’*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

**2.7:**

This is directing students to explore pornography: how could they assess the influence of pornography without actually watching pornography? This would also make young people curious about how pornography depicts sexual relationships. The assumption seems to be that all pupils in school would be watching pornographic material – in effect **normalising the viewing of pornography** in this age group. It is also indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. What possible good can come from students investigating pornography when they should be directed away from it?

## 2.8

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight **image based abuse**? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

## 2.9:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or '**sex in all its forms**'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: '*The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey*'(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

## Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**3.6:**

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

***'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):***

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

**Question 3: Any further suggestions**

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

***'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...***

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

***'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'***

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

***'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'***

– There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term *'diversity'* in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.'*

-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.

**Social Norms...***'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important'*

-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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# Contributor

Sarah Thompson



## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here:

In principal I agree with the aim, however I have concerns that there is not sufficient detail given about the term empathetic. I am very concerned that emphatic could mean a student would be expected to be empathetic towards a child who is socially transitioning, and in turn be required to call them by their preferred pronouns even if that is against their student's person own religious or personal beliefs. I would like for it to be clarified that if a student believes there are only two genders male and female that they will not be accused of discrimination.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                         |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                    |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.4 | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5 | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6 | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7 | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8 | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9 | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

**Yes I am happy with the clarity and the relevance of these learning outcomes.**

### **Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**2.1:**

**I don't think it is necessary to teach students in secondary school about online relationships.**

**2.3:**

**I think it is the parent\gordians job to discuss all materials relating to sexual activity with their children. This should be done at a time when they think is appropriate for that specific child taking into account the emotional and intellectual development of their child. There are numerous different levels of development in any class group a teacher is not the right person to decide when a child is mature enough to talk about sexual activity. I have grave concerns about the level of detail individual teachers would be allowed to go into with students under learning outcome 2.3. I think it is highly inappropriate for a Secondary School Student to be discussing sexual activity with their teacher and classmates as it leads to normalising this type of behaviour.. As sexual intercourse is illegal for students under 17 years of age in Ireland, I don't think it should ever be discussed in a classroom. I think schools should concentrate on teaching students about the importance of communication, friendship and enjoying quality relationships without including sexual activity. intimacy or mutual pleasure. This is very sexualised material and has no place in the classroom.**

**2.7:**

I disagree with this learning outcome in its entirety it is nothing more than a push to promote pornography. This is not appropriate to be discussed in any classroom and this learning outcomes seems to be set on normalising pornography. I can see no benefit to the student of this learning outcome.

**2.8**

I don't think it is the role of a teacher to discuss any of the learning outcomes in this section other than to direct student to professionals.

**2.9:**

I do not believe the teacher should be teaching any of this. The age of consent in Ireland is 17 years so issues to do with fertility and sexual practices should not be discussed. I think a list of professional agencies that can give a student help, if the need arises should be made available, without going into too much detail in the classroom.

### **Strand 3: Into Adulthood**

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                        |
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|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 3.5 | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6 | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

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I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of ‘allyship skills’ under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading ‘**Inclusivity**... an approach that is inclusive...of **all genders, sexualities**, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.’ The introduction to this section states- ‘...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality’ – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

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### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

Below are some of the other **controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised** definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

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– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child’s physical biological sex.

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**'LGBTQI+':** an umbrella term to signify gender and **sexuality diversity** and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'

- There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

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-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.



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# Contributor

Sean Sloan

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to 'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

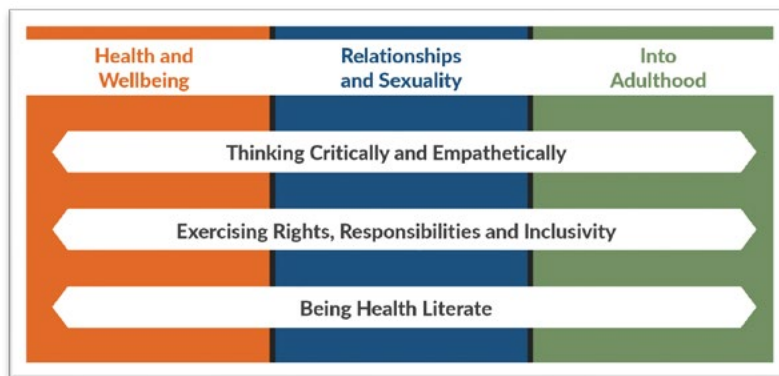
#### Insert response here:

I support this aim.

I agree with the aimed statement but believe it falls slightly short of the purpose of the curriculum. The purpose of education is academic as much as it is about life skills. It should also teach that academic achievement and self learning can drive many of the future opportunities which will arise beyond school.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                         |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance |

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.3  | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4  | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5  | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6  | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7  | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8  | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9  | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.10 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

I believe an additional learning outcome could be added which addresses the dangers of too much 'screentime' or overindulgence in social media<sup>1</sup>, television<sup>2</sup> or binge watching series on demand. These can damage a young adult mentally and lead to them becoming introvert and distant. A outcome which addresses this would be great as I didn't identify any outcome which reflects the digital world.

I also would like to see an outcome added which emphasises physical health. This outcome would encourage good diet and physical health. We know the damage<sup>3</sup> obesity can cause and addressing it within the curriculum would be a fantastic opportunity to create healthy outcomes from youth. I know this is covered a bit in strand 3, but I see the strand 3 goal being more about future objectives rather than outcomes which can have more immediate results.

<sup>1</sup> <https://mentalhealth.ie/blog/effects-of-social-media-on-mental-health>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9368441/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/poor-mental-health-low-self-esteem-biggest-implication-of-obesity-in-children-1.4080815>

**Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality**

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |



|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.3 | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                            |
| 2.4 | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives        |
| 2.5 | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                      |
| 2.6 | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available     |
| 2.7 | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                              |
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

I support the core aim however I'm concerned about the note "*should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated*". Are LGBTQ+ identities being singled out within the relationships and sexuality section of the curriculum over the other aims? I would have a concern that extremist voices such as activist groups like TENI or BeLong are shouting the loudest and unduly influencing the curriculum to the detriment of other strands of development. I believe the learning outcomes should be tiered with particular priority on outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.8 and 2.9. Outcome 2.6 should closely align with outcome 2.5. Outcomes 2.3 and 2.7 should be covered but could be covered in standalone sessions. I am also concerned about outcome 2.4. What harmful attitudes around gender are being perpetuated in the media, online and in society? There needs to be a middle ground which protects womens rights, whilst also helping and protecting those who are vulnerable and may not feel the sex they were born with is what they want to be. Gender identity is not well understood and teaching that someone can be 'born in the wrong body' is hugely irresponsible as the restrictions it places on someone are endless. Its very important that we protect those that feel they aren't perfect but no one should be taught that they were born wrong.

**Strand 3: Into Adulthood**

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

It is vital that the curriculum educates children and young adults and puts them on a pathway of self fulfilment and becoming valuable members of our society.

3.1 - Young adults need to be taught the benefits of a good lifestyle which blends healthy living and a good environment. They need to be advised of where to contact for professional support and how to express their feelings in a way which empathetic and relatable towards their peers. They should be taught the benefits of socialising and broadening their peer group.

3.2 – An approach which blends continual advances in technology with core skills needs to be thought of when considering how to teach self-management. 20 years ago diary or time management was a paper based method. Nowadays smart phones have replaced this method but achieved the same outcome. Advising children on where to look for resources and to access the value of that resource independently will be important.

3.3 – Without trying to hark back to times gone past, religious education provided solace to those going through difficult times. This can still provide solace for believers in God, but for those who have no faith in God a new approach is required. A good approach could be achieved by linking up students with life coaches, sporting or professional role models and bereavement and relationship counsellors. Knowing who to turn to during a life event is often more important than any theoretical education.

3.4 – Social media and the irresponsibility of many national media outlets (and indeed some government ministers) in promoting ‘influencers’ and ‘celebrities’ can easily mislead young people. People can aspire to easy money or form a belief that their own rights trump others. An approach to use is to try and place people in someone else’s shoes to learn about the importance of responsibility. It could be useful to link in a mix of with successful professionals, reformed criminals, bereaved parents and victims of ill treatment to try to educate young adults as to the best path in life.

3.5 - Often the ability to stand up for oneself and others is ingrained in a persons DNA. It’s a difficult skill to teach. An approach to use is to where through case studies where no one stood up for an individual or group who were being discriminated. Without being seditious it is important the young adults are taught their rights and taught that democracy and freedom from tyranny, exploitation or servitude are core human rights. An example could be to bring in someone who was trafficked into Ireland or someone who was a victim of domestic violence where people knew but no one said anything.

3.6 – The most important piece of information any child or young adult should be taught is that they are unique. No one knows what someone is going through or what difficulties they may have experience. There should be no such thing as an ally, just friends. Teaching that someone is superior or inferior is senseless and self defeating. There is shame in trying to teach a young adult who has experienced significant trauma that they are in some way privileged, it is like teaching original sin. A good approach I would have learned from a teacher was for alternating weeks he actively discriminated against people based on their eye colour. He didn’t tell any of us what we had done wrong until after 6 weeks of it. His purpose was to try and show how petty and racism and sectarianism was and for us to learn from it.

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

**Insert response here:**

I have completed this response because my children are in the school system but yet to start Senior Cycle.

When I was 9 my uncle was murdered because he was Irish and because he was Catholic. I was a same year in school as a boy who's older brother (aged 16) was abducted and murdered on his way home because he was Irish and because he was Catholic. I know people who's parents were murdered, people who's siblings where murdered and people who's children were murdered because of their identity. I know parents who's sons committed suicide whilst still at school. I do not know who has proposed a set of privileged statuses in the consultation document(<https://ncca.ie/media/6269/draft-sc-sphe-for-consultation.pdf>) but I would like them to meet these bereaved people. If possible I would like NCCA to contact those groups or individuals who proposed the sample set of 'privileges' listed in the Allyship skills section. I can facilitate with them meeting with under privileged people or people who have experience significant life events. I believe there is a lot they could learn and which may be beneficial to future curriculum changes which they wish to propose.

I believe every person is unique and therefore special. I do not believe in pigeonholing people into groups then signalling them out for bullying or racism. My interpretation of the proposed curriculum changes is that they will lead to bullying and racism.

**Allyship skills:** refers to the actions, behaviours, and practices used to support, advocate and collaborate with others, in support of justice and equity. Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups.



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# Contributor

Thomas Smith

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

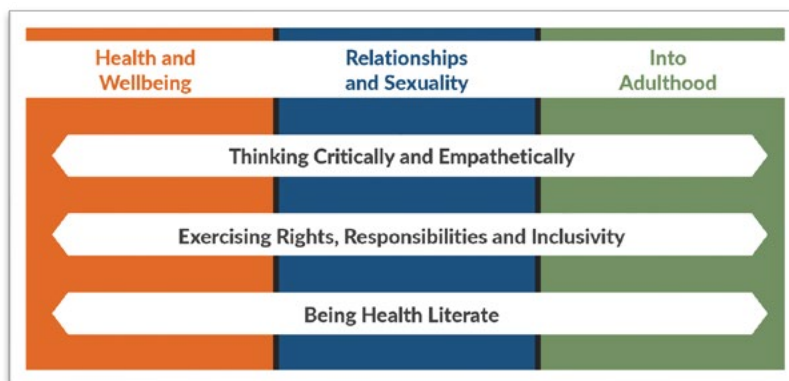
Insert response here: I disagree. The aim sounds good on the face of the above wording but the means is not appropriate for children. Teaching children so young about gender ideology and sexual orientation seems extraordinarily ill advised when these are clearly adult themes and many adults have differing opinions about these things. To teach such things like gender ideology as fact when there is no scientific consensus seems misjudged.

There seems to such over emphasis on sexual activity rather than teaching children about self control and helping children understand the benefits of having committed loving relationships.

Also the role of parents seems to be omitted which is at odds with our constitution where parents are rightly considered the primary care givers. This needs to be addressed.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here: Again there seems way to much focus in the course material on all things sexual. It almost seems obsessive. Key is to let children be children and provide them a safe environment to grow in wisdom and maturity that when they are adults they will be well formed to understand that sexual activity belongs in commitment relationships namely marriage and that engaging in sexual activity where the only criteria is consent is flawed and can cause psychological problems.

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.6 | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available     |
| 2.7 | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                              |
| 2.8 | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                               |
| 2.9 | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services. |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

2.2 Identity - There is a lot of focus on 'identity' in the curriculum. Identity seems overly linked with sexual behaviour. There is much more to a person than their sexual behaviour but it seems pushed as by far the most predominant part of who a person is. Sexuality should be though only on the biology of sex as anything more goes into the realm of a philosophical point of view being pushed on children too immature to understand such adult themes.

2.3 Discussing sexual activity in adult relationships is not appropriate for children who are below the age of sexual consent. This approach would push young children in the direction of sexual activity and normalizing it as part of relationships – thereby sexualising children which is wholly inappropriate.

'Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, foudling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people'.

There seems to be a doctrine underpinning this all that sexual pleasure is the guiding principle undergirding this whole curriculum which is not scientific but a worldview being pushed on children too young to be exposed to such ideologies.

2.7 Investigate the influence of pornography... Pornography is a complete perversion of the sexual act. To view others engaging in sexual activity is clearly perverted. Pornography is not something any person should ever be exposed to. The damging effects of watching pornography are well documented so this should be excluded completely from any course in a school. Pornography should be something we are considering to make illegal never mind teaching it to minors.

2.8 discuss image-based abuse...what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these - There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight image based abuse? We should tread very carefully here. To put these thoughts or ideas into young childrens heads seems almost like an attack on the poor child's innocence. Again this is too much of an adult theme, so not suitable for children.

2.9 explore sexual and reproductive health - all of these aspects arise from sexual intercourse or 'sex in all its forms' – is this appropriate for 12 year olds? Again so much emphasis on sex. Children need to be formed first and then when adults they can go into the world and not be looking to sex for pleasure but looking to meet someone to have a committed relationship with. Sex for pleasure leads so much more to unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Children are not mature enough to be having any sort of sexual activity.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

#### Insert response here:

**3.6 demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion’.**

The ‘Allyship skills’ definition below is in the Glossary of Terms of this draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification -

**‘Allyship Skills:.. Allyship involves recognising and using one’s privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups’.**

Is this not racist sexist against white and / or Irish males? This is an ideology and has to be rejected straight up.

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Please cut out the vast majority of teachings on sex and sexuality. It just seems obsessive and is detrimental to creating well rounded young adults.

Can we stop labelling people LGBTQ+ etc. We are all people, different and varied but we all share our humanity together. I think these labels separate people again based mainly on sex. Building strong and caring characters should be the aim of educating children. Leave the sex till much much later. Let the children be children.





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National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

**Contributor**  
Tonya Pell

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

Yes, I agree that the aim summarizes the purpose of the updated SPHE curriculum. The themes of health, resiliency, responsibility, and empathy seem to be integrated well throughout the curriculum, including the key competencies. The three strands and three cross-cutting elements allow for a lot of overlap and learning opportunities for the students to see how the various themes are interconnected. By approaching SPHE in a more interdisciplinary way, I think the outcomes will aid students in seeing how interconnected their health, relationships, and personal experiences tend to be.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
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|     |                                                                                                                                                       |
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| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I do think these seem relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds, as long as there is an emphasis on social media and peer pressure. I think having frank discussions on self-image, comparisons, and peer pressure from social media needs to occur so students can learn how to better handle social media culture and, in turn, their mental health.

#### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I do think that the learning outcomes are relevant and align with the learning expectations for SPHE. I think that sexting needs to be discussed and included in conversations related to image-based abuse and consent. To avoid that topic is avoiding a huge reality for teens and college students nowadays. Handling that conversation, along with pornography and the like, must be done in a non-judgmental manner. I also believe it's important to stress the negative impacts that gender can have on men today and the stereotypes that perpetuate toxic ideals of masculinity. In having conversations, rightfully so, about gender-based violence against women and gender minorities we can't steer clear of the reasons why men perpetrate gender-based violence. While I see a support for examining gender and gender-based violence, I do want to see an explicit outcome related to gender identity. If the curriculum is inclusive, transgender, non-binary, and other gender minority students need to see themselves reflected and discussed explicitly.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

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| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

I believe these outcomes are relevant as well. For 3.3 I think it's important to name grief as the feeling they will experience in their life. Grief can occur for a variety of reasons and being able to name that as an emotion and how it impacts us is crucial to moving through life. I also think that while giving students the skills they need to stand up for themselves, you must be able to name why they might need to in the first place. Discussing power structures and how they show up in our lives is crucial for students learning on why those skills are important in the first place.



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# Contributor

Valerie Brooks-Healy

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

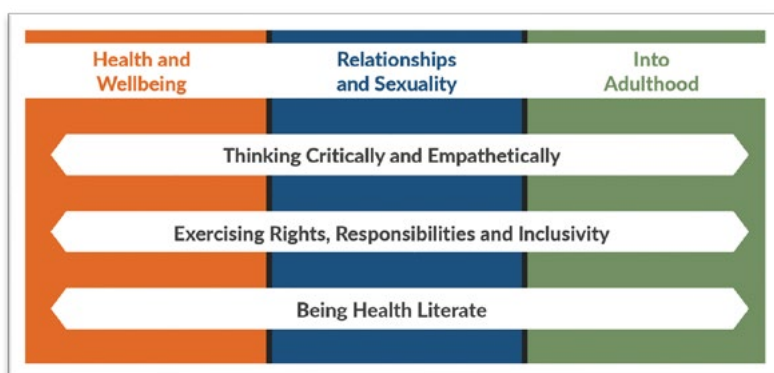
Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

#### Insert response here:

I agree with this but again, this is content over view, I would like more in depth information as a breakdown on each broad section.

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three cross-cutting elements, illustrated below:



Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

**In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.**

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#### Students should be able to

- 1.1 research the determinants of good health
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|     |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| 1.1 | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

**Insert response here:**

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

**Note:** Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

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| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand. This section is not relevant or appropriate for 16 year olds today: 2.1 I do not consent to my daughter been taught in school about on-line relationships, this is the role of the mother or father not the school as I believe schools should be directly boys and girls away from online relationships.

consultation from the school as to the depth of the curriculum. The definition of sexual activity in the appendix 2 also makes me want to vomit as I am thinking about this from a 16 year olds point of view, and as the mother to teenagers re: sexual activity ...founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people. This is utterly sickening, degrading to teenagers about respect for their own bodies and others and places them in a situation that no mother wants to see their son or daughter enter into. It is utterly perverse and shame on any teacher that would look to teach this distorted view of sexuality and relationships. No safety in this at all. I am utterly appalled by this. Again the use of the word sexuality in the glossary is appalling, the highly sexualised nature of this curriculum speaks volumes and jumps off the page and it scream sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual shaming and confusion of sexual identity. There are only two genders, male and female. The use of normalising sexual partners and multiples of them is utterly reckless as an education/curriculum assessment section; I am absolutely appalled by this curriculum. 2.6: as a woman I am very aware of the actual and portrayal of abuse against women within all societies, however, the focus should not be against women/girls but of all men and women. To do it this way creates a divide which does not help neither sexes, both boys nor girls, it's goal appears to create segregation, fear and isolation and to make all men out to be monsters and dangerous. Not a very good approach to take and I do not consent to this. 2.7: this section also alarms me as how can a 16 year old determine how they are influenced by pornography if they have never seen it unless they have seen it or intend to be shown it. It implies that the curriculum would be exposing these teenagers to pornography which I am completely opposed to and that in effect normalising the viewing of pornography and creating curiosity to view it and that it is indicating that sexual activity is a normal expectation in relationships. The physical and emotional attachments to this normalising are beyond comprehension as a mother and I do not consent to any/all of it EVER. No good whatsoever would come from 16 year olds searching porn and thinking this is normal as the majority do not do this. 2.8: in theory this section is relevant but again it's the deeper content I am unsure about, the rest of this appears to be warped with inappropriateness, and indicates to me to create a dangerous environment for teenagers and the above content would create situations where the issues like sexual harassment, image-based abuse, rape and sexual assault would now be a problem for that teenager instead of preventing it in the first place. The monster in the room created the monster that now must be dealt with. 2.9: this section completely contradicts everything that it aims to teach teenagers and it is again as a result of the complete inappropriate requested teachings within the curriculum up to that point. Clearly everything that is promoted in the previous sections is the reason that these teenagers would need to know this, prevention is better than cure and the cause would be this new curriculum and I do not consent to any of it. Learning about unplanned pregnancy will undeniably create the conversation and learning about the morning after pill and abortion; again this is a result of normalising sexual activity and all its forms and I as a mother do not feel teachers are equipped to teach teenagers this in a classroom setting as this continues to be the primary role of the teenagers mother and/or father. The assessment looking at what boys and girls have learned from these sessions takes away their right to privacy regarding the highly sexualised nature of the topic, hence, I do not consent to these assessments been written about or verbalised about in any of these highly sensitive and emotive topics for my son or daughter to expose themselves or listen to others been exposed in front of up to thirty others. NO WAY.

**Insert response here:**



### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

#### Students should be able to

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1 | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2 | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3 | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4 | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5 | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6 | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) **clarity** on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) **relevant** to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

#### Insert response here:

This is irrelevant to the lives of 16-18 year olds. I have genuine concerns about the use of the word ally as it is used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people and this is referred to in the glossary of terms in appendix 2 recognising the use of ones privileged status (example white, male or Irish) to support those from minority identity groups. As a mother I find this repulsive to teach my daughter this “critical race theory” within a school environment as this sets out a presumption that this “privileged group” are treated as privileged and are to be formally disrespected, despised and made feel inferior. This is straight away creating a divide that did not already exist. It is discriminatory against this so called privileged group and is clear how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including Queer theory and Gender identity. These have no place in the education system and my daughter will not be exposed to this disgusting agenda. I teach my teenagers to be proud of the fact to be white, male, female, Irish, and to respect others that are English Japanese, Asian or whatever they are. This racism and cultural divide coming from a school assessment team is utterly awful and this is where the unnecessary hate speech rubbish is coming from and been fuelled. It will not be fuelled on my watch, therefore I do not consent to this rubbish been taught to my teenager.;

### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

#### Insert response here:

I do not agree to the implementation of this curriculum in its entirety.



**NCCA**

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National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Contributor

## Vincent Nolan

## Questions to consider

### Question 1: Aim

The aim of the updated curriculum is to *'empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.'*

Please state whether you agree this aim summarises the purpose of SPHE for senior cycle students and your reason for agreeing/disagreeing.

Insert response here:

### Question 2: The Learning

The draft course is structured around three strands and three crosscutting elements, illustrated below:

Below provides extracts from the draft specification. See draft specification pp 11–15 for a more detailed outline of the learning.

In the following section, we would value your feedback on each of the three strands.

#### Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Within this strand, students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these aspects of health. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                        | research the determinants of good health                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.2                        | discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance                            |
| 1.3                        | critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs                                                                                               |
| 1.4                        | explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self |
| 1.5                        | recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour                                                                                |
| 1.6                        | draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health                                                  |
| 1.7                        | recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed                      |
| 1.8                        | discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety                                                                                                                      |
| 1.9                        | explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed                                       |
| 1.1                        | discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.                                                                      |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 1, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-18 year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

### Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1                        | demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict |
| 2.2                        | reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour                                                                   |
| 2.3                        | discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure                                                                            |
| 2.4                        | examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives                                        |
| 2.5                        | identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control                                                                                                                      |
| 2.6                        | explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available                                     |
| 2.7                        | investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations                                                                                                              |
| 2.8                        | discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these                                                               |
| 2.9                        | explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.                                 |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 2, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16-year olds today. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

2.1:

Does this imply that there can be healthy 'online relationships'? Shouldn't schools be steering students away from online relationships?

2.3:

I do not believe that discussing sexual activity is appropriate for students in Secondary Schools? This is de-sensitising young people to discussing sexual activity and in effect normalising it – thereby sexualising students. The focus given here in adult relationships is on intimate sexual activity and pleasure. Consent arises for sexual encounters so this is educating young people about consent for sexual intercourse etc; as the legal age for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years this is entirely inappropriate. The 'sex is for pleasure' philosophy underlying the whole RSE curriculum shines through here. What about the importance of commitment, trust, communication, and the quality of relationships? What about the morality of sexual intimacy when consent is the only criteria?

Definitions of 'sexual activity' and 'sexuality' is given in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2 of the full draft Senior Cycle SPHE Specification –

*'Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, fondling to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.'*

– The NCCA 'sex is for pleasure' approach pervading the whole RSE Curriculum is evident here – no reference to the relationship context (eg sexual activity can be solitary) – This is not the message that 16-18 year olds should be learning, as with the reference to sexual intercourse '***in all its forms***'.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships over time with different people.

2.7:

There may be some good in the above issues, but is it necessary to highlight image based abuse? This seems to be the question of intimate photos or images of young people circulating, or threatened to be circulated, on social media. If it warns students from taking intimate selfies or worse and sharing them on social media platforms, it could be a good thing – but I fear this is putting the very idea in young peoples' minds.

## 2.8:

All of the above aspects arise from sexual intercourse or '**sex in all its forms**'. This will require educating students on how to have 'safe sex', which is a myth, as sex often takes place in less than ideal circumstances, especially for young people. But as indicated, the course will teach them how to deal with unplanned pregnancy – no doubt they would be taught about the 'morning after' pill and abortion. I do not agree that 16-18 year olds need to be taught this. The above learning outcome normalises sexual encounters without the context of relationships or commitment and would give students the impression that they can have safe sex, so there is no need for inherent caution about this.

\*\*\*Note that the draft SC SPHE curriculum has a new dimension to teachings in SPHE/RSE – assessment of what pupils have learned: '*The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey*'(Full SC SPHE Specification – see p.16 'Assessment').

-This is inappropriate for the intimate nature of topics covered in the Strand 2 on RSE and a violation of students' rights to privacy in these highly sensitive issues.

### Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and maintain good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

| Students should be able to |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                        | explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2                        | demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3                        | explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times                                                              |
| 3.4                        | summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights |
| 3.5                        | consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise                                                                                                      |
| 3.6                        | demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.                                                                                                           |

Having considered the learning outcomes in Strand 3, please comment on whether you think the learning outcomes provide (a) clarity on expectations for learning in Senior Cycle SPHE and whether you consider the learning outcomes to be (b) relevant to the lives and needs of 16–18 year olds. Please also let us know if you think anything important is missing from this Strand.

Insert response here:

### 3.6:

I believe these terms are generally used by the NCCA to refer to LGBTQ identified people, and these categories are the prime focus of *'allyship skills'* under this heading, including transgender people. The NCCA Information Note on the SC SPHE makes this clear under the heading *'Inclusivity... an approach that is inclusive...of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities.'* The introduction to this section states– *'...build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality'* – the NCCA have the LGBTQ community in mind in this category.

*'Allyship Skills (Glossary of Terms in Appendix 2):*

*Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups'.*

– This is an **outrageous** imposition of critical race theory on Irish school students, especially considering the long history of oppression of the Irish people. It is also a discriminatory statement against men and white people – this is a giveaway of how ideologically driven the NCCA school curriculum is, including gender identity and Queer theory, which have no place in the education of young people.

#### Question 3: Any further suggestions

We would appreciate any further suggestions for how the draft updated Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum could be improved?

Insert response here:

Below are some of the other controversial, indoctrinating and overly sexualised definitions in Appendix 2. I would like these to be either removed or amended:

*'Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics...*

– this is the false proposition that gender is socially constructed and unrelated to a child's physical biological sex.

*'Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth'.*

– This is gender identity theory – that a person's felt gender may be different from their biological sex; ie *'a boy could become a girl, neither or both'* – as set out in some of the SPHE textbooks. This is categorically false.

*'LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people'.*

1. There is a completely disproportionate focus on LGBTQ matters in the SC SPHE course and this is generally what they are referring to when they use the term 'diversity' in the SC Specification.

*'Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships.'*

*-The highly sexualised nature of the SC SPHE course jumps out from this definition, including the implication that a person can have sexual relationships with different people over time.*

*'Sexual Orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender'*

*-This points to 'intimate sexual relations' with more than one person and more than one gender.*

*Social Norms... 'it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important'*

*-This points students in the direction of the prime importance of their feelings – rather than any objective set of values in the area of sexuality and relationships. And it directs students to critique social norms – no doubt the normal conventional morality of sex is for marriage, or at least for a committed heterosexual relationship.*





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