



School-based review: **Cycle one questions**

Thank you for participating in this school-based review of senior cycle. The purpose of this review is to initiate conversation and formulate a shared vision for senior cycle education for the future. Below you will find the questions for cycle one of the review and some discussion prompts that may help to initiate discussion in your school. When reporting on the discussions it is important that different opinions as well as consensus is gathered for feedback.

When discussing senior cycle be aware of the full range of programmes that are offered at this level and include reflections on Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE).

Q1. Currently, what are the best things about senior cycle in your school?

Things to think about

Any review should recognise the positive elements that are currently evident in the system. From the perspective of your own school, what are the most positive aspects of senior cycle for your students? As a staff, please discuss your initial thoughts and prioritise the top three aspects of senior cycle that you feel are central to the experience of senior cycle in your school.

Q2. What are the main challenges relating to senior cycle in your school?

Things to think about

*For teachers and schools, challenges such as maintaining the relevance of curricula, mediating the backwash of the high stakes examination on the teaching and learning in the classroom and offering relevant pathways for a diverse student cohort are important. **ESRI research** has suggested that workload, student stress, regret over subject choices or pathways and a narrowing of learning experiences, inadequate preparation for what comes next in their lives and in further and higher education are some of the main challenges facing students in senior cycle.*



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From your school's perspective, discuss and prioritise what you consider to be the main challenges relating to senior cycle. Please describe 2-4 of these challenges in your response.

Q3. a) Looking toward the future, from your school's perspective what do learners need to gain from senior cycle to succeed and participate actively in an ever-changing world?

Things to think about

***International research** across a number of countries highlights the role of this stage of education in helping students to achieve full potential, preparing them for further and lifelong learning and employment and enabling the development of adaptable, future-focused individuals and responsible active citizens. The **World Economic Forum** identifies a mindset and willingness towards lifelong learning as well as an emphasis on cognitive abilities such as creativity, logical reasoning and problem sensitivity as essential preparation for future employment, whereas the **OECD** identifies global competence¹ as a key element in preparing young people for an inclusive and sustainable world.*

Looking toward the future, from your school's perspective what do learners need to gain from senior cycle to succeed and participate actively in an ever-changing world?

¹ Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues; to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others; to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.

b) What changes to senior cycle would be needed to enable this to happen? Please explain your answer.



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Q4. a) How should senior cycle build on the student experience of the new junior cycle?

Things to think about

The **Framework for Junior Cycle** focuses on key skills such as being creative, working with others and managing myself, in addition to recognising and valuing different types of learning and reporting on a broader range of learning.

From your school's perspective, how should senior cycle build on the key skills, focus on wellbeing, varied reporting practices, greater local autonomy, the potential for creative and flexible programme development and design, and a wider range of curriculum components emerging from the reform of junior cycle?

b) Are there any challenges in building on the new junior cycle experience from your school's perspective?

Q5. a) Does the teaching and learning at senior cycle enable all students to achieve their full potential?

b) Currently, to what extent do you feel that senior cycle is inclusive of all backgrounds, talents and abilities?

Things to think about

International research reveals a general principle that upper secondary provision should enable all students regardless of their individual need, profile or ability to achieve their maximum potential. In the current context, how well do we enable all students to achieve their potential? From your school's perspective, are there particular groups of students that currently have difficulty reaching their potential?



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c) **How can we ensure that in the future senior cycle education helps all students achieve their full potential?**

Things to think about

*In a society that is increasingly diverse how can senior cycle help all students succeed? According to the **CSO**, 12% of the population is from a non-Irish background (becoming increasing dual national) from over 200 countries, with linguistic skills in multiple languages. Approximately 13% of the population have a disability and approximately 20% of the population experience deprivation.*

Q6. a) **How do you currently define success in senior cycle (including TY, LCA, LCVP, LCE)?**

Things to think about

In your school, how is success at senior cycle defined? Is it completion of post primary school, access to further education, entry to third level, preparation for employment, development of life skills, or something else?

b) **How should we define success in senior cycle?**

Things to think about

*At present in Ireland, 92% of students remain in school to complete the Leaving Certificate. Of these, approximately 5% do the Leaving Certificate Applied and approximately 25% complete the LCVP. **International Research** reveals that many countries have a variety of learning pathways that lead to qualifications and certification used for different purposes.*

Qualifications and certification may take the form of school leaving certificates, matriculation certification, vocational certification, transcripts of achievements or high school diplomas. Other countries also utilise a broader system of assessment and reporting that is not limited to the reporting of academic achievement where individual research, community work or work experience can be awarded credits and reported on.



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Do you think any changes are needed to recognise or document different aspects of success? In reporting on educational achievement at senior cycle, what learning and experiences should be recognised, reported on and certified?

Q7. **What have we missed?**

Things to think about

Are there any other key pieces of information that should be considered in an examination of the purpose of senior cycle education?