



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

Questions for Parent Focus-Group Sessions

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 among the parents 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. What are the best things about the senior cycle experience available to your child?

Any review should recognise the positive elements that are currently evident in the system. From the perspective of your experience, what are the most positive aspects of senior cycle for your child/children?

Facilitator notes

This question and the next are tapping into people's thoughts about the 'baby' and the 'bathwater' of the current system. The 'baby' being those aspects that are valued and that respondents feel should be maintained, the 'bathwater' those that aren't valued and that respondents feel should be revised or changed.



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

From your perspective, what do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of senior cycle for your child/children.

Facilitator notes

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. For teachers and schools, other challenges exist such as maintaining the relevance of curricula, mediating the backwash of the high stakes examination on teaching and learning in the classroom and offering relevant pathways for a diverse student cohort. **As parents are there other challenges you can identify?

Q3. a) Looking toward the future, what does your child need to gain from senior cycle to succeed and participate actively in an ever-changing world?

Facilitator notes

***International research** across a number of countries highlights the role of this stage of education in helping learners 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.*

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.



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

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

From your child's experience, how can 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?

Facilitator notes

***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.*

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

Q5. a) Currently, to what extent do you feel that senior cycle is inclusive of all backgrounds, talents and abilities?

From your perspective, does your child's/children's background, talents or abilities make it difficult for them to reach their potential? Are your child's/children's talents rewarded by their senior cycle experience?

Facilitator notes

***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?*



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

From your perspective as parents are there barriers to your child /children fulfilling their potential evident at senior cycle? How can these barriers be overcome?

Facilitator notes

*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 Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Established)?

From a parent's perspective, how is success at senior cycle defined?

b) How should we define success in senior cycle?

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?

Facilitator notes

*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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Q7. What have we missed?

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

Glossary of Acronyms

ERSI: The Economic and Social Research Institute

This is a national organisation working towards a vision of 'Informed policy for a better Ireland'. They produce high-quality analysis to provide robust evidence for policymaking, with the goals of research excellence and policy impact.

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This is an international organisation that promotes policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world, as such, it provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems.

CSO: The Central Statistics Office

This is Ireland's national statistical office, their purpose is to impartially collect, analyse and make available statistics about Ireland's people, society and economy.