

Senior Cycle Review

Please see below for a submission from the **Japanese Language Teachers of Ireland (JLTI)**, the representative body of Japanese language teachers, including post-primary teachers, in Ireland.

The JLTI welcomes the NCCA Senior Cycle Review and agrees that the present senior cycle structure, driven by a high-stakes end of year assessment model, may not cater equitably for all students, nor fully take account of the varied learning styles that exist within even a single classroom. In addition, with Junior Cycle Reform well underway, the JLTI agrees that a disconnect now exists between the new Junior Cycle and the present Senior Cycle structures. We welcome the creation of a more diversified assessment approach that moves away from a heavy single assessment loading.

However, we do have a number of reservations regarding potential options under consideration.

1) If the number of exam subjects taken by students were to be reduced, we believe that such a move would negatively affect language uptake in general and diversification in particular. As the Languages Connect website points out, only 6.5% of the world's population are native English speakers, and yet 70% of Irish people cannot speak a foreign language. Protecting and encouraging language education in our schools is a key issue for our students who are continually adapting to a more pluri-lingual and cultural school environment and society as a whole.

2) A reduction in class contact hours for exam subjects similar to the changes that have occurred at Junior Cycle level would have a detrimental effect on language competency levels, especially with a subject such as Japanese which students start in 5th year at abinitio level.

3) The JLTI would also be concerned at the potential negative impact on students of Japanese if a new assessment in 5th year would be introduced too early in the academic year. This would greatly impede on the space and focus on teaching and learning that takes place in 5th year in a less pressurised and more relaxed environment. It would be our concern that if senior cycle assessment components were to be divided up between the 2 years, students would feel pressured to constantly focus on assessments throughout their whole senior cycle learning experience.

What the JLTI would welcome is a review of the end of cycle assessment method, and the possible addition of a digital literacy component. For example, we would like to see communicative skills being expanded to include the teaching and assessment of electronically written texts.

Finally, the JLTI would hope that the results of this review process will produce an improved senior cycle structure that will offer students greater choice and flexibility,

both in the subjects on offer, and the assessment methods. We believe that offering Japanese at post-primary level not only encourages language acquisition, but also promotes cultural understanding, supports a more diversified education model, and provides students with valuable skills they can take with them in their life journey as young adults.