

Senior Cycle review: Synopsis of feedback from Junior Cycle for Teacher Support Service.

July 2019

The NCCA undertook to review Senior Cycle Education. In 2016 a Senior Cycle board was created. In 2017, the NCCA gathered International perspectives from 9 other countries to inform and to generate a conversation about Senior Cycle in the Irish system. In 2018, the NCCA engaged with 41 schools in two cycles of consultation. The first cycle focussed on the purpose of Senior Cycle education and Cycle two focussed on pathways, programmes and flexibility. The feedback was analysed by ESRI and shared at national seminars for discussion with other stakeholders. The review offers an opportunity to generate a shared vision for Senior Cycle and a strong base from which to shape a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners.

All full-time Advisors and Team Leaders in JCT have had the opportunity to engage in the same process through an initial input at a training event and then to discuss some of the key questions with in their team collaboratively. All inputs were gathered via a folder in One Note and then collated as one submission to the review process. The details of the feedback from within the JCT support service is detailed below.

Senior Cycle: Synopsis of consultation one

What are the main challenges in Senior Cycle currently?

Themes emerging include:

1. Pathways

- Currently there are narrow pathways at Senior cycle. There is a perceived lack of value on vocational education with limited access to apprenticeships. The general public and the education system place less value on the Leaving certificate Applied programme which is more vocational in nature.
- There is deemed to be one route for students which is truly valued by stakeholders and this is directly to third level. The supply and demand for college places drives the points system and thus back washes in to the learning experience of students.
- Leaving certificate does not cater for all types of learners- students are directed in to one pathway.
- There is poor quality and not enough guidance at senior level to support students currently.

2. Impact on students

- The impact of the current system on student's wellbeing was emphasized across the consultation within JCT. High levels of stress are experienced by a lot of students.
- Students, Parents and Teachers can place value on subjects which are perceived to be easier to gain points. Students choosing subjects to study at senior cycle to gain greatest points regardless of interest in the subject. Points system is the driver of

the teaching and learning culture in schools which can be a negative experience for students.

- There is a lack of balance for some young people between home and school life with sports and activities forsaken for grinds and study in the final year of study. The system encourages teaching to the test and the need for a grind culture which impacts on student's wellbeing.

3. Impact on Teaching, Learning Assessment and Reporting

- Teaching to the test can become the focus in a lot of senior cycle classes. Learn and forget culture associated with the terminal exams like the leaving certificate.
- The Leaving certificate examination is a poor indicator of suitability for college.
- There is a lack of awareness and enactment of the Senior Cycle framework in classrooms.
- Past exam papers and books are the driver of the content taught not the syllabus/ specification.
- Lack of opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways. This can then impact on the pedagogy in the classroom. Tension between high stakes exams and meaningful student engagement.
- Curricula are perceived as being too broad which can lead to extensive workload and content heavy in delivery.
- Over reliance on teacher led delivery and student engagement decreases the student learning experience. Spoon feeding and notes giving culture to feed 'points race' driven exams.
- Rote learning, memorisation, under emphasis on critical thinking skills dominate.
- Non-exam subjects with pastoral/ vocational aspect are under-valued.
- Only two of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences being valued – Logical/ mathematical and linguistic, other intelligences are only included in part depending on subject area.
- Lack of alignment between Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle currently.
- Compartmentalisation in some subjects through their syllabus design i.e. Art history and the practical art component. They are engaged with separately by the students in the classroom.
- Over emphasis on the summative assessment and little consideration given to ongoing assessment and formative feedback.
- Density and scheduling of the final three weeks assessment period is very challenging for students with little consideration given to the nature of the assessment.
- Disparity in the types of assessment (Art and Music have a large practical component where as Home Economics does not have a practical exam) Imbalance in some practical subjects compared to others.
- There is too much focus on summative assessment currently. There is a need to explore assessment periods over the two years of senior cycle. Not a broad enough assessment picture to support student learning. One exam at the end of two years not fair to students or reflective of their learning journey.
- Big difference in expectation of learning between ordinary level and higher level.

4. Inclusion

- The current system is not inclusive of all students.
- There is inequality in resources between schools and this can impact on the student experience and level of achievement gained. Teaching resources impacts on the curriculum offered so students in smaller schools can miss out.
- There are too many subjects at senior cycle for some students in order to 'get' the Leaving certificate.
- There is no senior cycle Level 1 and Level 2 for students who need these programmes.
- There is little or no emphasis on Key skills for life.
- The system is very rigid and has a clear lack of flexibility in programmes or assessment modes to be inclusive of students.

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

1. Skills

- Develop competencies across all literacies – visual, oral, digital, written etc.
- There needs to be greater parity of esteem for all competencies in the curriculum.
- Application of knowledge not rote learning for summative assessments.
- Development of discipline knowledge vs. Subject Knowledge.
- To develop the skill of collaboration and working with others.
- To develop communication, digital intelligence, adaptability and Innovation.
- More value placed on vocational education/ skills.
- Development of practical and creative skills as these compliments and support academic skills.
- Skills which are transferable to an everchanging work market and world. To develop the skills of evaluation and reflection that can be used in an everyday situation.
- Awareness of living sustainably needs to be embedded.
- Problem solving mindset/ critical thinking needs to be developed in all subjects.
- Development of skill set from Junior Cycle needs to be expanded and embedded in learning experiences.
- Student centred approach allowing time to explore and create new learning experiences.

2. Personal development

- To develop confidence with in students in a number of areas- in themselves as learners and their capacity to learn and to develop their own voice.
- To become creative, self-reflective, confident and not risk adverse young adults.
- Connection to the community and active citizenship is important for senior cycle students.
- Being resilient and able to maintain their own wellbeing.
- To develop a growth mindset as they move through senior cycle.
- Space for personal development, creativity and entrepreneurship to flourish.
- Flexibility, resilience and wellbeing need to be nurtured.

- Importance of relationship and sexuality education at senior cycle is central to develop at this age and stage of learning.
- Collaborative and group work skills .
- The ability to do research and presentations need to be embedded in the learning process.

3. Pathways

- A need to develop the concept of lifelong learning – learning which is fun, ongoing and enduring over time.
- Instil a love of learning that is beyond content knowledge to support learning journey of life.
- Broader pathways which includes better career path awareness for the modern world.
- Broad balanced learning that is relevant to real life and prepares young adults for life after second level schooling.
- Predictability in assessment (Examination papers) needs to decrease to reduce dependency on rote learning and support learning for life and college.

How should Senior Cycle build on the student experience of Junior Cycle?

1. Competencies and skills

- Continue to build on the competencies and skills developed at Junior Cycle as well as the knowledge/ values. To develop a problem solving, critical thinking mind set is crucial for young people.
- Learning outcomes specifications allow for unconstrained learning in the classroom which needs to be part of the Senior cycle programme.
- Retain a focus on key skills.
- More consideration of developing future skills needs for life and work.
- Learners should have the opportunity to connect learning in different subject areas and not continue to keep them in subject silos.
- Wellbeing for students in all its aspects needs to be further enhanced and developed.

2. Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Reporting

- Establish different modes of assessment to include projects, portfolios completed in non-exam conditions. Record of work to demonstrate learning. Allows all students to excel like in the Junior Cycle classroom-based assessments.
- Recognise the importance of reporting on a broader area of learning (OAL) Senior Cycle Profile of Achievement.
- Continuity of using learning outcomes continues to place the student at the centre of their learning through choice, flexibility, skills and assessment practices.

- There needs to be points like the CBAs as reference on the learning journey in a subject at senior cycle.
- Needs to be a focus on ongoing assessment in the classroom and to embed the language of learning. Extend the dual approach to assessment with a balance between formative and summative assessment.
- Needs to be greater flexibility in the Curriculum and assessment approaches to allow for student choice. Suggestion of 50/50 prescribed versus open content in English.
- Refrain from labelling students too soon in their learning path, allow them time to mature.
- Curriculum that is learner focussed, appropriate and inclusive. The system needs to continue to keep the student at the centre through choice and flexibility in the dual approach to assessment.
- Use similar language to avoid confusion.
- Use of action verbs and learning outcomes should continue in to Senior Cycle.
- Consider quality learning experiences and not quantity of content driven .

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

1. Voice and Choice

- Modular approach to learning and assessment.
- Short course modules to broaden the curriculum.
- Equity of school facilities and subject choice needs to be addressed for all students.
- The curriculum needs to offer all students 'Hope'.
- Wellbeing is central to student development and in this space, we need to develop resilience/ responsibility.
- Need to focus on senior cycle skills and life skills.
- Empower young people to value being educated versus having an education.
- Other criteria need to be considered for entry to third level. Points too narrow a gauge.

2. Career Guidance

- Entrance to third level needs to require a more diverse intelligence and skill set.
- Relevance of current career guidance programmes in schools needs review. Is it fit for purpose? A more focussed taught programme regarding career guidance is required. Career guidance can vary from school to school therefore there is not a consistency of student experience across the system.
- Work experience, Vocational, Community and voluntary placements needed. Also, greater connections to business, coaching and mentoring.
- Recognition of different learners in the system and that other pathways are needed.
- Transition year needs to remain an option and not get subsumed in to a compulsory three-year programme.

3. Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Reporting

- Teaching, learning, assessment and reporting in the classroom needs greater relevance to students lives.
- System needs to change to actively engage students in their own learning.
- Value and report on extracurricular activities /other learning that happens in school.
- More inclusive programmes needed to ensure all students have access to relevant learning.
- Greater need for personalised learning programmes for students empowering young people to make their own decisions.
- Level 1 and level 2 required at Senior Cycle to enable inclusion of all students at Senior Cycle.
- Better links between second and third level to aid transition to college/ third level.
- 3-year cycle for all a consideration with core and optional pathways for students.
- HEAR and DEAR access programmes should be further developed.
- Teacher / student relationship is central to effective teaching and learning needs to be emphasized at senior cycle.
- Lots of CPD is required before any curricular changes are introduced. One day per year in the subject space is not enough to support the level of change that is required. CPD needs to be front ended several years before the reform and build on experience of CPD at Junior Cycle.
- Different learners express learning in different ways. Greater assessment literacy required by teachers to capture this learning.
- Different assessments that carry different weightings over the two years are needed. Different assessment modes for different purposes to ensure full learning picture for the student is gathered and reported on.

How should we define as Success in Senior cycle?

1. Personal development of students

- Continuity of learning which develops over time. 'Yet to meet' expectations of learning may continue to develop. Students have a sense of development and autonomy over their learning.
- Active, critically engaged, sense of citizenship participation and civic duty.
- A belief in their own capacity to adapt, work in teams and make choices. A student who is happy in school and can manage the balance between workload, develop inter and intra personal relationships and learn to be resilient. That students have a stronger sense of wellbeing and self-worth.
- A student who is capable of using knowledge to answer questions that are not predictable.
- Celebrate self-directed learning.
- Healthy balance between academic effort and other areas of life.
- Evidence of healthy competent adults.

2. Skills Focus

- New skill sets developed by students to be recognised as key learning moments.

- Important to develop a digital fluency at senior cycle. This needs to be embedded in to the assessment moments to ensure that the skill set is acquired and valued by all.
- Development of skill sets that support lifelong learning.

3. Pathways

- Development of pathways to traineeships/ apprenticeships to ensure equality of access for all.
- Universal equal access for all students to learning at Senior Cycle.
- Robust respected technical and vocational education path into further education.
- Portfolio and interview application process for third level.

4. System

- Reduce or remove relevance on the points system.
- Leaving certificate seen as part of the students learning journey not as an end in itself.
- A system that is not focussed on gaining points but educating young people for the myriad of challenges that lie ahead.
- Fair system whereby students manage stress during the assessment moments.
- A system where students are praised and given positive/ formative feedback frequently to support learning.
- A system where students enjoy learning and curiosity is sparked.

5. Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Reporting

- Broad spectrum of learning demonstrated across a variety of modes and means.
- Sense of self as learner will continue to learn and develop beyond school.
- Realistic and meaningful education experience.
- Complete picture of student personal, educational and skill development.
- To develop autonomous learners and nurture a curiosity about life and learning evidenced through reflective engagement.
- A positive learning experience to build on the learning of Junior Cycle.

6. Teacher development

- To continue to promote the professionalism of teachers as curriculum developers.
- Empowered teachers who are passionate about their subject area.

Senior Cycle: Synopsis of consultation two

Current Senior Cycle programmes

Transition year, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Established and the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme are the four programmes currently available to be offered in Irish Schools.

- 1. Please outline, in your opinion what are some positives and some negative aspects of each programme. Give examples where possible.**

Positives

Transition Year Programme

1. Student experience modular learning and collaborative learning and enjoy learning new areas of learning that are outside the traditional curriculum at either junior or senior level. This supports the holistic development of the student in their learning.
2. Opportunity to sample subjects and make more informed subject choices and an opportunity to experience adult world through work experience and community work (helps students to mature).
3. A varied approach to assessment due to a mix of learning experiences e.g. subjects, modules, work experience and work in the community.
4. Opportunity for students and teachers to build relationships outside of the classroom setting.
5. The programme can be very student centered in approach to learning and assessment with ongoing portfolio work usually a central mode of assessment.

Leaving Certificate Established

1. There is a clear pathway to 3rd Level from engaging in the programme.
2. A transparent system of assessment and progression (SEC/CAO) therefore there is high levels of public trust in the external assessment.
3. Within the LCE 18 of 37 subjects have an additional assessment component. There is a variety of ways of displaying learning in some subjects.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

1. Combined with Leaving Certificate Established subjects is a pathway to 3rd level.
2. Up to 60% of final grade derived from portfolio work. There is high levels of public trust in the external assessment.
3. Students experience enterprise and work modules. This gives students insight into the world of work.

Leaving Certificate Applied

1. LCA prepares students for skills-based employment and apprenticeships.
2. Motivational aspect to ongoing assessment and feedback. This supports student engagement and developing confidence in their learning and achievement.

3. Broad range of reporting of achievement through different modes of assessment. Students accumulate credits over the course of the two years through assignments, completion of modules, tasks and interviews.
4. Teachers have to collaborate to ensure that it is co- curricular for some of the tasks.
5. Key assignments are completed at the students own level.

Negatives

Transition year programme

1. Programme varies significantly from school to school and a lot can depend on the teacher or coordinator running in the programme in a school.
2. Not offered in 11% of schools and there can be an inequity of facilities and resources from school to school.
3. Some evidence of student exclusion due to additional costs so equity of engagement for all can be an issue.

Leaving Certificate Established

1. High stakes nature of the final assessment means higher stress levels amongst students and teachers. Some students are making poor subject choices based on perceived potential points rather than aptitude for subjects.
2. There seems to be an overemphasis on the established leaving certificate as a pathway, and not enough flexibility and choice to combine aspects of different programmes into a student's senior cycle profile of achievement. Only 40% of schools in Ireland offer LCA and only 5% of senior cycle students participate in LCA, therefore although this may be the most appropriate option for a student, they may not have access to this Pathway/Learning experience.
3. The Leaving Certificate report provides students, parents and employers with a limited picture of the knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes of the students over the two years at senior cycle.
4. Highly stressful experience for students with a very negative impact on student wellbeing. There is an over emphasize on summative assessment.
5. There is a lack of accessibility for a programme that should be accessible to all.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

1. There can be some segregation of students in schools where the programme is offered.
2. Decisions made locally about student participation.
3. Grade based reporting structure does not report on students' knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes.
4. There can be timetabling restrictions which can impact on access to the programme.
5. School resources can impact on access to IT facilities to complete part of the assessment.
6. Points don't benefit the high achieving student, so this can be a disincentive for engagement.

Leaving Certificate Applied

1. Assessment is ringfenced with no access to 3rd level (exclusion from CAO). This assessment model is very beneficial to students but is a limited pathway to 3rd level via a PLC programme.

2. Only 5% of students study the programme as its not available to all. There is limited availability to students as it is not offered in all schools and in very few Voluntary secondary schools.
3. Some students following programme can feel segregated in schools where LCA is offered leading to isolation from their peers. They are seen as 'other' or different to their peer group.
4. Students are not assessed based on spelling, grammar or punctuation. Further research is required to consider the extent to which these skills are necessary for further education and employment.
5. Employers lack knowledge about the course content and this may lead to a lack of value on the programme by employers.

Structure

1. How long should Senior Cycle be and what flexibility if any, should there be to complete Senior Cycle at a different pace?

- Flexibility should exist for students in terms of taking a 2- or 3-year senior cycle programme.
- Students should be able to leave this programme after one year, receive a certificate of achievement and be able to return at a later date. Others should be able to extend the duration to three years if required. In order to provide an inclusive education for all, flexibility is required.
- Based on the existing model students can complete TY and two further years however this is not suitable for all students so there should be a 2 year option which incorporates some of the beneficial aspects(modules) of TY i.e. work experience, community work so that students who engage in a two year programme do not miss out these opportunities for vocational and social maturity.
- Students should be given a choice. The minimum time spent at senior cycle should be two years. This should encompass work experience and career guidance.
- Perhaps a better flexibility between the Leaving Certificate programmes would allow for a more inclusive programme to suit all student's needs. What if students could pick and choose modules from LCA and subjects from LCE. This would support Junior Cycle students that are following the Level 2 Learning Programme. It would allow student to learn at their own pace. A combination of TY, LCA, LCVP, LCE would increase student engagement, provide structure, better access to progression routes and reduce stress levels as students are given more choice.

2. Should Senior Cycle be structured in Subjects, Modules and /or units of Learning?

- Flexibility is required here, the provision of major and minor subjects would allow students to access a range of subjects and therefore not be pigeon holed at a young age e.g. if a student chooses home economics, biology and geography in the Leaving Certificate at the moment this is rigid, and they will not have access to other areas such

as a business subject. Major and minor subjects would allow access to a broader education base and therefore a broader range of pathways after secondary education.

- Senior Cycle is currently a mix of these through the TY, LCA, LCE and LCVP programmes. An ideal model would incorporate aspects of all these programmes and replicate the new model of short courses and subjects in JC. All students would study a combination of subjects (fewer than the current 6/7) and complement this with short courses taken in each of the two years of senior cycle.

3. Are there some subjects/areas / modules that should be studied by all students? If so what are they?

- The answer to this question in some ways depends on what has been studied at Junior Cycle, and this should be considered when addressing this question.
- English (literacy) and Maths (numeracy) should continue to remain core.
- Some connection to Irish culture be that through language or history, should form an important part of any senior cycle. Consideration would need to be given to this to arrive at the best possible option.
- Module: Work skills to incorporate work experience, applying for work, interview skills, and dealing with the work environment. Work experience should include a specific work assignment.
- Vocational preparation - career guidance, work experience, work in the community
- Skills preparation - digital technology, research, collaborative learning
- Social and Emotional development - wellbeing, relationships and sexuality
- Sustainability should be studied by all students. Education for Sustainable Development content and/or principles are being integrated into new specifications. Students develop awareness of the need for sustainable development and use of natural resources at local, national and global scales. For example, sustainable development is embedded in one the units of the Economic Specification.
- Political Education should be studied by all students. Financial literacy and work experience. Research has identified aspects of TY such as the inclusion of work experience, modular learning, collaborative learning, learner-led curriculum and self-development as being beneficial.
- All students should leave post-primary with digital literacy.
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning should be considered. Similar to STEAM, is it possible to make more explicit links between subject areas? Can we move towards areas of study that promotes critical thinking and problem solving? Can we tap into student strengths and interests? What do our students aspire to be or become?
- A movement from subject to discipline? Making connections and relevance to real life situations.

Pathways

1. To what extent do all students have suitable pathways and learning experiences available to them?

- In many ways this depends on the outcome that the student wants from senior cycle. It also depends on the school that the student attends and the programmes and subjects that they offer.
- Currently there seems to be an overemphasis on the established leaving certificate as a pathway, and not enough flexibility and choice to combine aspects of different programmes into a student's senior cycle "profile of achievement."
- There are at present insufficient supports for student progression to a range of future pathways, such as apprenticeships. There seems to be an over emphasis on progression to third level regardless of what is being studied there in some cases. More pathways that value technical and vocational modules needed.
- Currently students have access to different pathways and learning experiences in senior cycle education through TY, LCE, LCA & LCVP
However, there is an over-emphasis on Leaving Certificate Established, only 40% of schools in Ireland offer LCA and only 5% of senior cycle students participate in LCA, therefore although this may be the most appropriate option for a student they may not have access to this pathway/learning experience.
- There are limited pathways for students with additional needs and no pathway for students following the Level 2 Learning programme at junior cycle.

What suggestions would you make?

- Consistency in terms of programmes on offer to students is needed. Flexibility in terms of a student's ability to study a range of subjects suitable to them is also a very important consideration.
- We would recommend more flexibility in the area of learning experiences/pathways, currently these programmes are ring-fenced however there should be an option to combine different aspects of the programmes to meet the needs of the individual student. Flexible pathways are inclusive of all students. A modular approach is key to enabling this to happen.
- To be equitable all senior cycle programmes should be offered in all schools but financially this is not feasible. The development of a broader type Leaving Certificate Established which incorporates aspects of LCA, LCVP and TY is probably the best solution so that all schools essentially offer the same programme but there is choice within the programme.
- Perhaps some of the courses require a revamp. Similarly, the LCA module content is not responsive to the changing labour market conditions.
- Perhaps if there was a programme that provided choice in vocational and academic? Perhaps all students would have a compulsory vocational component to better prepare them beyond senior cycle?
- Would it be possible for students to be given the choice to combine aspects of different programmes offered at senior cycle?

Assessment

1. What are, if any, the positive features of the current approaches to assessment in senior cycle (TY, LCA, LCE and LCVP)?
 - Within the Leaving Certificate Established, 18 of 37 subjects have an additional assessment component. Some of these additional components are completed in advance of the terminal exam.
 - High levels of public trust in the external assessment.
 - Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme has a portfolio worth 60% of the final grade completed over 2 years.
 - Leaving Certificate Applied students accumulate credits over the course of the two years through assignments, completion of modules, tasks and interviews. Students receive feedback on progress throughout the year.
 - Transition Year programme - a varied approach to assessment due to a mix of learning experiences e.g. subjects, modules, work experience and work in the community.
2. What are, if any, the negative features of the current approaches to assessment in Senior cycle?

Leaving Certificate Established:

- The Assessment window and modes are condensed in to a narrow time frame.
- Only some subjects have an additional assessment component. Problems can occur with this additional component if students move school's mid-way through the two-year programme.
- Limited second chance opportunities.
- High stakes terminal exam.
- Impact of high stakes on learning and teaching.
- High stress levels for students and teachers.
- The current system does not reflect the student's broader skills, ability and aptitude
- Points race leads to subject choice rather than interest or ability in the subject.
- Bonus points for mathematics gives rise to certain challenges faced by both teachers and students.
- Focus on memorisation, rather than higher-order critical thinking skills.

Leaving Certificate Applied:

- The assessment model is very beneficial to students as it is ongoing and factors in many aspects of learning, but the results of these assessments are not a pathway to 3rd level.
- Students are not assessed based on spelling, grammar or punctuation. Further research is required to consider the extent to which these skills are necessary for further education and employment.

3. What changes would you like to see in assessment at Senior Cycle? Outline the kinds of changes.

- Greater flexibility in spreading assessment out over a longer time period. Ongoing Assessment during the year as part of the final grade. Assessment should be based on modules within subject areas like the third level system. In Northern Ireland, the system allows for assessment periods at the end of the first year to be counted as part of the whole result. This ongoing assessment is better for the student and the teacher.
- Greater student choice in content covered for assessment.
- A wider range of assessment practices that value a wide range of knowledge, skills, and ways of displaying learning.
- More portfolio-based work to show progress, process and product.
- Project work which makes up a component in all subjects which is student centred in design.
- Value placed on non-academic achievements, such as work experience for all students, participation in the community (like Gaisce).
- Assessment in: Interview skills, Financial Skills, Cooking, Nutrition (Modules/Short Courses).
- Value placed on Lifelong Learning.
- Continuity from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle in areas of assessment.
- Provisions to be made for students following the Level 2 Learning programmes at senior level.
- Different tracks to choose from at senior cycle: academic or vocational track should lead to different types of assessment modes.
- In order to retain the external assessment and its validity, student work should be externally supervised. Currently, due to the high stake's nature of the Leaving Certificate, senior cycle projects are being heavily influenced by the teacher, leading to the question, what is the learning for the student? These could be assessed by creating a supervised assessment where students are asked about their experiences, encouraged to reflect on their role or demonstrate a skill they have developed through the project etc.
- Students would complete a senior cycle programme that involved a combination of subjects (long courses) and modules (short courses).
- A combination of results from subjects and credits from short courses would be used by CAO to establish pathway to 3rd level.

Reporting and Transitions

1. What, if any, are the positive features of current approaches to Senior Cycle reporting?

- Reporting of achievement in traditional Leaving Certificate through SEC and the CAO system is broadly considered fair, and transparent. Grades received are converted in to points for access to third level.
- Broad range of reporting of achievement in Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied
- LCA reporting on progress throughout the year and gathering of credits over the two years through the completion of modules, key assignments and tasks and interviews supports student engagement and developing confidence in their learning and achievement.
- In Leaving Certificate Established, of the 37 subjects, 18 subjects have an additional assessment component. Variety of ways of displaying learning in some subjects (Engineering).
- In LCVP, students complete a portfolio worth 60% of their final grade. This is a better way of ongoing assessment and reporting of learning.
- LCA students receive a descriptor of the credits achieved over the two years broken down in to four levels (Distinction, Merit, pass and fail). This method of reporting rewards continuous effort and achievement along with attendance.
- The process of appeal is a positive.

2. What, if any, are the negative features of current approaches to Senior Cycle reporting?

- Some view approaches to assessment as narrow, giving a limited picture of the knowledge, skill, abilities, and aptitudes, as they transition to the worlds of work, training and further education.
- Narrow timeframe for assessment of learning.
- No opportunity to repeat just one exam.
- No recognition for Other Areas of Learning in senior cycle.
- Excessive media focus on reporting of transfer rates to college. Reinforcing the value that society places on the pathway to third level and ignoring reporting on students' pathways to other post leaving certificate learning.
- Not all students engage in TY and do not benefit from the ongoing reporting which is normally a feature of this year.
- LCE/LCVP - grade based reporting structure does not report on students' knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes.

Is there anything else that you would like to add not mentioned above?

- Student learning during senior cycle should help students to develop the capacities they need for adult life irrespective of their choice of post-school destination.

- Senior Cycle in Ireland has, to date, been a predominantly academic pathway with very limited vocational, technical or professional options available therefore greater flexibility within senior cycle could provide students with the option of a more personalised Leaving Certificate with greater variation in subject choice and forms of assessment.
- The rigidity of the CAO and pathway to third level needs to be assessed and a review of university admissions should be carried out.
- Work experience and specific assignments in the workplace should be reported upon by the employer and student.
- Community involvement activities and extracurricular/co-curricular activities should be reported on.
- Exploration of a single Leaving Certificate programme (available in all schools) that adapts best practice from both the LCA and LCVP, with students being able to choose a combination of subjects and short courses that best supports their learning.
- One idea is that TY in its current form would disappear but beneficial aspects such as collaborative learning, work experience and community work would be incorporated into a 2-or 3-year senior cycle programme.
- High quality CPD needs to be put in place to support teachers in the Senior Cycle Reform. CPD that provides cross-collaboration and supports change.
- Better partnerships between the researchers, teachers and students to improve the learning outcomes for our Senior Cycle students.

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