

To whom it concerns,

Below are some general comments from two staff members in the School of Education:

### Curriculum components

The hearts-and-minds work for a new senior cycle has to begin long before any curriculum roll-out is envisaged. This needs to happen with PDST, teachers and parents. The NCCA are embedded in the reform process for years before a curriculum is released, the work on peoples' understandings of the rationale and the benefits and so on should be done BEFORE the curriculum roll-out is due to happen, not at the same time.

### Language education

The Senior Cycle review could draw on the learning from the Primary Language Curriculum and take an integrated view of language competence across English, Irish, curricular and heritage languages. This would provide a closer alignment with the language educational needs of an increasingly diverse population as well as celebrating and appropriately supporting the development of the rich multilingual repertoires of the students in the education system.

### Other comments

The review process is succeeding in surfacing all the main issues which concern students, parents, teachers and other educators.

The "negative backwash effect" of the CAO cannot be overestimated.

Education systems are notoriously slow to change but the pushback against the junior cycle reform process should not be allowed to dictate the pace of senior cycle reform. If an "evolution not revolution" approach to change is to be followed it may take very many years for meaningful change to occur. This is not fair to the students who will go through the senior cycle in the meantime and given the serious global challenges Irish society is facing over the next period – climate change and the rise of AI and robotics – it is not clear that we have the luxury of moving slowly.

Under vision for senior cycle learners there is a tension between the "central importance of disciplinary knowledge" being fully affirmed and objective of deepening skills. In the past the former has trumped the later and is likely to do so again going forward.

Under assessment the statement that the system is fair and transparent is highly problematic. The recent report from the HEA which found that "among students scoring 405 to 600 Leaving Cert points, more than one-quarter – 27 per cent – were from affluent backgrounds, compared with just 3 per cent from disadvantaged areas" would suggest that what we assess is far from fair.

The key to whole senior cycle reform process is the CAO process. It can be argued that this is outside the scope of the NCCA to address, as the CAO system is owned by the universities. We value what is measured and unless the higher education sector begins to value more than the current very narrow definition of academic attainment then the reforms to the

Leaving Cert Established will be of minor impact. The aspiration expressed to “explore the reporting needs of students, further education institutions....” Is far too mild a statement for such a pivotal determinant in the reform process.

Kind regards,

Joanne.

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