



Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate Classical Languages

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1. Introduction

This paper sets out the background and context for the proposed development of new arrangements for the study of Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek and Latin. This development follows the publication of a new Junior Cycle Classics specification, incorporating provision for the study of Ancient Greek and Latin, which was introduced to schools at the beginning of the school year 2019/20. It is also in the context of a new Leaving Certificate Classical Studies specification which is due to commence in schools in the 2021/22 school year.

The paper begins with an overview of the historical context for Ancient Greek and Latin in the curriculum and the subsequent experience of both languages over succeeding decades before elaborating on the nature of recent curricular changes in the classics at both junior and senior cycle levels. Some international perspectives on the nature of classics curriculum provision are considered, as is the model for the study of modern foreign languages in the Irish curriculum. The paper then considers some observations and conclusions based on the issues and themes discussed. It concludes by presenting the template for the design of Leaving Certificate subject specifications and the proposed brief for the review that will guide the development group in devising new arrangements for Ancient Greek and Latin.

2. Background

The classical languages of Latin and Ancient Greek have been an integral part of the national curriculum since the foundation of the Irish State in 1922. Great value was placed upon the classical tradition in education and the study of classics was viewed as central to Ireland's cultural heritage. Ireland saw itself as being unusual in Western Europe in having used Latin as a spoken language amongst sections of the rural population in the 19th century while the classical tradition had been maintained and fostered by the hedge schools of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Moreover, it was felt that the classical grammar tradition would also contribute to the revival of the Irish language; in 1937, Eamon De Valera urged the narrowing of the programme of secondary schools as he believed that its range hampered the important mission of 'Gaelicisation'. In such a literary, humanist curriculum, Latin flourished while Greek (now Ancient Greek) and Classical Hebrew were also seen as important.

A further factor that strengthened the classical tradition was that most second-level schools operated under the management of Catholic religious orders. They were keen to maintain Latin in their schools given the language's centrality to Catholic liturgy and their mission to pass on Catholic teachings and values. Latin was also essential in the formation of men for the priesthood. Up to the 1970s, study of either Latin or Ancient Greek remained a requirement to gain entry to university education in Ireland.

In the latter decades of the last century, the position of Latin and Ancient Greek within the curriculum gradually changed. A profound shift in social and economic values that became evident in the 1960s meant a loss in the status of Latin and to a lesser extent Ancient Greek (which had never enjoyed the same numbers as Latin). The decade was bookended by two government initiatives which would transform the education landscape. The decade commenced with the implementation of the *First Programme for Economic Expansion*, based on the 1958 Department of Finance report *Economic Development*, which set out a blueprint for national economic development that would have a profound impact across public policy, including in education. Towards the end of the decade, free secondary education for all would remove the barriers that had previously prevented one third of children leaving primary school from accessing post-primary school, thus erasing what its proponent Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, termed 'a dark stain on the national consciousness' (Ferriter, 2004, p. 597).

Taken together, these developments dramatically altered the nature of Irish schools and the curriculum. Attendant developments from the 1960s onwards included the continuing evolution of

vocational schools and the advent of comprehensive schools, with an increased focus on practical subjects, the introduction of the Intermediate Certificate course and the emergence of a more extensive and diverse curriculum in secondary schools. All of these changes led to a shift in curriculum balance that saw 'the steady decline of classical studies, with Latin plummeting from its position of prominence' (Coolahan, 2017, p. 138).

How were the classics so affected by these changes? The route sketched out for Ireland in *Economic Development* could not be achieved without 'a transformation of the quality and quantity of education' (Lee, 1989, p. 361). In 1966, the seminal *Investment in Education* report initiated a debate on the nature of the school curriculum and on the values and skills schools ought to transmit to the younger generation in the context of the ongoing, broader economic planning. The report collected important statistical data for the first time, intended to indicate the resources available and the efficiency with which they were used. It identified the elitist nature of the education system and referred directly to the classical languages as an indicator of discrimination in at least one area: female access to universities. Matriculation in Latin or Greek or mathematics was required to enter university but in the 1963 Leaving Certificate examination no girl took Greek, and only 1,475 girls passed Latin out of a total candidature of 4,696 girls (*Investment in Education*, Section 6.41, pp. 123/4). Not only was Latin not available to most girls, it was also not offered on the vocational curriculum. Thus, Latin came to be perceived as a barrier to advancement in a social climate striving to define equality of opportunity.

The 1966 report further emphasised the need to ensure that students had a range of choices appropriate to their particular talents and aptitudes and the need to keep abreast of new knowledge and subjects. It highlighted the importance of European languages and the need for the introduction of technological and business disciplines on the curriculum. Other contextual factors also affected the status of the classical languages. A growing international and outward-looking perspective in Irish politics and society saw the country seek entry to the EEC and gain membership of UNESCO in 1961. Furthermore, the events of the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 and the publication of the papal encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, resulted in the replacement of Latin by the vernacular in the Catholic liturgy, which reduced the Catholic Church's interest in the status of Latin in the curriculum.

In 1973, the National University of Ireland's requirement of a classical language for matriculation was abolished. The result was a sudden sharp decline in numbers taking Latin at second level. The next section looks at some of the relevant figures in more detail

2.1 Numbers of students taking Latin and Ancient Greek

As can be seen in the table below, the number of students sitting Latin in the Leaving Certificate examination fell from 7,571 in 1969 to 1,016 in 1983, a drop of 86%, with the sharpest drop between 1975 and 1978.

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1969	5316	2255	7571
1972	5455	3651	9106
1975	3127	2168	5295
1978	1558	618	2176
1980	1039	450	1489
1983	776	240	1016

Table 1: Leaving Certificate Latin numbers 1969-1983

The decline in numbers continued into the 1990s. Table 2 illustrates the further fall in numbers taking the Leaving Certificate examinations between 1990 and 1999.

Year	Higher	Ordinary	Total
1990	461	42	503
1993	255	8	263
1996	151	9	160
1999	120	2	122

Table 2: Leaving Certificate Latin 1990-1999

Apart from the drop in numbers *per se*, one should consider the concomitant steep increase in numbers actually sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations during the period 1969–1999. The overall increase in students taking the Leaving Certificate is illustrated below using English as a benchmark, with students sitting Latin indicated as a percentage of the overall cohort (Table 3).

Year	English	Latin	Latin as a % of English
1969	16779	7461	44.5
1972	23942	9106	38
1975	27558	5295	19.2
1978	33994	2176	6.4
1980	36356	1489	4.1
1983	42724	1016	2.4
1987	47594	844	1.8
1990	51767	503	1.0
1993	56355	263	0.5
1996	52899	160	0.3
1999	55555	122	0.2

Table 3: Number of students taking Latin as a % of the full student cohort

The number of pupils taking Leaving Certificate Latin has remained at the low levels of the late 1990s, with significant further reductions from 2017 (see Table 4 below). It is not surprising that an NCCA report in 2004 should state that

Action for Latin is even more urgent as the very survival of the subject could be said, without exaggeration, to be at stake. Numbers continue to fall to the point where a future without Latin has become a possibility..... The position of Latin in post-primary schools is a precarious one. Numbers have been falling for many years and have now come close to crisis – some 450 at Junior Certificate and about 120 at Leaving Certificate. Latin is taught almost exclusively in one type of school viz. voluntary secondary and, in particular, in fee-paying schools within that sector. This means that the whole vocational sector, and almost all community and comprehensive schools, are without Latin (NCCA, 2004).

The report also observes:

With the decline in the numbers taking Latin, there has been a concomitant decline in the numbers of graduates coming out of the universities with a degree in Latin. Quite a few existing teachers of Latin are in the older age bracket and at the moment it is hard to see how they can be replaced when their time comes to retire (NCCA, 2004).

Year	Higher	Ordinary	Total
2009	127	5	132
2010	138	5	143
2011	94	7	101
2012	130	1	131
2013	91	4	95
2014	108	7	115
2015	110	7	117
2016	107	7	114
2017	74	6	80
2018	59	3	62
2019	57	-	57

Table 4: Uptake of Latin at Leaving Certificate level 2009 – 2018

Figures for Greek reveal a similar trend to Latin. While the number of students taking the subject was never at the same level as Latin, the numbers taking Ancient Greek declined steeply between the 1960's and 1990's and have remained at a very low level in the past decade (Table 5).¹

Year	Higher
2006	5
2007	10
2008	6
2009	7
2010	12

¹ Ordinary level figures for Ancient Greek are not specified here as in most years over this time period no candidate took that level at all.

2011	12
2012	12
2013	12
2014	6
2015	11
2016	14
2017	13
2018	12
2019	17

Table 5: Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek, 2006 - 2019

2.2 Conclusion

It could be argued that Latin and Ancient Greek belonged to an 'old order' which came under pressure as new political, social and economic priorities emerged from the 1960's. In a period of thirty years or so, Latin lost its pre-eminent position in the curriculum and Catholic secondary schools gradually began to drop Latin as a school subject.

However, specific factors relating to the treatment of the classical languages as subjects at curriculum design level should also be considered. The integration of curriculum as content and experience as articulated in the Junior Certificate languages syllabi and the new junior cycle specifications has never been translated into Leaving Certificate Latin and Ancient Greek, which has remained unchanged. The Leaving Certificate syllabi for Latin and Ancient Greek still consist of a list of content and examination requirements. The programme is based on prescribed authors and a narrow canon. It emphasises a traditional grammar-translation methodology. Changes in the past fifty years have been technical: in Latin, set texts were reduced from two to one in 1968 and a comprehension passage was introduced as an alternative to compulsory prose composition in 1989. In 2009, the number of unseen passages to be translated by candidates in Latin and Ancient Greek was reduced from three to two. In the absence of root and branch changes for over fifty years, these adjustments to the examination papers have effectively acted as syllabus reform. In this context, it is evident that urgent attention is needed to address the future sustainability of these subjects.

In 2005 a Board of Studies for the classical subjects was convened by the NCCA. Members of the Board initially intended to revise the Leaving Certificate syllabi in Latin, Ancient Greek and Classical Studies as the languages had not been revised for almost forty years and Classical Studies had not been reviewed since its introduction in 1983. However, as it became clear that the Junior Certificate syllabi would have to be revised first, the work of the Leaving Certificate committees was paused. In 2020, however, much of this review work is now complete, with a new Junior Cycle Classics specification (in schools since September 2019) and a new senior cycle Classical Studies specification (approved in 2019 for introduction in schools). These will be elaborated on in the next section.

Summary

The classical languages of Latin and Ancient Greek were important in the Irish curriculum in the early years of the independent Irish state due to several historical factors, including a culture of appreciation for the classical tradition in education generally, the central role of the Catholic Church in governing post-primary schools and the importance of Latin in Catholic life, and the requirement to study Latin or Ancient Greek in order to gain entry to higher level education.

However, the status of the classical languages changed radically due to societal changes in the 1960s and subsequent decades, both in Ireland and globally. These changes brought new social, economic and cultural priorities, a move away from Latin in the Catholic Church, and a changed conceptualisation of schooling and the curriculum in general.

The steep decline in uptake and provision which is evident from the 1960s was not helped by the lack of subject reform. Only minor adjustments have been made to Leaving Certificate Latin and Ancient Greek in the past fifty years, while the nature and scope of recent curriculum innovation and reform in the classical languages in the junior cycle, as well as in classical studies in the senior cycle, have not been replicated, particularly regarding how learning is delineated, teaching methods and assessment.

3. Classics and classical languages in the curriculum

Current moves towards reform of Leaving Certificate Latin and Greek are taking place in a broader context of curriculum reform in the area of the classics at both junior and senior cycle levels. A new Junior Cycle Classics specification was introduced to schools at the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year, while a new Leaving Certificate Classical Studies specification is due to commence in schools at the beginning of the 2021/22 school year. The key features of these new curriculum documents will now be considered, while current arrangements for Latin and Ancient Greek in the curriculum will also be outlined.

3.1 Junior Cycle Classics

The development and design of the Junior Cycle Classics specification is informed by the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015). This document sets out what the educational experience looks like for all students in the first three years of their post-primary education.

The design of the Junior Cycle Classics specification is in accordance with a template for all junior cycle subjects under the framework. This template includes a rationale and aim for the subject; an overview of the subject links with statements of learning and key skills; an overview of expectations for students set out in strands of learning, within which learning outcomes are arranged in relation to thematic elements; and assessment arrangements for the subject. The specification is designed to be taught and assessed at a common level across 200 hours of class contact time.

The structure and nature of the Junior Cycle Classics specification will now be explored, with particular reference to how the classical languages are addressed.

3.2 The Junior Cycle Classics specification

The rationale for the subject affirms the centrality of the classical world of ancient Greece and Rome in shaping western thought and society. It also highlights the value of studying a classical language, in terms of its structures, forms and modes of expression as well as its significance in the development of literary genres and areas of intellectual endeavour. It states that students studying the classical

language strand ‘will develop an appreciation of the unique role that language plays in transmitting a picture of a society and how language reveals people’s beliefs, values and expectations.’

The Classics specification is organised in three strands:

- Strand 1: Core component (100 hours)
- Strand 2: Classical studies (100 hours)
- Strand 3: Classical language (100 hours)

All students must study the core component (Strand 1). They then have the option of taking either the classical studies component (Strand 2) or the classical language component (Strand 3). In strand 1, all students become familiar with key aspects of Greek and Roman culture by examining the concept of *myth* and by studying aspects of *daily life* in ancient Greece and Rome.

Those students who study strand 2 learn about public life in the ancient world by considering the social dynamics of Greek epic in *The world of Achilles*; they also explore the significance of the public space of the city of Rome in the context of Rome’s status as imperial capital in *Rome, centre of an empire*.

Those students who study strand 3 learn either Latin or Ancient Greek. It is worth noting here that while learning outcomes are arranged in strands, this does not mean that strands are studied in isolation: it is intended that learning and teaching are integrated across strands. Therefore, when studying a language, students of strand 3 also apply that learning to their engagement of the core component.

3.3 Languages in the Junior Cycle Classics specification

Strand 3, the classical language component, supports students’ engagement with the literature, thought and history of the civilisation to which their chosen language relates. Students learn to read and critically engage with texts in their chosen language, relating them to myth and daily life as outlined in strand 1, so that their learning of the language supports them in acquiring insight into society, literature and history of the classical culture. Their study of language allows for exploration of different kinds of text, such as poems, speeches and historical accounts, as well as opportunities to engage in different ways with the language, including translating, interpreting, and creating texts.

Learning outcomes are organised across two elements, which help to group learning outcomes thematically. These elements are:

- Reading narrative and exploring representations: supporting students' understanding and appreciation of texts in Latin or Ancient Greek
- Analysing structures, patterns, values and ideologies: developing students' language awareness and analytical skills.

3.4 Assessment of classical languages in JC Classics curriculum

All Junior Cycle Classics students complete two classroom-based assessments, one for each strand studied. In the case of the classical language component, students will have developed and maintained a language portfolio over the three years of study of the course. This portfolio allows the student to focus on the process of learning the classical language and to document their exploration of the links between the language and classical culture, supporting their capacity to meet the learning outcomes in strand 1.

The portfolio may include a broad range of material, including written texts, projects, audio-visual materials, learning logs, and student reflections, and may be presented in different formats or modes of presentation, such as handwritten, digital or any multi-modal format.

The classroom-based assessment requires students to select three pieces from the portfolio and to present them for assessment. One should relate to language acquisition, another to authentic texts and a third to classical civilisation.

The classroom-based assessment relating to strand 3 is the focus of the assessment task completed in the third year of junior cycle, which is worth 10% of the overall grade in the terminal examination. In the assessment task students are assessed in various aspects of their learning relating to the language portfolio, including, for example, their ability to evaluate new knowledge or understanding they have gained through their experience of developing the portfolio, and their ability to reflect on the skills they have developed and their capacity to apply them to other situations in the future.

3.5 Leaving Certificate Classical Studies

A new Leaving Certificate Classical Studies specification will be introduced to the curriculum from the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year. It is useful to consider aspects of that specification in thinking about the development of classical languages from two perspectives: the structure and layout of the specification and how learning outcomes are organised; and the nature of the specification in terms of content, key emphases and arrangements for assessment and reporting.

As in other new and revised Leaving Certificate specifications, learning for Classical Studies is set out in strands. Each strand has a suite of learning outcomes, which are arranged thematically. This overarching structure resembles the junior cycle model and seeks to strengthen the coherence of the learning experience from junior to senior cycle.

The rationale for Leaving Certificate Classical Studies acknowledges the debt owed by the contemporary western world to ancient Greece and Rome and highlights the subject's multi-faceted nature, encompassing 'the disciplines of history, literature and drama; art, architecture and archaeology; religion, philosophy and political thought'. It states that in 'making connections between these disciplines, Classical Studies students gain a holistic understanding of Greek and Roman culture and thought and learn how the past continues to inform the present.' The stated aim for the subject reads: 'Leaving Certificate Classical Studies aims to stimulate students' curiosity and interest in the classical civilisations of Greece and Rome. It develops skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable students to understand the political, economic, social, cultural, artistic and literary cultures of these civilisations and promotes using these insights to help them navigate their own worlds'.

Learning outcomes are set out in four distinct but inter-related strands:

- *The world of heroes* explores heroic society and narratives and the characteristics and types of leaders
- *Drama and spectacle* looks at the context and nature of Greek tragedy and at aspects of Roman spectacle
- *Power and identity* focuses on the historical contexts and careers of Alexander the Great and Caesar and questions of collective and personal identity
- *Gods and humans* examines the role of the divine, devotional and funerary practices and philosophical thinking about mortality, the afterlife and living well.

3.6 Current arrangements for Leaving Certificate Latin and Ancient Greek

Currently, Latin and Ancient Greek are two separate subjects with separate syllabi. Each syllabus comprises a list of prescribed authors, texts and topics, and examination requirements, distinguishing between Ordinary and Higher level requirements. The emphasis is on grammar and translation, and on information students should be able to reproduce. Marginal adjustments over time have related to the prescription of set texts and the introduction of comprehension as well as prose composition. In the absence of root and branch changes, adjustments to the examination papers have effectively served as syllabus reform for over 50 years.

Ancient Greek

Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek is concerned with the study of the language, literature, history, art and architecture of Ancient Greece. The current syllabus has been in place since 1981. The emphasis is very much on the reading of the great writers such as Homer, Plato, Sophocles and Euripides. Students at Higher level are required to do composition from the vernacular into Greek and to read greater quantities of Greek literature than students at Ordinary level.

More specifically, students study:

- (a) Scansion of verse
- (b) Prescribed texts (issued for each year by the State Examinations Commission)
- (c) Unprescribed texts
- (d) History (including art and literature), with indication of periods and topics to be studied

In addition to the above, students at Higher level partly study different texts and they are expected to demonstrate some additional competencies which are specified. The assessment consists of a single examination paper.

Chief Examiner's Reports 2009 and 2015

Looking at the two recent Chief Examiner's Reports offers insights into how the examination of the syllabus is experienced by students. Both reports (2009 and 2015) highlight the fact that, frequently, no candidates sat the Ordinary level paper, and (in the view of the author), this trend might be exacerbated by the extent of the difference between the two levels, which makes it impossible to

change level mid-stream. Both reports also highlight that 100% of students achieve an ABC grade, reflecting high preparation and the very selective uptake of the subject. The examiners offered particular praise to students in the way that they answered questions on history, art and literature in a fully comprehensive way.

Latin

Leaving Certificate Latin, like its Greek counterpart, entails the study of the language, literature, history, art and architecture of ancient Rome. The period from the death of Caesar to the death of Trajan is prescribed for the study of history and students consider Roman art and architecture within the prescribed period. They also explore the life, works and literary importance of Latin authors from the prescribed history period such as Caesar, Cicero and, in addition, Catullus.

More specifically, students study:

- (a) Composition
- (b) Formal grammar
- (c) Prescribed texts (issued for each year by the State Examinations Commission)
- (d) Unprescribed texts
- (e) History (including art and literature), with indication of periods and topics to be studied

As for Ancient Greek, students at Higher level are expected to demonstrate some additional competencies, which are specified. The assessment again comprises a single examination paper.

Chief Examiner's Report 2004

The Chief Examiner's Reports for Latin also highlight the high numbers achieving in the ABC grade at Higher level. Generally, 89.5% of candidates achieved in the ABC grade at Higher level, and the numbers taking Ordinary level are very low. In the most recent report, the author notes that, with the exception of a change to the examination paper layout in 1989, the syllabus was unchanged since 1989 and a revision of the syllabus 'is clearly overdue'. The report notes that students achieve best in questions on the prescribed text and on history and civilisation, while questions on unseen texts and on grammar and scansion proved most challenging. The report commends the generally high standard of answering as evidence of strong commitment and extremely hard work on the part of students and their teachers.

3.7 Conclusion

As we have seen, considerable work has been done in recent years to reimagine the classics curriculum at junior and senior cycle levels.

The change at junior cycle level has been quite pronounced. The subjects of Ancient Greek and Latin have been integrated with the area of classical studies in a reconfigured classics specification which provides a core component for all students and language and non-language options. The languages are accommodated in a strand where learning outcomes are delineated in such a way that they may be applied to either of the target languages. These learning outcomes focus on the two key areas of language acquisition and text appreciation. Assessment is also set out in a novel fashion, with an increased focus on formative assessment evident in the requirement that students devise and maintain a language portfolio over the three years of their study of the subject. It is also intended that their growing acquaintance and proficiency with their target language will further illuminate and enrich their interrogation of learning outcomes and areas of learning in the core component of the course, which has been designed for fully integrated teaching and learning.

At Leaving Certificate level, the subject of Classical studies has been revised, with learning set out in four distinct but interrelated strands of study. While the subject retains its distinctive status in relation to the languages, it is evident that knowledge of Latin or Ancient Greek would complement students' learning experience in this subject and enrich their engagement with the specified learning outcomes. Consideration of how learning outcomes are arranged may also usefully inform reflection on how learning outcomes in the language specifications will take shape. One feature of note might be how aspects of the literary or historical dimensions of the classical canon will be accommodated in supporting students' language acquisition and development.

Summary

There has been considerable change in the nature of the curriculum for classical languages at junior cycle level in the context of the *Framework for Junior Cycle*. A new junior cycle subject Classics was introduced to schools in 2019 and will be examined for the first time in 2022. This subject combines the disciplines of classical studies and classical languages in a single course, which is designed to be taught and assessed at a common level.

The new subject requires all students to study a core strand made up of two components, *myth* and *daily life*, which ensures that all students acquire an awareness of the central importance of myths and storytelling in the ancient world and today, and learn to appreciate what key aspects of daily life were like in Greece and Rome. In addition, students study either the classical studies strand 2, which comprises *The world of Achilles* and *Rome, centre of an empire*, or they study strand 3, classical language. Students of strand 3 will develop language awareness and analytical skills and learn to understand and appreciate a variety of texts in either Latin or Ancient Greek. They will maintain a language portfolio over their three years of study which will form the basis of their classroom-based assessment. Aspects of their language learning will be integrated with their study of the core component.

The section also provides an overview of Leaving Certificate Classical Studies, including the strand designations and assessment arrangements. It concludes with a brief overview of how classical languages are currently provided for at Leaving Certificate level, and notes some observations made in recent SEC chief examiner reports on Ancient Greek and Latin. Both reports highlight the high numbers of students achieving in the ABC grade at Higher level, and commend the generally high standard of answering as evidence of strong commitment and extremely hard work on the part of students and their teachers.

4. International curriculum for classical languages

4.1 Introduction

The United Kingdom, Commonwealth nations and many Western European countries mirror Ireland in that the classical languages lost the status of core subjects in secondary education from the 1960s onwards. This led to two main developments:

- introduction of non-language courses (Classical Studies, Classical Civilisation, Ancient History) in order to make the cultures and history of Ancient Greece and Rome available to a wider range of students; and
- reconception of Latin and Ancient Greek courses in order to increase their relevance and appeal for modern learners and preserve the teaching of these languages.

Although student numbers in Latin and Ancient Greek courses have generally been in steady decline in all countries over the last five decades, a modest revival in the teaching of the classical languages in some countries has been evident recently. This reversal is evident in:

- a re-appreciation of the learning of a Classical language at *all* levels of education, including primary education, where the language is associated with the acquisition of literacy skills, cultural skills and other generic skills (note, for example, the success of UK projects such as Latin in the Parks, Minimus and Classics for All); and
- further actualisation of Latin and Ancient Greek courses to reflect the importance of these skills as well as changing approaches, frameworks, emphases and expectations in cognate subjects (History, English, Classical Studies/Civilisation, Modern Foreign Languages) and in third-level education.

4.2 Background

The following paragraphs consider Classics specifications for the senior years of post-primary education in four jurisdictions: the United Kingdom (the OCR A-level courses), Canada (Levels 2–3 of the Ontario Curriculum in Classical languages), Australia (Framework for Classical Languages) and the

Netherlands (Eindexamen Griekse/Latijnse Taal en Cultuur). None of these specifications allow for exact, like-for-like comparison, but each has features or resources that might be considered in developing a new Irish senior cycle specification for Latin and Ancient Greek.

4.3 A-level Latin and Classical Greek (UK)

In the United Kingdom, the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge, Republic of South Africa) consortium has, within the A/AS-level framework, developed new courses in four different subjects, each with their own specification and central examinations: Classical Studies, Ancient History, Latin and Classical Greek. The Latin and Classical Greek specifications were first taught in 2016, while the Classical Studies and Ancient History specifications were first taught in 2017.

Building on the associated GCSE specifications, the Classical language courses introduce students to a greater range of vocabulary, accidence and syntax within the context of detailed study of prose and verse literature, leading to a deeper understanding of the life and culture of the ancient world. There are separate specifications for Classical Greek and Latin. The following table shows the prescribed content and examination components for Latin (central examination only, no classroom-based assessment):

Content overview	Examination
Study of texts written by a range of prose authors and a verse unseen author to develop linguistic competence; for examination in 2018-2023, the prose passage is taken from Livy, the verse passage from Ovid, the unseen passage for comprehension from a prose author not listed elsewhere in the specification.	Unseen Translation (100 marks) 1 hour 45-minute written paper
	Prose Composition or Comprehension (50 marks) 1 hour 15-minute written paper
Study of one prose text in greater depth or two prose authors; additional texts in translation to contextualise the set text(s)	Prose Literature (75 marks) 2 hour written paper For examination in 2020 and 2021, set texts are selections from Cicero, <i>Philippic II</i> ; Tacitus, <i>Histories I</i> ; Apuleius, <i>Metamorphoses IV-V</i>
Study of one verse text in greater depth or two prose authors; additional texts in translation to contextualise the set text(s)	Verse Literature (75 marks) 2 hour written paper For examination in 2020 and 2021, set texts are selections from Vergil, <i>Aeneid XII</i> ; Horace, <i>Satires and Odes</i> ; Ovid, <i>Amores</i>

Table 6: OCR A-level Latin

The specifications expect learners to know and build upon a Defined Vocabulary List specified for the AS Level. Set texts have been specified until 2023 and may be subject to change thereafter. Over the course of the A Level, students will have studied the works of at least four different authors in preparation for the final examinations. The specifications are very well resourced: OCR has secured the rights to all prescribed texts to be read in translation, which have been made available free of charge online, and all components are supported by textbooks, with further resources made available on the website of the publisher (Bloomsbury).

The specifications reflect current trends in their increased focus on critical, analytical and reflective skills, linguistic skills which are applicable to learners' studies of English and other modern languages, and the study of literature as a window into the life (values, culture and society) of the ancient world.

4.4 Ontario, Canada

In Canada, the specification for Classical Studies and International Languages (2016) of the Ontario Curriculum has been formulated within an educational vision and skills parameters that are not unlike those of the Irish *Framework for Junior Cycle*.

The specification comprises courses in Latin and Ancient Greek that students may take in any grade of secondary school (Grades 9-12). Progression is indicated by levels 1-3, with a Grade 12 (final year) course in Classical Civilization serving as an alternative progression option from Latin or Ancient Greek Level 2 (rather than as an independent subject started at Level 1).

The expectations in all levels of Classical Language courses are framed in terms of competencies to be acquired in four key strands: oral communication, reading, writing, and intercultural understanding. The syllabus states that it is imperative that teachers of Ancient Greek or Latin plan instructional activities that integrate expectations across the strands to highlight the interconnectedness of language and culture in the development of literacy skills and plan instructional activities that blend expectations from several strands to provide students with enriched and meaningful learning experiences that emphasise making connections between the classical world, the world around them, and their own experiences.

Assessment for all courses and levels is school-based and can, within reason, take whichever form (based on the teacher's professional judgement) is suitable to establish whether students meet the standards set in the specification. Seventy percent of the overall result at each level is to be based on continuous assessment, thirty percent on a final evaluation.

4.5 Australia

The Australian Curriculum for Languages (2014–2016) provides a framework for language learning that is comparable to the Ontario Curriculum. It is designed to enable all secondary school students to engage in learning a language in addition to English. The Classical languages are not part of the mainstream curriculum, but Latin is offered in a substantial number of schools as an elective subject. The Australian Framework for Classical Languages (2016) is of particular interest because it incorporates the classical languages straightforwardly in a broad framework for the teaching of languages as diverse as French, Mandarin, Hindi and Ancient Greek, organising objectives and learning outcomes in the same structural matrix, and framing them in the same terms, regardless of the specific features of the studied language. The framework approach acknowledges that classical languages are unique within the Australian curriculum in that, while they have ceased to be languages of everyday communication, they are worthy of study because they provide a key to the literature, history, thought and culture of the ancient societies that produced them, and to how they shaped contemporary life. This approach allows Latin and Ancient Greek to be taught both as a means of communication and as a way of supporting intercultural understanding.

4.6 Netherlands

In the stream of the Dutch secondary system which prepares for university entry, the curriculum is divided into a three-year junior cycle and a three-year senior cycle. Although some guidance is provided to teachers through the Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling (SLO) there are, remarkably, no ‘hard’ objectives and learning outcomes for the junior cycle (Adema and van der Plaat, 2017). There is therefore much room for the professional judgement of teachers in planning learning activities and setting assessment parameters in such a way that their students are prepared for the senior cycle, which is in part assessed through a central examination.

The Netherlands offers an interesting model because, in the area of the Classics subjects, it has followed a path that is very different from the anglophone countries. Since the Netherlands has a significant number of schools in the German ‘altsprachliches Gymnasium’ tradition, where the teaching of Latin and Greek was considered central to the identity of the schools, it was relatively late to introduce a Classical Studies course. Because this course never really succeeded in broadening access to classical studies and at the same time, a surge in the popularity of the Gymnasium schools made a significant reconsideration of classical language teaching a priority, the Classical Studies course was discontinued in 2014 and its content incorporated in the language specifications, which were re-

labelled Latin Language and Culture and Greek Language and Culture. (van der Plaat 2016; Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling 2020).

The Dutch senior cycle courses are interesting because they strike a balance between:

- classroom-based assessment (as in the Ontario system), consisting of a series of continuous assessments carrying 50% of the final result ('school examination'); and
- central terminal examination of set texts, prescribed (annually) for specific examination years (as in the UK A-level courses), completed in the final year and also carrying 50% of the final result.

For examples, the central final examination for Latin in 2020 will be on a selection of passages from Vergil's *Aeneid*, to be studied in Latin and in translation in the academic year 2019/20, with the support of published resources (College voor Toetsen en Examens, 2018). The examination paper (3 hours) assesses students' ability to translate an unseen passage from the studied author, and answer comprehension and contextual questions about the studied text(s); students can use a dictionary in the exam. Overall, the course specifications distinguish a number of 'domains' (including reflection on classical texts; on ancient culture; on relationships between ancient culture and European culture; but also 'independent judgement') of which not all subdomains are assessed in the central examination. The full range of domains must be covered in the 'school examination', the form and content of which are largely at the discretion of schools and teachers. The parameters stipulate little more than that for this component:

- students cannot study the author of the final central examination;
- students must study at least 30 (Oxford Classical Text) pages of original Latin or Ancient Greek literature, including texts from at least two genres and both poetry and prose;
- students must study a selection of translated classical texts of at least 45 pages;
- students must study at least three of the areas narrative, drama, visual arts, architecture, and philosophy.
- optional elements include unseen translation and creative engagement with cultural and reception topics.

4.7 Conclusion

Consideration of the experience of other jurisdictions provides grounds for optimism in terms of the status of classical language teaching. While the moderate status of the subject within the curriculum is common internationally, innovative approaches in curriculum design and assessment have revitalised the languages and presented them in new ways with new emphases. Some of these

approaches may have application in the Irish context and could be explored further in the curriculum design process.

Summary

A survey of some other jurisdictions indicates that the decline of the classical languages in the Irish curriculum from the 1960s fits into an international trend, even if some of the circumstances relating to this decline are particular to Ireland. Interventions in other countries, however, have supported the introduction of new Latin and Ancient Greek courses focused on engaging a modern audience. This has spawned a tentative revival of classical language teaching.

It should be noted that the Irish experience is necessarily different due to the centralised nature of curriculum development and assessment, where schools follow a prescribed course and take prescribed examinations issued by state authorities, which is not the case in all other jurisdictions.

While each explored jurisdiction has engaged with the promotion of classical languages in its own way, some characteristics are evident:

- Language curriculum revision has been accompanied by the introduction of new related subjects such as classical studies and ancient history.
- The study of language is integrated with consideration of classical literature and with the promotion of intercultural education.
- Classical languages are included in a framework approach whereby other languages, including, in some instances, modern languages, are structured for study in a similar way, for example, in terms of learning outcomes or overall objectives.
- A strands approach integrates the study of languages across key competencies, such as reading, writing and oral communication
- Themes for learning are presented in different ways, with some jurisdictions setting broad parameters and allowing significant scope for teachers and schools to determine what is taught.
- The nature of assessment is broad and varied, encompassing both continuous and terminal assessment models.

5. A framework approach to curriculum design in languages

A feature of recent specification design in curricular languages in Ireland and many other countries is the use of frameworks. This framework model involves a common approach across specifications relating to different languages, relating to elements of the rationale, the aims, expectations for learners and approaches to assessment. The framework approach allows for various objectives to be realised for different languages through one common specification.

The framework approach has been employed for the design of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in junior cycle, where one specification encompasses various languages. Learning outcomes and other attendant features can be applied to the target language as appropriate. The approach has also been employed in the development of new specifications in Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese at Leaving Certificate level.

In junior cycle Classics, a similar approach has been employed to support teaching and learning in strand 3, where a single suite of learning outcomes delineates what students should be able to do with respect to the language they are studying, regardless of whether this language is Latin or Ancient Greek. Use of a framework approach for Latin and Ancient Greek at Leaving Certificate level will support continuity and a transparent progression from junior to senior cycle.

A framework which is often consulted in the development and evaluation of language curricula is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It was designed 'to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency' in Europe and beyond (CEFR, 2001). CEFR has directly and indirectly informed the Irish framework approaches mentioned above, including strand 3 of the junior cycles Classics specification.

6. Observations and conclusions

The following observations and conclusions are drawn from consideration of themes discussed in preceding chapters.

- The uptake and provision of Latin and Ancient Greek at post-primary level in Ireland have declined considerably since the 1960s. While the marginalisation of classical studies and classical languages in the curriculum is an international phenomenon, various historical factors have contributed to a particularly sharp reduction in the popularity of Latin and Ancient Greek in Ireland, to the extent that the position of these subjects is now critical.
- While the historical causes are noted, it is acknowledged also that any change in Leaving Certificate classical languages in the past fifty years has been marginal and technical, taking the form of adjustments to prescriptions and examination papers. The subjects have benefitted little from new developments in curriculum design, pedagogy or assessment.
- Comprehensive and carefully considered curriculum change has occurred in the area of classical languages at junior cycle level. The new classics specification has reformed the area of study by combining classical studies and classical languages in a new subject called classics, under the *Framework for Junior Cycle*. Equally, at senior cycle, the Leaving Certificate classical studies curriculum has been thoroughly revised and presented in a new format, taking into account current approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- Much of the change has focused on a shift from syllabus content delineation to the presentation of learning outcomes aligned with broader key skills across the programme cycle (junior or senior), with an increased focus on progression and on innovative assessment arrangements.
- These changes, and the rationale for them, provides a direction for the proposed revision of Leaving Certificate classical languages. There is a lack of alignment between classical languages and the revised classical subjects, whose reconception reaffirms the relevance and importance of the classics in the curriculum and the potential of the subject area to be refreshed by innovative pedagogical and assessment practices.
- Curriculum revisions in the broader area of foreign languages signal an innovative approach to language study from which classical languages may benefit. These include a framework approach to curriculum design which has been adopted in the common junior cycle modern foreign

languages specification and recent senior cycle specifications (Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese), and which has been adapted in the language component (strand 3) of the junior cycle classics specification. These specifications provide models for a new classical languages specification that can provide a smooth and transparent progression from junior to senior cycle.

- The experience of other jurisdictions is important in considering how best to redevelop and reinvigorate classical languages through innovative curriculum and assessment design, including ongoing assessment and pre-submitted assessment components.

7. Subject specifications in senior cycle

All senior cycle specifications for subjects offered within the Leaving Certificate Established programme will have a number of features in common. They will:

- be outcomes-based
- reflect a continuum of learning with a focus on learner progression
- include a focus on all five key skills and literacy and numeracy
- strive for clarity in language and for consistency in terminology.

The specification for each subject will include:

- Introduction; Rationale; Aim; Objectives; Structure; Assessment

Introduction to senior cycle	This will be common to all specifications and will summarise the main features of senior cycle education.
Rationale	This will describe the nature and purpose of the subject as well as the general demands and capacities that it will place on, and require of, students. The text will, as appropriate, aim to draw attention to challenges and any access issues associated with study of the subject for students with specific needs or disabilities.
Aim	A concise aim for the subject will be presented.
Objectives	A broad outline of the skills, values and knowledge, consistent with the aim, that the students will develop during the course.
Structure	An overview of the subject will illustrate how it is organised and will set out the learning involved in strands and learning outcomes.
Assessment	This section outlines the assessment component/s through which students will present evidence of learning for assessment for certification.

In general terms, the specification should be aligned with levels 4/5 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Some specifications may have distinct characteristics due to specific learning areas within the subject. The specification will be designed for 180 hours of class contact time and there will be an ordinary and higher level.

8. Brief for the review of Leaving Certificate

Ancient Greek and Latin

The review of Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek and Latin will involve developing one common framework-based specification for both subjects. The template used will be in line with the template for specifications for all senior cycle subjects.

The key skills of senior cycle and the skills of literacy and numeracy, as appropriate, will be embedded in the learning outcomes of the specification, which will also be designed to ensure appropriate progression and continuity from junior cycle classics.

More specifically, the development of the new specification will address how students will:

- extract information and derive enjoyment from a variety of sources and texts
- become reflective and autonomous language learners and become actively involved in monitoring and assessing their own progress
- foster an appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity
- appreciate the value of using their linguistic repertoire to better understand the cultural and social dimensions of the societies and cultures in which the target language was spoken
- appreciate how the target language functioned as a means of communication, spoken, heard and written by people in the past
- develop the capacity to pronounce, listen to, and produce phrases and sentences in the target language using appropriate structures and vocabulary
- develop an awareness of how languages, in general, work and relate to one another
- build on current linguistic knowledge and skills in order to develop transferable skills to further lifelong language learning and learning in general
- enjoy a language learning experience that will intrinsically motivate them to continue learning languages in the future.

The development of the specification will also consider:

- how students will be assessed, including the integration of a coursework assessment component

- how to encourage student agency and an associated capacity for lifelong learning
- how to differentiate on conceptual depth to meet the needs of a diverse range of students
- the identification of supports necessary for the successful enactment of the specifications and broadening of participation in the subjects.

The work of the Leaving Certificate Classical Languages subject development group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. In the course of its work and discussions, refinements of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.

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