

Introduction to and Brief for the development of Leaving Certificate Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese

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Background

Context

This paper has been prepared to support the development of Leaving Certificate specifications for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese, and Mandarin Chinese for non-native speakers. The specifications for Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese offer opportunities to students from heritage language communities and from varied language learning backgrounds to develop their communicative capacity, their language and their intercultural awareness in these languages.

This paper provides an overview of the rationale for introducing these languages at senior cycle and discusses the underpinning research-evidence and policy landscape out of which the need for curricular provision for these languages emerged. Furthermore, it highlights relevant issues for consideration by the Development Group.

Rationale

Ireland's *Language Education Policy Profile (Language Policy Division Strasbourg and the then Department of Education and Science, 2005)*, published jointly by the Council of Europe and the then Department of Education and Science, identifies Ireland's main challenge in language learning as

to move away from 'an official but lame bilingualism' to become a truly multilingual society, where the ability to learn and use two and more languages is taken for granted and fostered at every stage of the education system and throughout lifelong education. (p34)

Knowledge of at least one foreign language can enrich a person's life experiences, and the *European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2007) recognises the ability to communicate in a foreign language as one of the key competences needed for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

Languages Connect, Ireland's Language for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (Department of Education and Skills, 2017) acknowledges both of these items explicitly and sets out ambitious targets and goals to encourage and prioritise language learning in post-primary and third level education.

Ireland's membership of the European Union carries with it important implications for foreign language policy and practice. Respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union, which is founded on unity in diversity: diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs, and languages. Communication in foreign languages is one of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning as outlined in the *Education and Training contribution to the Lisbon Strategy* (European Commission, 2000). However, Eurostat figures show that just over 20% of Irish adults aged 25-64 knew one foreign language at the time of the most recent survey, European Commission, 2011).

With the additional complexities that could arise in a post-Brexit era, trade connections are likely to require greater involvement between Ireland and other EU countries and China. The Eurobarometer survey shows that Irish respondents considered language learning primarily as a benefit for employment, with 59% considering

language learning an advantage for getting work in another country, and 43% for using it at work or while on business travel. 20% of those surveyed considered Chinese is important for children to learn for their future.

In recent years Ireland has been lucky to have a greatly enhanced language diversity, predominantly due to the arrival of immigrants from almost 200 countries since the year 2000, according to recent Census figures. This is a social, cultural and national resource to be welcomed and nurtured. As identified in a paper entitled *New Irish Families: Successes and Challenges in Heritage Language Acquisition for Second Generation Migrant Children* (Trinity College Dublin, 2015), the authors comment

In the last twenty years migration brought many changes to the linguistic landscape of Ireland, making multilingualism an increasingly common reality. According to the 2006 Census, more than 100 languages were spoken in the country alongside Irish and English. Census 2011 shows that recent migration to Ireland has resulted in far greater linguistic diversity (Central Statistics Office 2012).

According to the 2016 Census, immigrants account for 11.6% of Ireland's population, a large increase over the 5.8% recorded in 2002. More than 612,000 people who responded to the 2016 Census speak a foreign language at home, up from 514,000 in 2011.

Of those, Poland (122,515) and Lithuania (36,552) provide the highest number of nationals in the non-English speaking category living in Ireland. In addition to a host of other nationalities, the 2016 Census recorded 9,575 Chinese nationals resident in Ireland and that 17,584 people living in Ireland (on the night of the Census) stated that they speak Chinese at home, while it also recorded 13,000 Brazilians and 6,000 Portuguese living in Ireland. In the same year, there were 900 school aged children identifying as Brazilian and 600 as Portuguese.

At senior cycle a number of languages are currently offered as curricular subjects within the Leaving Certificate Established programme. However, Mandarin Chinese and European heritage languages are currently not available within the curricular provision of this programme. In order for Ireland to continue to provide for the future, and to encourage multilingualism and all the benefits it offers, new learners must be encouraged to learn new languages.

Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages

Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (Department of Education and Skills, 2017) and the accompanying *Implementation Plan 2017-2026* (Department of Education and Skills, 2017) were published by the Department of Education and Skills in December 2017. The Strategy sets out a vision that Ireland's education system will promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society and the economy.

K, To achieve this, four key goals have been identified:

- Improve language proficiency by creating a more engaging learning environment.
- Diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish
- Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages
- Enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages.

In achieving these goals, the Strategy hopes to see the following:

- Increase the uptake in key languages from their present Leaving Certificate examination uptakes: German (13%), Spanish (11%), Italian (0.9%), Russian (0.6%), Japanese (0.6%), Arabic (0.2%), Mandarin Chinese (N/A), Portuguese (0.2% - non-curricular)
- Introduce a curricular specification for new learners of Mandarin Chinese for Leaving Certificate and curricular specifications for heritage speakers for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese.
- Increase in the number of post-primary schools offering two or more foreign languages and increase the number of students sitting two languages for state examinations by 25%
- Increase the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity, as part of their course to 20%
- Increase the number of participants in Erasmus+ by at least 50%
- Double the number of teachers participating in teacher mobility programmes
- Double the number of Foreign Language Assistants
- Improvement in learners' attitude to foreign language learning
- Improvement in the quality of foreign language teaching at all levels
- Adoption of the CEFR in education and by employers and increase the proportion of graduates leaving HE who reach the Independent User standard.

Languages in context: continuity and progression

Early Learning

Language is central to the theme of *Communicating in Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009). Children share their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others with growing confidence and competence in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. In this way they are able to reflect on how languages are learned, and they make a link between first language and second language learning. They also increase their awareness of strategies they can use when communicating and of the fact that language is much more than words, phrases and sentences.

Languages in Primary Education

Children have experience of learning at least two languages in the *Primary School Curriculum* – English and Irish. A general objective of the curriculum is that where possible the child should be enabled to develop competence in a second or third language with a focus on cultural and intercultural awareness, as well as language awareness. This would be at a level appropriate to his or her ability and cultural and linguistic background. Subjects such as History, Geography and SPHE also contribute to children's awareness of intercultural issues and to their knowledge of target language-speaking communities.

Languages at Junior Cycle

The new Modern Foreign Languages specification for Junior Cycle was introduced in September 2017. This specification, generic for all four junior cycle languages, provides examples of learning for each of the languages: French, German, Spanish and Italian.

Additionally, as part of the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, schools are now able to offer 100-hour short courses as part of their junior cycle programme. There is a short course in Chinese Language and Culture available developed by NCCA and the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) has developed a generic language short course specification (based on the NCCA's generic short course specification) as well as short courses in Japanese, Polish, Lithuanian and Korean. Schools can also develop their own short courses in line with guidelines set out by NCCA.

With regard to other junior cycle subjects such as History, Geography, SPHE, Home Economics, Music and Classics, the study of languages along with these subjects contributes to a broad educational experience for students, who can make links between the target language and other subjects in terms, for example, of intercultural awareness and vocabulary.

Languages at Senior Cycle

Leaving Certificate language learning offerings include Irish and English, and modern languages such as German, Italian, Spanish, as well as classical languages. The majority of senior cycle learners will already have been studying Irish and English for many years. Some students will also have another home language. Many will have studied Irish as a second language and will bring to the task of learning another language many of the language-learning skills acquired previously. The learning of senior cycle languages aims to help the learner build on these skills.

The study of languages also relates to other subject areas, enabling learners to make links between the target language and these subjects in terms, for example, of intercultural awareness and vocabulary. The study of the target language is particularly interrelated with subjects such as History, Geography, SPHE, Home Economics, Music, Art and Politics and Society. By learning about the way of life of target language-speaking communities students heighten their awareness of social and cultural diversity, and of the diversity of cultural heritage, literature, visual arts, music, and so on. In turn they are enabled to reflect on and become more aware of their own cultural identity.

Leaving Certificate language specifications equip students with the skills and learning strategies to underpin further language learning, including learning other languages, and the pursuance of study and career opportunities through the medium of the target language. Learning activities are designed to help learners develop strategies for effective language learning and acquire a critical awareness of how meaning is organised and conveyed by the structures and vocabulary of the target language. This in turn enhances their effectiveness as learners of other languages in the curriculum and beyond, and will increase the fluency, accuracy and complexity of their own use of the target language.

Existing (curricular and non-curricular) language provisions

Junior Cycle and Short Courses

Currently there are provisions for German, French, Spanish and Italian at Junior Cycle level as part of the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) specification. In addition, students can follow short courses in Chinese, Polish and Lithuanian. NCCA developed a 100-hour short course in Chinese Language and Culture while Polish and Lithuanian short courses for Junior Cycle were developed by the PPLI in line with the NCCA framework and in conjunction with the Polish and Lithuanian Embassies in Ireland. There is no short course available for Portuguese at Junior Cycle level.

The PPLI has indicated that seven schools are offering the short course in Chinese Language and Culture. Chinese was also offered as a Transition Year (TY) module in 86 schools in 2016, supported by the Confucius Institutes in University College Dublin (UCD) and University College Cork (UCC). This compares to Japanese (in 31 schools) and Russian (in 17 schools) which are currently offered as ab initio subjects.

Some schools offer after-school Chinese through 'Confucius classrooms', run in collaboration with the Confucius Institute. However, a PPLI audit of language provision in post-primary schools suggests that approximately 60% of schools offering after-school Chinese in this manner are fee-paying schools.

Leaving Certificate Curricular Provisions

At Leaving Certificate, the range of curricular languages is expanded to Japanese, Russian and Arabic (in addition to French, German, Spanish and Italian). The current curriculums are offered for students of a range of abilities and levels and the examinations (offered at both ordinary and higher level) assess students' reading, written, aural and oral competencies, the exception being Arabic.

Leaving Certificate Non-Curricular Provisions

Students from European countries may also opt to sit one non-curricular language (NCL) for state examinations based on the First Foreign Language final written paper of the European Baccalaureate in accordance with commitments under Article 149 of the Treaty of Nice, specifically that

Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States.

These languages do not appear as part of the normal school curriculum, but students may opt to be examined in them if they meet certain criteria. Chief among these are the requirements that candidates for these examinations

- Be from a member state of the European Union
- Speak the language in which they opt to be examined in as a mother tongue

- Have followed a programme of study leading to the Leaving Certificate
- Be taking Leaving Certificate English.

For 2018, examinations were conducted in the following NCLs: Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Slovenian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, Croatian, and Maltese.

In their present format, the non-curricular examinations are offered only at higher level and assess only the skills of reading and writing. There are no oral or aural components as part of this examination, even though the strength of the candidates is more likely to lie in their spoken language. *Languages Connect* points out that if their home languages were offered as full Leaving Certificate subjects, these students would be enabled to demonstrate the full range of their language competences and to enhance their opportunities for further education and employment. Of the non-curricular languages at Leaving Certificate Level, Polish has the greatest student uptake with 693 taking it in 2018, while 213 students sat the Lithuanian Leaving Certificate examination and 84 students sat the Portuguese Leaving Certificate examination in the same year (State Examinations Commission, 2019).

Language Learning Environments

One of the main needs identified in the and consultation process of Languages Connect was to support the languages of immigrant communities and to consider offering at least some of the non-curricular languages as full curricular languages. By sustaining the language capacity of these speakers, Languages Connect seeks to *support the growth of language competencies*.

Some schools offer these languages during the school day (especially Chinese as a short course and as a TY Module). There are also examples of good practice where schools have succeeded in cultivating positive attitudes toward home languages among children and their parents. One such example mentioned in an article in the ETBI Newsletter (Spring 2015) is when “dual language stories, written in English in school and with the help of parents at home, are read by the children to their classmates, thus improving their confidence and competence in language and exposing their peers to an enriched linguistic environment that becomes a resource for all.” (ETBI, 2015).

In addition, many students from heritage language-speaking backgrounds attend Saturday schools around the country to receive support in the learning of their home language. This model is not unique to Ireland; it exists in many other countries including the UK and USA. These Saturday schools are often supported by the government departments in the home country with responsibility for education and foreign affairs. For example, Szkolny Punkt Konsultacyjny schools are supported by the Polish Ministry of Education, which promotes the learning of the Polish language among young Poles who live abroad and other such Polish schools receive funding from local Polish communities and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, the Lithuania Saturday school classes are supported by the Embassy of Lithuania in Ireland.

According to heritage language speaking parents and Saturday school teachers interviewed by The Irish Times (Irish Times, May 2016) Saturday schools serve many purposes; to help students who can speak but read very little of their home language and wish to learn how to communicate with relatives who are living back in the home language country. Interviewees also been commented that the understanding and appreciation of one's heritage language can help build one's identity (as a speaker of this language); and that it also enables one to be able to integrate confidently in their new home (the rationale being that if they are "confident in their own skin they will able to interact better").

Current developments in relation to the provision of these languages at Leaving Certificate

Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (Department of Education and Skills, 2017), commits to introducing Lithuanian as a full curricular language in 2020, with first examination taking place in 2022. Part of the development will include consultation with stakeholders and in collaboration with appropriate experts.

Further to *Languages Connect, Implementation Plan 2017-2022* (Department of Education and Skills, 2017), NCCA is commencing the development of Leaving Certificate specifications for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese for heritage language speakers, and for Mandarin Chinese for non-native speakers.

As aforementioned, the Foreign Languages Strategy commits to developing and introducing Lithuanian, Polish Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese specifications for Leaving Certificate. These will cater for a range of abilities and will be offered at higher and ordinary levels. With the introduction of the four specifications, candidates will be examined on written, oral and aural competencies.

Considerations in the development of the new specifications

A number of important considerations in the development of these new language specifications are outlined below.

Language Learning Timelines

One of the important considerations is how difficult a language is. According to research by the US Department of State's Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies, there are four categories of languages (1-4 ranked in order of difficult) which are useful to note when considering how much time it takes (on average) for an English speaker to become proficient in another language. Below are examples from the four categories which illustrate the level of difficulty of some of the languages currently taught in Ireland:-

Category	Amount of time (on average) to become proficient	Examples
I	Languages more similar to English Requires on average 24-30 weeks to become proficient	French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish
II	Languages more similar to English Requires on average 36 weeks to become proficient	German
III	Requires on average 44 weeks to become proficient	Lithuanian, Polish, Russian
IV	Requires on average 88 weeks to become proficient	Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese
<p>Note: All estimates relating to the length of time needed to learn these languages to a Speaking 3/Reading 3 (S3/R3) proficiency level assume that the student is a native speaker of English with no prior knowledge of the language to be learned. It is also assumed that the student has above average aptitude for classroom learning of foreign languages; lower aptitude language learners will typically take longer. Although languages are grouped into general "categories" of difficulty for native English speakers, within each category some languages are more difficult than others</p>		

Table 1: Language Learning Timelines Table Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies

It is interesting to note from this table that Polish, Lithuanian and Russian considered to be are Level III languages and therefore require almost twice to become proficient as long as Category I languages. Also of note is that Mandarin Chinese is considered to be a Category IV language, requiring almost four times as much time to become proficient than Category I languages.

Specific Pitching - Level/ Range of Assessment

Although there is a short course in Chinese Language and Culture offered at Junior Cycle, many students who choose to follow the Chinese at Leaving Certificate specification may not have had access to said short course and thus will start at Ab Initio level. Mandarin Chinese will be aligned to the pitch of the current curricular offering for Leaving Certificate Japanese. This takes into account the additional complexities of Mandarin Chinese (as acknowledged in Table 1 above and detailed in the paragraph “Consideration for Mandarin Chinese” below).

Portuguese, Polish and Lithuanian will be offered to all students at higher and ordinary level and aligned to the existing curricular languages of French, German etc. (which broadly aligns to the A2, B1 bands CEFR). This will ensure equity.

Language Skills - Jagged profile among speakers of Heritage Languages

In their paper *“Heritage Language Acquisition for Second Generation Migrant Children”*, the authors consider the fact the ‘language shift’ mentioned by Valdés in his work (Valdés 2005: 415) and how, “as children born in the receiving country partake in pre-school and school related activities, they are increasingly exposed to the host country language, as well as to peer influence and the media of their country of birth. This can make them feel less positive towards their heritage language and consequently they are likely to use it less.”

When discussing the various forces which influence children’s lack of desire to use their heritage language, they note that “as a result of limited usage, proficiency in the heritage language often wanes between the second and the third generation since second generation parents have fewer opportunities to use the ethnic language and impart it to their offspring. Accordingly, in many cases, the third generation starts to lose their ability in the heritage language despite the fact that their grandparents and/or parents are fluent speakers of the native language.”

Given that it is more than twenty years since many migrants arrived in Ireland, many of today’s primary and secondary school students who speak these heritage languages may have never lived or spent significant time in the respective heritage language country. The result of this is that, while they may speak and understand the language proficiently to varying degrees, they are likely to have been less exposed to written forms of the language. This is an important consideration which will need to be taken into account when developing the respective specifications.

Considerations for the Portuguese Specification

Consideration needs to be given to the approach that is taken with the Portuguese specification, in particular because of international variations in the language (e.g. the Portuguese spoken in Portugal differs greatly from that spoken in, for example, Brazil and Angola).

The term “Lusophone”

‘Lusophone’ (from the Portuguese ‘lusófonos’) is an adjective to describe people who speak the Portuguese language, either as native speakers or as learners. The Lusosphere or Lusophony is a community of people who are linked to Portugal, culturally and linguistically, either historically or by choice. The advantage of the term ‘Lusosphere’ and ‘Lusophone’ is that it is free of ethnic connotations since a Lusophone may not have any Portuguese ancestry at all. This definition is particularly important in a post-colonial world where there are inherent power differentials between Portuguese-speaking nations that are a result of the colonialist heritage.

European Portuguese has various grammatical differences to Brazilian Portuguese, so to base the specification or the examination around any of those variations could potentially disadvantage and discriminate persons who speak other variations of Portuguese.

There is an opportunity for the Leaving Certificate specification to become a source of unity and to celebrate diversity rather than become a source of division, and to foster a greater sense of mutual understanding and appreciation between Portuguese speakers from different heritage backgrounds. To this end, it has been suggested that a Lusophone approach be taken in the development of the specification for Leaving Certificate Portuguese, whereby international variations can be accommodated in examination. The State Examinations Commission have advised that this is already done with Spanish.

Considerations for Leaving Certificate Chinese

As aforementioned, Mandarin Chinese will be aligned to the pitch of the current curricular offering for Leaving Certificate. This will take into account the additional level of complexity of tonality and characters.

Additional Expertise

In response to this NCCA has established a sub-group to support the work of the development group with the Mandarin Chinese specification. Furthermore, and as with all NCCA development work, where needs arise for additional expertise to support the development group in their work (e.g. linguistic components for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese), this will be made available.

The teaching and learning of languages at Senior Cycle

Language is the principal means by which we think and all language activities, in whatever language, are exercises in thinking. Language is one of the chief means by which societies and cultures define and organise themselves and by which culture and identity are transmitted within and across societies and cultures. Every language has its own distinctive features and its own intrinsic value.

Language is the medium through which knowledge is acquired and organised. It is also the chief means of interpersonal communication within education and is a central factor in the growth of the learner as a person.

The school curriculum is language-rich, saturated with the language(s) of each learning area.. By learning to use languages, students become able to think in different ways, access new areas of knowledge, and see their world from new perspectives. This curriculum promotes language acquisition and the development of literacy in a wide range of real-life contexts.

Introduction and rationale

Learning languages other than our own widens the spheres in which we can communicate, enables us to adapt to a variety of cultural backgrounds and to participate in, and contribute to, an increasingly international marketplace. Our society is a globalised multicultural one that is also multilingual.

Migration, communication technologies and transportation are bringing people closer together and geographical boundaries do not define the confines of our world as they did in the past. For these reasons, linguistic skills are crucial for employment and career, and in this multicultural environment it is becoming increasingly necessary and advantageous for people to speak more than one language.

Languages are a significant and substantial component of senior cycle. They include the two official state languages, Irish and English, as well as a number of European and non-European languages. This indicates the importance attached to plurilingualism and to studying additional languages – not just for economic or career-related reasons, but also for social integration and active citizenship.

As well as benefitting society, language learning also has positive effects for personal and intellectual development. Learning in classrooms is primarily accomplished through language. Beneficial backwash effects accrue to learners' first language skills from subsequent language learning through the development of their insights into language in general and of their ability to think about and analyse language. Many academic studies have demonstrated that high levels of bilingualism are correlated with higher levels of achievement in other educational areas such as mathematical abilities and the formulation of scientific hypotheses.

Cognitive development is also enhanced by the awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity that can result from language learning.

The study of Leaving Certificate languages aims to enable learners to communicate in the target language for a range of purposes including socialising, study, work and travel. Students also acquire an awareness of language as a linguistic system and an understanding of how to go about learning another language. Furthermore, they have ample opportunities to gain insights into the cultures and way of life of target language-speaking communities and to develop a positive attitude towards them.

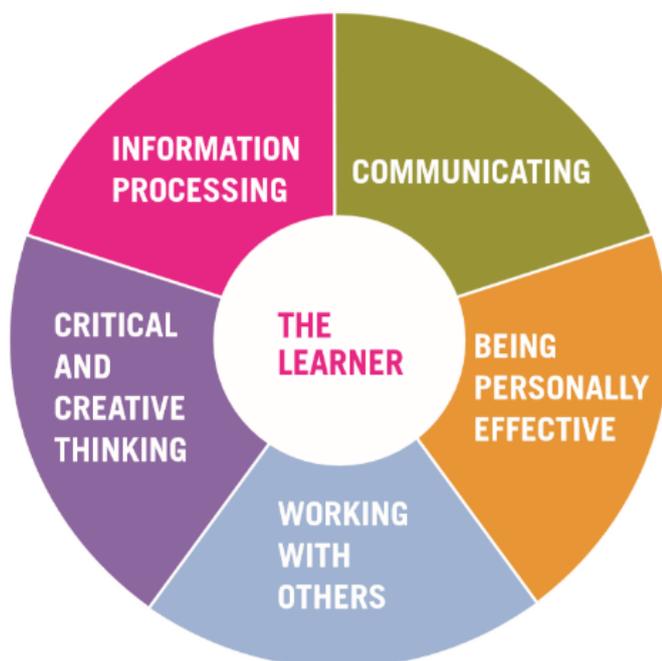
The skills that learners acquire relate to and build upon learning in other senior cycle subjects. Thus they become better able not only to apply existing language knowledge to new knowledge, but also to transfer their skills across all learning. In common with other language and non-language subjects, communication is an important feature of the language specifications in terms of listening, reading, speaking and writing as well as accessing, organising and presenting information. The five language skills of listening, reading, speaking¹ and writing are viewed as central and essential to the full experience of the subject.

The knowledge and skills that language learners have to acquire in order to be effective users of a second language are described comprehensively by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), which was published by the [Council of Europe](#) in 2001 with the aim to provide a “common basis for the elaboration of language specifications, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” (*Council of Europe 2001, p. 1*). The CEFR was recently updated when *The Companion Volume* was published in 2018 (Council of Europe, 2018).

Key Skills in Senior Cycle

Recent developments in curriculum and assessment at senior cycle have focused on the embedding of key skills within learning outcomes and in the development of a different approach to assessment in which students can generate responses that reveal the depth of their understandings and an indication of where they are relative to the knowledge and skills that comprise the learning outcomes. The embedding of key skills requires careful consideration of the balance between knowledge and skills in the curriculum and in learning and of finding appropriate ways of assessing them.

The key skills of: *information processing; being personally effective; communicating; critical and creative thinking* and *working with others*, and the learning outcomes associated with them, comprise the NCCA Key Skills Framework (NCCA, 2009). It was developed to provide a common, unified approach for embedding key skills across all future Leaving Certificate specifications. From an Irish perspective, these skills were identified as being important for all students to achieve to the best of their ability, both during their time in school and into the future, and to fully participate in society, in family and community life, the world of work and lifelong learning.



Information Processing

This key skill helps learners become competent in an information-intensive environment. As well as developing the specific skills of accessing, selecting, evaluating and recording information, learners develop an appreciation of the differences between information and knowledge and the roles that both play in making decisions and judgements.

Critical and Creative Thinking

This key skill assists learners in being aware of different forms and patterns of thinking so that they become more skilled in higher order reasoning and problem solving. In engaging with this key skill, learners reflect critically on the forms of thinking and values that shape their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge.

Communicating

This key skill helps learners to appreciate how central communication is to human relationships of all kinds, and to become better communicators in both formal and informal situations. As well as developing specific skills in a variety of media they form a deeper understanding of the power of communication-particularly language and images-in the modern world. It also incorporates competence and confidence in literacy as an essential basic skill for all learners.

Working with others

This key skill highlights the role that working with others plays in learning and in reaching both collective and personal goals. It helps learners gain some appreciation of the dynamics of groups and the social skills needed to engage in collaborative work. It contributes to an appreciation that working collectively can help motivation, release energy and capitalise on all the talents in a group. In a broader context, they come to recognise that working collectively is important for social cohesion and for engaging with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups.

Being personally effective

This key skill contributes to the personal growth of learners, to them becoming more self-aware and to their using that knowledge to develop personal goals and life plans. As well as giving learners specific strategies related to self-appraisal, goal setting and action planning, an important dimension of this key skill is in building the know-how of learners in recognising how to get things done, how to garner and use resources effectively, and how to act autonomously according to personal identities and personal values.

(Source: Senior Cycle Key Skills Framework, NCCA, 2009)

Next steps

The Development Group for the four new curricular Foreign Languages will prepare the overarching framework and specifications. The group will meet approximately six times during 2019 and as needs arise in early 2020. The development of the framework and specifications for Leaving Certificate Foreign Languages will progress according to the timeline in the Table below.

Time	Action
April - October 2019	Drafting of specification
November 2019	Draft specification to Board and Council for approval for consultation
December 2019 - end January 2020	Consultation on specifications for Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese
February 2020	Draft specification for discussion at Board and Council
March 2020	Specification for approval at Council and for issue to DES
September 2020	Students will commence the study of the new Leaving Certificate curricular languages

Table 2: Timeframe for developing the curricular specification for Leaving Certificate Foreign Languages

Brief for the development of Leaving

Certificate language specifications

The work of the Development Group will be to create a foreign language framework for the four new language specifications; Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese. The approach taken in developing the foreign languages framework will be student-centred, outcomes-based, and follow the format of other senior cycle specifications:

- Introduction and rationale
- Aim
- Objectives
- Structure
- Key skills
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment.

In general terms, the framework and specifications should be aligned with levels 4 and 5 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The specifications will be at Higher and Ordinary level and will be designed to be taught and assessed in 180 hours.

The specifications will be organised around learning outcomes. The key skills of senior cycle will be embedded, as appropriate, in the learning outcomes of the framework and specifications and will be developed with cognisance of the connections and synergies with other subjects.

It will address assessment requirements, ensuring that assessment methods are in line with ongoing developments in assessment at senior cycle, where the emphasis on the demonstration of skills is being promoted and integrated into specifications, mindful of appropriately assessing both oral and aural skills which, heretofore, have not been assessed in the non-curricular languages.

More specifically, the development of the new specifications will address

- The rationale for studying Senior Cycle Languages, making it transparent and evident to students, teachers and parents in the specifications
- How the course will be organised in terms of strands and elements included in the framework
- How target language, task-based teaching and learning will be promoted
- Continuity and progression: how to connect with and build on related learning at junior cycle as well as future learning in life, study and work
- How the specifications, in their presentation and language register, can be strongly student-centred and having a clear focus on what the students can do to develop and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, capabilities and achievements
- How the development of key skills will be embedded
- The provision of opportunities for multiple means of engagement with and demonstration of language learning for all learners
- The emphasis placed on discussion and analysis of sociocultural, intercultural awareness and issues that permeate contemporary life
- How student work will be assessed; the provision of multiple, diverse and appropriate opportunities available for students to achieve.

The work of the Foreign Languages Development Group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. The framework and draft specifications will be completed in 2019. During its work and discussions, elaborations of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.

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