



**NCCA**

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta  
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Report on the consultation on the draft Programme Statement and draft curriculum areas for Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

June 2024

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## List of Abbreviations

COS	Continuum of Support
DCU	Dublin City University
DE	Department of Education
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HSE	Health Service Executive
JC	Junior Cycle
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCE	Leaving Certificate Established
L1LP	Level 1 Learning Programme
L2LP	Level 2 Learning Programme
LP	Learning Programme
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualification
NLN	National Learning Network
PE	Physical Education
RACE	Reasonable Accommodations for Certified Examinations
RE	Religious Education
SC	Senior Cycle
SET	Special Education Teacher
SETAM	Special Education Teacher Allocation Model
SPHE	Social Personal Health Education
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning

## Introduction

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The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022) was published in March 2022 following the response from the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, TD. Actions outlined in the Advisory Report include the development of follow-on modules at senior cycle for students currently studying Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LP) and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) in junior cycle. In March 2022, the Minister for Education requested that NCCA undertake a series of actions to progress the programme of work that was set out in an ambitious plan to redevelop senior cycle. One of the actions included in the plan was the introduction of a new qualification at Level 1 (L1) and Level 2 (L2) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

A development group was established to undertake the task of developing the Programme Statement and draft curriculum areas for Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. The work of the Post-Primary SEN Development Group was guided by a [Background Paper and Brief](#) that was published for public consultation in March 2023. The deliberations of the Development Group were informed by the feedback from the consultation, which was published in a consultation report in September 2023.

The draft Programme Statement for Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes and two curriculum areas (Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy) at both levels were made available for public consultation from February 14<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The aim of this consultation was to seek open and honest views on the new draft Programme Statement and curriculum areas.

In general, the responses to the consultation welcomed the introduction of Level 1 and Level 2 learning programmes at senior cycle, building on the programmes at junior cycle, with participants affirming the importance of all students' learning and progress at senior cycle being formally recognised. The structure of the learning programmes was welcomed as broad, balanced and relevant to students' interests and needs, while it was also regarded as giving a level of autonomy to schools. Nevertheless, ensuring that students had choice in their areas of interest was emphasised. The introduction of external validation of students' work was broadly welcomed as was the certification of their achievements. Participants welcomed the curriculum areas of Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy, but had mixed opinions around some of the learning outcomes.

The following sections of this report will elaborate, in more detail, on the feedback from the consultation. Section One outlines the consultation process while Section Two provides an overview of the feedback gathered during the consultation on the draft Programme Statement and curriculum areas. Section Three summarises other areas of feedback, with the conclusion bringing together the key insights from the consultation and next steps in relation to the development of Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes.

## Section 1: Consultation Process

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Consultation is a key aspect of NCCA's work, where advice is shaped by feedback from the public, schools, settings, education interests and others. The following section presents an overview of the methodological approach employed during this consultation which is underpinned by the principles set out in NCCA's Research Strategy (2023) and provides a summary of engagement during the consultation.

### Methodological Approach

The consultation on the draft Programme Statement and curriculum areas included the following modes of engagement:

- An online survey
- Written submissions
- Regional focus groups with teachers and school leaders
- A range of school-based focus groups to capture insights from students, parents, teachers and school leaders.

A self-selecting sampling approach was used for the online survey, written submissions and regional focus group sessions, with educational organisations and stakeholders invited to forward a written submission outlining their response to the draft Programme Statement and curriculum areas. The online survey was open to individuals or those wishing to respond on behalf of an organisation. Regional focus groups for teachers and school leaders took place in Athlone, Dublin and Limerick. Schools were limited to sending no more than two delegates to the regional focus group sessions to ensure as broad a range of schools as possible could attend.

In terms of the school-based focus groups, a representative sample of ten schools was selected from the 44 schools that expressed an interest in becoming involved in consultation in curriculum developments. The ten schools were selected using criteria relating to DEIS status, gender, school size and type. Student assent and parental consent was sought for students to participate in the school-based focus groups.

Regional and school-based focus groups were based on a set of open-ended questions, which were used to access participants' views. A written record of all discussions was made during focus groups. Feedback was anonymised, and all feedback from the consultation was stored as digital files in line with NCCA's Data Protection Policy (2023). The privacy of all participants has been maintained through anonymisation, except where an organisation or individual has given explicit permission to be identified as contributing to the consultation.

The consultation sought to explore five broad areas of focus on the draft Programme Statement:

- Purpose, Planning and 'Programme Requirements'
- Who the Learning Programmes are designed for
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Rewarding Achievement.

Feedback was also gathered in relation to two curriculum areas at Level 1 and Level 2:

- Communication and Literacy
- Numeracy.

A thematic approach was used to analyse the feedback and was framed by the broad areas of focus within the consultation. This helped to categorise, evaluate and collate feedback drawn from the information gathered. The findings of this analysis are presented in Section Two of this report.

## Consultation Responses

The use of a broad range of modes of engagement ensured that anyone who wished to contribute to the consultation could do so. The online surveys and written submissions facilitated the collection of feedback from a wide cross-section of participants, while the school-based focus groups and regional focus groups enabled more extensive and in-depth discussion and feedback.

Table 1 provides an overview of levels of engagement across the consultation. The responses to the online survey were made by teachers and school leaders from across a variety of settings. Organisations and individuals who made written submissions and wished to be identified are listed in Appendices 1 and 2.

Mode of engagement	Participants	No of participants
Online survey	School leaders	10
	Teachers	40
Written submissions	Individuals	7
	Organisations	8
Regional focus groups	Mainstream, special class, special school teachers and school leaders	44
In-school focus groups	A representative sample of 10 schools, equally divided between special and mainstream schools, with 4 sets of interviews per school	87

Table 1: Engagement across the consultation

Contexts	Number of Participants
<i>Teacher Mainstream School</i>	18
<i>Teacher Special School</i>	12
<i>Deputy Principal Special School</i>	9
<i>Principal Special school</i>	3
<i>Deputy Principal Mainstream School</i>	2
<i>Other</i>	3
<i>Múinteoir as Gaeilge</i>	1

Table 2: Respondent demographic for the online survey.

Participants	Number of Participants
<i>Teachers</i>	35
<i>Students</i>	25
<i>Parents</i>	22
<i>School Management</i>	15
<i>Deputy Principal Mainstream School</i>	2
<i>Other</i>	3
<i>Múinteoir as Gaeilge</i>	1

Table 3: Respondent demographic in school focus groups

## Promoting the consultation

Information on how to participate in the consultation was disseminated in many ways including the NCCA website, the NCCA newsletter, social media platforms, and correspondence sent to education organisations and stakeholders.



## Section 2: Feedback from the consultation

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This section presents an overview of the feedback received during the consultation. The findings have been grouped into the following areas:

- Overall impressions of the draft Programme Statement
- Purpose, Planning and 'Programme Requirements'
- Who the Learning Programmes are designed for
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Rewarding Achievement
- Curriculum Areas: Numeracy and Communication and Literacy.

### Overall impressions of the draft Programme Statement

The draft Programme Statement and the introduction of the Senior Cycle L1 and L2 Learning Programmes was seen across the consultation as an important and significant milestone in ensuring all students have access to, can participate in, and benefit from an appropriate curriculum in senior cycle. The draft Programme Statement was welcomed in all educational settings visited during the consultation and described as "comprehensive" and "concise". It was described as firmly placing the student at the centre of the learning across all educational settings.

*Programme Statement; very positive, firmly establishing the student at the core of the focus for planning, teaching and learning*

(Written Submission)

The presentation of the draft Programme Statement as one document for all post-primary and special schools was welcomed by teachers and school leaders.

The personalised, student-led approach to designing the programmes described in the draft Programme Statement was strongly endorsed by participants. The level of autonomy afforded to schools was cited as enabling this student-led and student-centred approach. Equally, participants welcomed the provision of some "parameters" and "guidance", as described in the document, within which schools could work to design L1 and L2 learning programmes for their students

*The autonomy for schools is great-it allows us to look at the vast range of how students access the curriculum and how to address it well*

(Principal, School focus group)

### Purpose, Planning and 'Programme Requirements'

The six L1 curriculum areas (Numeracy, Communication and Literacy, Personal Care, Being part of a community, Music and the Arts, Being Active) were described as "broad", "varied", "relevant" and an appropriate reflection of students' needs and interests.

*Accurately reflects the work we are doing at senior cycle at the moment*

(Online survey)

Similarly, the L2 curriculum areas were widely endorsed as being important. However, it was suggested that providing students with more choice of curriculum areas and modules would be preferable. It would also provide more flexibility to schools. Suggestions included geography, history, horticulture, society and politics, thus providing more choice for students and teachers alike. As such, many participants suggested it would be more appropriate and desirable to have three core curriculum areas, namely: Personal Care, Numeracy, Communication and Literacy. It was noted that all other curriculum areas and modules would be best placed as an electives, ensuring schools can provide a more student-led programme.

A small number of participants suggested that electives also be provided at Level 1, to correspond with the provision of choice at Level 2.

The modular nature of the curriculum areas was considered to be a positive design feature and allowed for student choice.

## **Who the learning programmes are designed for**

The information and language proposed in this section of the draft Programme Statement (p.6), were broadly welcomed. The language used was described as inclusive and builds upon existing practice in schools. Most participants expressed the view that the information outlined in this section was sufficient to give comprehensive guidance and structure to the process of identifying students whose learning profile would be most appropriately suited to the L1 or L2 learning programme at senior cycle.

A number of participants also indicated that it was affirming what schools already do to support identifying the learner profile that would be most suited to pursue these programmes.

*The information on who these programmes are designed for is laid out clearly and gives a comprehensive outline on how schools, parents and students themselves reach this decision to follow this programme*

(Online survey)

The alignment of the language in this section of the Programme Statement to other policies such as the Special Education Teacher Allocation Model (SETAM) was acknowledged. While participants were largely in favour of the language in this section, it garnered a range of commentary within stakeholders' submissions.

*The term 'global developmental delay' is welcomed as it is a term used on psychological reports*

(Written submission)

*Consideration is needed in order to strengthen the guidance. Schools may have difficulty identifying who are best suited for the L2 programme*

(Written submission)

Providing a glossary of terms was suggested as useful to provide clarity of updated terminology.

## Teaching and Learning

While this section of the draft Programme Statement (p.16) was described as having captured the key characteristics of good teaching and learning. It was accompanied by the caveat that it could be further expanded. Some participants suggested that the role of school management could be more explicitly enhanced in this section. It was repeatedly stated that a more prominent reference to hands-on, practical, real-world pedagogy is required here.

Making explicit the cross curricular links within and across curriculum areas and subjects was also identified as necessary to support teaching and learning. There were many observations from participants that impromptu opportunities for learning within the school and across the wider community should be emphasised within this section of the Programme Statement.

Participants also indicated it would be helpful to provide case studies and exemplars of how the programme might be implemented across different settings. It was noted that this type of support material could share examples of links across curriculum areas, good pedagogical practice and approaches to establishing links to the wider local community.

Participants indicated that they would like further support in timetabling.

While all participants reported that the learning programmes need to be “brought to life” for real learning to take place, this was most evident when speaking to students as part of the school-based focus groups. All students identified practical, active, hands-on learning and engaging with their local community as their favoured aspects of school.

While it was identified across the consultation that engaging in the community was an important feature of the programmes, it was acknowledged that this would present implementation challenges, which will be addressed in Section 3.

## Assessment

Across the consultation it emerged that this section of the draft Programme Statement (pp.17-21) captured the importance of the role of effective formative, as well as summative, assessment in supporting the students. Much of the feedback received was focused on the Progression Continuum and the Student Portfolio.

### Progression Continuum

The Progression Continuum (p.17), as a guide to formative assessment, garnered a lot of feedback across all modes of engagement. It was welcomed by participants and considered to be affirming good practice. It was mentioned by participants that the emphasis on the process of learning and

its incremental nature in the Progression Continuum would support ongoing assessment of student learning as the student progressed towards achieving the learning outcomes.

*[The Progression Continuum] empowers the teacher to capture student progression*

(Teacher, school focus group)

This was regarded as particularly relevant at Level 1 where, for many students, the emphasis for student learning is on progression towards the learning outcome.

*We need to stop focusing on achieving the perfect learning outcome. We need to focus on the next step to progress*

(Teacher, regional focus group)

Many participants stated they would use the language proposed in the Progression Continuum in their student support plans (SSP) and in their correspondence with parents. Responses indicated that it would support not just ongoing assessment, but planning for pedagogy and supporting differentiated teaching in every context.

*Progression is difficult to see in the classroom and the document empowers teachers to capture it while it is happening*

(Teacher, school focus group)

While participants across all modes of engagement agreed that the inclusion of the Progression Continuum was necessary, the description of some of the progression steps on the continuum garnered much commentary in the written submissions.

*The Progression Continuum on page 17 could potentially lead to confusion in some special schools. For instance, teachers in special schools are fully aware of Additional Support Pathways (Primary) and Progression Pathways (Junior Cycle). However, the introduction of two different sets of Progression Continuum at senior cycle could potentially lead to confusion*

(Written submission)

## Portfolio

While it was acknowledged that portfolios (p.19) were time- and space-demanding, using them to collate evidence of learning was supported by participants and considered as being “necessary.” Many participants welcomed the inclusion of ‘home’ and ‘community’ as sources of vital and authentic assessment information.

*Evidence of learning at home needs to be part of their portfolios. We have students in the Special Olympics and local programmes. There needs to be space for this at Senior Cycle. It needs to be personalised and not generic*

(Teacher, school focus group)

The inclusion of the guidance in the draft Programme Statement that someone other than the teacher could capture evidence of learning was welcomed, but some concerns were noted. While there was a general consensus that this would be very appropriate and helpful in the context of SNAs capturing this evidence for the portfolio, it was acknowledged that it would be more challenging if this role is extended to a parent/guardian, a therapist, or other professionals that may be working with a student.

It was clear from the feedback from schools that there is a desire for additional guidance to support the various areas related to the collation of portfolios. Areas identified include: the types and examples of work to be included, the storage of portfolios and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Students, who for the most part referred to their portfolio as their *Folder*, stated (with the exception of 1 student) how much they enjoyed developing their portfolio for their junior cycle learning programme, both hardcopy and e-portfolios.

*I liked the time management and organising my portfolio*

(Student, school focus group)

Participants elaborated upon this within the context of school-based and regional focus groups. They frequently commented upon how important the portfolio was to their students. They recounted stories of students' increased self-esteem in seeing their own progression and achievements as their portfolio was physically increasing in size.

Many schools arrange an in-house award ceremony for the viewing and presentation of portfolios. While this is of widespread benefit to students, it was repeatedly stated that an external validation of the portfolio would have more far-reaching benefits for students. There was a general consensus that e-portfolios were relevant and less time consuming but equally, participants did not want to replace the hardcopy portfolio - both have a place.

Participants regularly noted that it was important to remember that not all students would have access to the digital infrastructure or the skills to support digital portfolios. But within that context, much conversation occurred around the notion of creating a singular online space to develop e-portfolios and a template for same. It was noted that this would support the "legitimacy" and "validation" of the portfolio for the student.

Some participants suggested that supports, such as a national online portal, in tandem with hard copy portfolios, would be helpful to teachers, so that the teacher can scan, access and upload the work of the students to create an e-portfolio. A number of participants expressed the view that an e-portfolio collated on a national online portal could also serve as an "education passport", where it could travel with the student after school. The e-portfolio was also deemed an enabler for whole school collaboration.

*We have a real challenge engaging mainstream teachers in SEN work-this needs to change and it might be a good start to have them upload work etc, bring their responsibilities into focus a bit more*

(Teacher, regional focus group)

This, in turn, led to much conversation within the focus groups on the area of collaboration within and across schools. This idea was raised on multiple occasions with the same purpose of supporting teachers' understanding of the standards and expectations when assessing students' portfolios. This, it was cited, would support teachers in making on-balance judgements of students' work when deciding on the level of achievement.

## Rewarding Achievement

The awarding of a certificate (p.21) at Level 1/2 on the NFQ for students following these programmes was enthusiastically welcomed across all modes of consultation. Participants strongly expressed the view that the formal recognition of students' achievements is vital.

*They deserve to be recognised for their own abilities*

*(Teacher, regional focus group)*

The majority of the feedback focused on the importance of all students having the opportunity for their achievements to be formally recognised at the end of senior cycle. Furthermore, it was emphasised that students should receive their certificate/award on the same day, regardless of their school setting or which level(s) of award they had pursued, and that their work should be validated by an external assessor. External assessment, according to many participants, would be a step towards parity of recognition. The following quotations reflect what was stated time and time again throughout the consultation process.

*External validation is important to be in line with the other Senior Cycle programmes from the perspectives of all concerned...curricular inclusion....perceived importance of the programmes vis-à-vis the other programmes in the eyes of the most important stakeholders i.e the students and parents*

*(Written submission)*

*Harp needs to be on top of the students results*

*(Principal, school focus group)*

Many participants lauded the quality assurance measures described in the draft Programme Statement. However, there was a strong desire for more clarity on the quality assurance, certification and qualification process, wanting further information on "what it might look like". Typical questions raised throughout the consultation included:

- Will an external, independent body be appointed to view and assess the student portfolio?
- Who will be the body responsible for this?
- Will the award be on the NFQ?
- Will the students receive a 'Leaving Certificate'?

## Descriptors of Achievement

The Descriptors of Achievement (p.22) were well received and described as positively worded and student-centred. The fact that three different descriptions of achievement are proposed garnered much positive commentary.

*All students are being celebrated where they are at*

(Teacher, regional focus group)

At Level 1, while the three descriptors (Achieved, Achieved with Competence, and Achieved with Distinction) were welcomed, some participants proposed including an additional descriptor at the level of 'Experience', which would be placed prior to Achieved. The rationale behind this was that some students at Level 1 will experience the modules as opposed to achieving them.

*Achieving at the experiencing level is achieved. Maybe add an asterisk to say that if a student is at the experience level, then they have achieved*

(Teacher, regional focus group)

There was some commentary that more detail may be required in describing 'Achieved with Distinction' to support the teacher. Within the same vein, it was articulated that the Programme Statement should revisit p.21 where it states 'A student who successfully completes 16 modules will receive the certificate' with the suggestion being to revise the word *completes* with a more appropriate reflection of student engagement.

## Curriculum Areas: Numeracy and Communication and Literacy

The feedback on the draft curriculum areas is presented under the following headings:

- General response to the curriculum areas
- Structure and organisation of the curriculum areas and modules
- Response to each curriculum area.

### General response to the curriculum areas

There was considerable support for the proposed curriculum areas. The modular-based design, was seen as essential to supporting a student-led curriculum.

*The modules enable the teacher, who knows the student best, to mediate the curriculum to the strengths and needs of the student*

(Teacher, school focus group)

Overall, the two curriculum areas-Numeracy and Communication and Literacy- were seen as relevant and accessible for students to consolidate, progress and continue their learning from junior cycle.

Much commentary emerged on the recommended time allocations, particularly regarding Numeracy, with some respondents suggesting the time allocation for Numeracy be reduced to enable more of a focus on other areas regarded as equally important for the students.

When looked at within the Programme Requirements at Level 1 and Level 2, participants indicated that Numeracy and Communication and Literacy were coherent, relevant and presented appropriate learning for students.

### Structure and organisation of the curriculum areas and modules

Participants welcomed the rationale outlined in the curriculum areas of Numeracy and Communication and Literacy, with the feedback indicating that these curriculum areas capture the important skills and knowledge that teachers are teaching their students on a daily basis and which students require.

In general, the structure of modules, which includes a module descriptor, *students learn about* column and equivalent learning outcomes, was positively received. The learning outcomes were seen to align well with the important learning described in the *students learn about* column. Participants acknowledged that the learning programmes need to cater for a diverse range of learning needs across both levels and across school contexts and suggestions were made in relation to specific learning outcomes to enhance the curriculum areas.

### Response to each curriculum area

In Numeracy at Level 1, some minor suggestions were made for a small number of additional learning outcomes. Participants noted that the topic of money can be challenging for many students. Participants overwhelmingly suggested the removal of the module 'Shape and Space' from the curriculum area as this is covered comprehensively at junior cycle.

In Numeracy Level 2, suggestions were made for the addition of learning outcomes relating to temperature, ratio and time zones. It was also suggested that some learning outcomes in *Understanding Number* could be made more challenging for students. Again, Shape and Space was cited as having been covered comprehensively at junior cycle and therefore should not be included within this curriculum.

Communication and Literacy at Level 1 was widely endorsed by participants as appropriate for students at senior cycle. Participants suggested that more explicit reference could be made to the importance of different ways of communicating, and that a student's preferred choice of communication should be supported as their form of communication. It was also suggested that the use of digital technology should be embedded across the curriculum area.

In Communication and Literacy at Level 2, some minor suggestions were made. Participants noted that there could be more of an emphasis on presentation skills within this curriculum area and that some learning outcomes in *Expression through writing* may be challenging for many students.



## Section 3: Other feedback arising in the consultation

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As mentioned previously, throughout the consultation participants discussed broader opportunities and issues for the successful implementation of the Learning Programmes. There were eight overarching areas of feedback:

- Level 3 curriculum provision at senior cycle
- Inclusivity of Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications
- Alignment of language
- Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)
- Resources and resourcing
- Professional time
- Special schools' primary status
- Continuity, progression and pathways beyond senior cycle.

### Level 3 curriculum provision at senior cycle

Across all modes of engagement there was a resounding call for curriculum provision at Level 3 at senior cycle. Participants stated that providing a curriculum at Level 3 for the cohort of students in senior cycle was a means of providing an appropriate level of challenge for students who could access a blend of Level 2 and Level 3 at junior cycle. An example cited regularly was students requiring a Level 3 qualification to access an apprenticeship, and the need for students to be able to access the highest level of award possible for them.

### Inclusivity of Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications

While the move towards providing a curriculum and an award at senior cycle to ensure that all students' learning had an opportunity to be formally recognised was valued, a small number of participants raised a concern around providing a separate curriculum at Level 1 and Level 2. These participants indicated a concern that providing learning programmes at Level 1 and Level 2 was not in keeping with ensuring an inclusive education system at all levels.

*In 2024 it would seem reasonable to at least set up the possibility of inclusivity within curriculum and within its delivery not to rewrite the separate curricula of yore using alignment rhetoric but retaining the deficiency modelling. This is a missed opportunity to develop instead guidelines wherein all citizens in a community could be afforded educational opportunities equal to their non-intellectually disabled peers and wherein all citizens would learn to understand and value diversity. It is a very sad moment in our education history if this is not priority number one. A handbook to illustrate possibilities for diversification and inclusivity (for students with low moderate or severe to profound intellectual disability) within all SC subject areas would be a much more rights-respecting, policy-informed and progressive move in 2024-25.*

(Written Submission)

## Alignment of language

The information and language proposed in the section *Who are these learning programmes designed for* of the draft Programme Statement (p.6) were broadly welcomed. Furthermore, participants responded strongly that the language and information used here should be adopted in the L1LP and L2LP at junior cycle, to ensure consistency of approach and to ensure that the Programme Statement and the junior cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programme Guidelines for Teachers remain in step with contemporary terminology and language.

*All stakeholders should use this uniform language*

(Principal, school focus group)

## Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)

There was agreement that professional learning will be essential if schools are to successfully enact the Programme Statement and professional learning should also be provided through the medium of Irish.

Additionally, it was emphasised that *ongoing* professional learning is crucial for meaningful engagement with the Programme Statement and that professional learning should be compulsory for *all* teachers and school leaders to support whole school collaborative practice.

## Resources and resourcing

Participants placed enormous value on each of the learning programmes in providing a variety of possible opportunities and contexts to support student learning and development. However, most participants suggested that many meaningful student experiences would require additional funding and resourcing to enable schools to achieve them.

*There was concern that schools would not be able to offer all options suggested in the electives and therefore there might be a limit on the choices available to schools*  
(Written submission))

Commonly cited areas which schools found challenging to finance included transportation costs, costs associated with additional learning experiences in the community, work experience opportunities and resources to support practical, hands-on learning activities. The current challenges schools are experiencing in the recruitment of teachers was also cited as a source of concern for the successful implementation of the learning programmes at senior cycle.

## Professional time

Feedback indicated that the design of L1 and L2 learning programmes requires consideration of the role of the SET (in mainstream schools), the role of Guidance Counsellors (where available) and the coordination of the programme in general. All school settings commented upon the necessity of time to collaborate and consult within their schools for planning, coordination and assessment purposes.

Further commentary emerged citing the value of internal validation meetings not just within schools but across schools to support the standardised approach to teachers' on-balance judgment when assessing evidence of learning.

Time was also raised across the consultation in relation to planning and preparing for the enactment of the Programme Statement in September 2024.

### **Special schools' primary status**

Participants from special schools emphasised the absence of certain supports which would be needed to enable special schools to enact L1 and L2 LPs. These supports, available in post primary schools, need to be made available to special schools to address the imbalance of access to, and funding for, subject-specific teachers to support the learning programmes in a genuinely meaningful manner. Examples cited included the T4 subjects such as Construction Studies, Drama, and Home Economics. The absence of professional time in special schools was frequently noted during the consultation as a challenge for teachers when it comes to collaborative planning and assessment.

### **Continuity, progression and pathways beyond senior cycle**

While the focus given to the individual nature of each student's pathway through and beyond school was welcomed, schools identified that they could benefit from further guidance in supporting transitions into post-school life for students engaging in L1 and/or L2 LP at senior cycle. Schools asked for direction and support on the role, where available, of guidance counsellors and others, both inside and outside the school, who can play an active role in supporting the making of informed decisions about existing and new pathways. Examples given of external agencies who could support schools in this context included the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the National Learning Network (NLN).

## Section 4: Considerations and Conclusion

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### Considerations

Overall, the draft Programme Statement was well received and the introduction of the Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at senior cycle was considered an important and significant milestone in ensuring all students have access to, can participate in, and benefit from an appropriate curriculum in senior cycle. The consultation fulfilled its objective of initiating discussion and debate on key aspects of the programmes at senior cycle. The consultation yielded feedback which will be considered by the development group when finalising the Programme Statement and the curriculum areas of Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy.

Key points for consideration in this context include:

- Ensuring the language and information in *Who the learning programmes are designed for* is clear, appropriate, inclusive and reflective of relevant policies.
- Providing further clarity on the Programme Requirements, ensuring that students have choice in their electives and schools have flexibility in relation to the electives they can provide.
- Including further reference to the role of school leadership in implementing the learning programmes.
- Providing further clarity on assessment, particularly the process of internal and external validation.

In relation to the curriculum areas, Communication and Literacy at both L1 and L2 was regarded as broad, balanced and reflective of students' needs at senior cycle, with some minor amendments suggested. Some suggestions for improvement in Numeracy and L1 and L2 were raised, such as the removal of *Shape and Space*, and these suggestions will be incorporated into the revised curriculum area.

It is worth noting that the feedback gathered during this public consultation highlighted the broader need for supporting teachers, schools and settings in implementing these programmes at senior cycle, including professional time, professional learning and adequate resourcing. While this feedback is beyond the scope of the work of the development group, it is reported for future consideration.

### Conclusion

The consultation on the draft Programme Statement and draft curriculum areas (Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy) generated rich discussion and was very informative. NCCA acknowledges participants' engagement and is grateful for the open, honest, committed, experience-based and expert feedback received. Consultation feedback indicates there are very positive views on the draft Programme Statement and curriculum areas, while acknowledging that provision of professional learning, supports and resources are fundamental to successful implementation. The feedback on the documents will help to further strengthen the Programme Statement and curriculum areas. It will also help inform the development of additional curriculum areas which are listed in the draft Programme Statement and which will be developed as part of a fuller suite of curriculum components in 2024/2025.

## References

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National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2022a) [Review Level 1 and Level 2 Learning programmes](#). NCCA

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2022b) [Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report](#). NCCA.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023a) [Background paper and brief for development of follow on modules](#). NCCA.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023b) [Research Strategy, 2023 - 2026 | NCCA](#) NCCA.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, (2023c) [Data Protection Policy](#) NCCA

## **Appendix 1: List of Contributors - organisations**

The following is a list of organisations who responded to either the online survey and/or online submission, that wished to be listed in this report.

Department of Education (Inspectorate)

Dublin City University

Foras na Gaeilge

Holy Family School for the Deaf Cabra

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

National Parents Council (NPC) (results of survey of 32 parents and two consultation events of 13 parents submitted)

OIDE

Saint Mark's Special School, Newbridge

## **Appendix 2: List of contributors-online submission**

The following is a list of individuals who responded to the online submission, that wished to be listed in this report.

Lauren Bradley

Margaret Flood, Maynooth University

Audrey Halpin, Dublin City University

Judith Jennings

Niamh McConville

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## Appendix 3: List of Contributors – online surveys

The following is a list of individuals who responded to the online survey that wished to be listed in this report.

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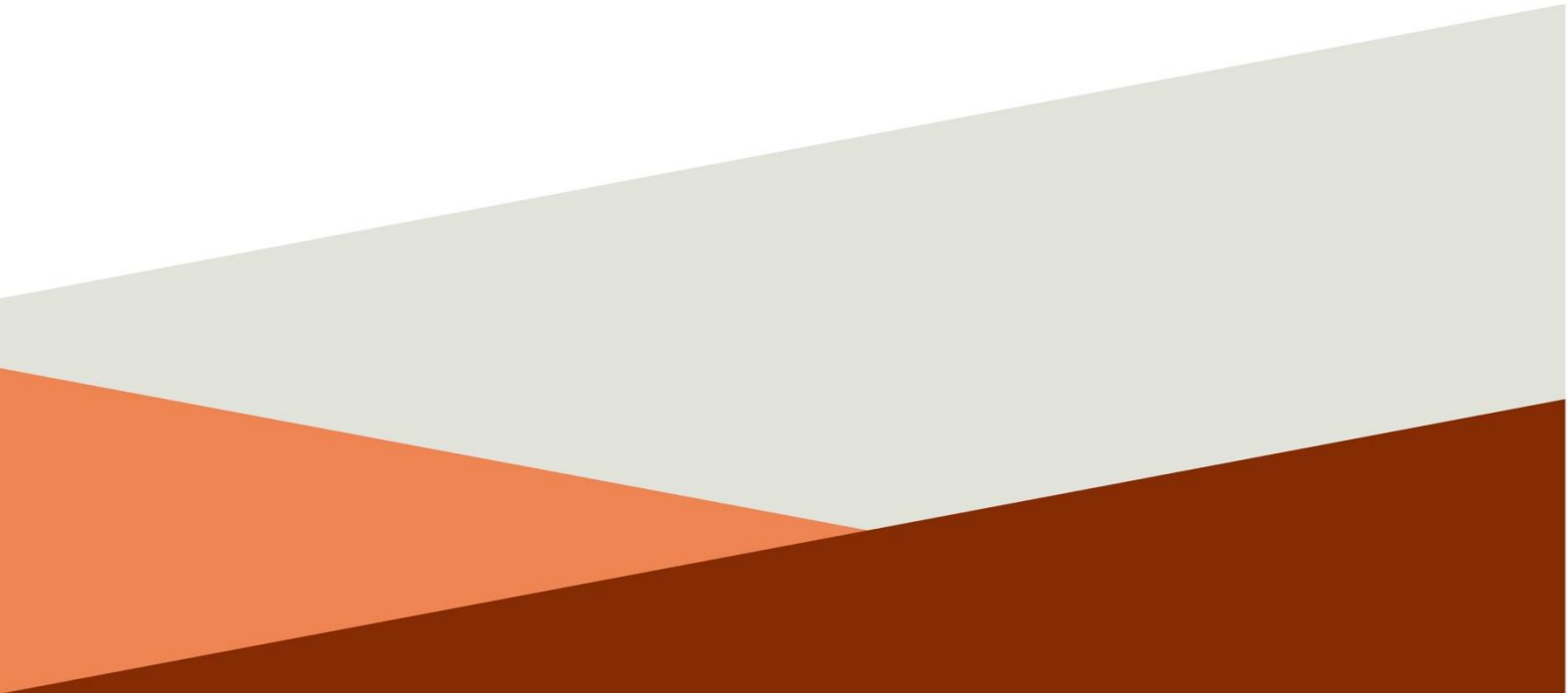
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**NCCA**

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