



**NCCA**

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

# Report on the consultation on the background papers and briefs for the review of Tranche 2 Leaving Certificate subjects

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## Introduction

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 a review of existing curriculum components - subjects, modules, and programmes. In March 2022, the Minister for Education requested that NCCA undertake a series of actions to support the realisation of her vision for a redeveloped senior cycle as set out in [Equity and Excellence for All](#) (Department of Education, 2022.) One key action set out in this plan was that a schedule of senior cycle subjects and modules for redevelopment be prepared for approval by the Minister.

NCCA subsequently prepared a schedule of subjects for review, which was organised into a number of tranches. The redevelopment of the tranche 2 subjects will be completed in 2025 for introduction to schools in September 2026. To inform a review of the tranche 2 subjects, a Background Paper and Brief for each subject was developed<sup>1</sup>.

The Background Papers provide an overview of the current context in which the review and redevelopment of the tranche 2 subjects are taking place, and have been informed by the views of teachers, school leaders and students gathered through a series of school visits conducted in a representative sample of schools. Each paper includes a consideration of relevant policy developments and looks at how each subject/module is currently provided for within the Irish curriculum. The papers include an overview of similar education opportunities internationally, by presenting how the curriculum areas are offered in different jurisdictions before concluding with issues identified for consideration in the development of a revised specification and setting out a proposed brief to guide the work of the development group.

These Background Papers were approved for consultation by Council on March 21, 2024, and the public consultation ran from April 8 to May 17, 2024. The aim of the consultation on the Background Papers was to seek the views of interested parties in relation to the ideas and issues set out in order to inform the work of the development group.

The following sections of this report will present the main themes expressed in the consultation feedback. Section One provides an overview of the consultation process. Section Two provides

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<sup>1</sup> There was no Background Paper and Brief developed for the tranche 2 subject of Physical Education as the specification for this subject was recently developed and an Early Enactment Review was conducted in 2023 which will support the development group with their work.

insights into the feedback from the consultation while Section Three presents a conclusion and identifies the next steps.

## Section 1: Consultation Process

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.

### Consultation responses

The consultation was based on an online survey with four questions that focused on the opportunities and challenges for the redevelopment of each subject and supports needed for the successful redevelopment and implementation of the subject.

The table below details the level of engagement with the online consultation.

Subject	Number of responses
Accounting	20
Construction Studies	66
Engineering	46
English	122
Geography	42
LCVP	13

*Table 1: Number of responses to online survey*

A written submission was also received from the National Parents Council (NPC).

## Section 2: Feedback from the consultation

This section presents an overview of the feedback received during the consultation for each of the tranche 2 subjects.

## Accounting

There were 20 responses to the online survey for the consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Accounting (NCCA, 2024a). Respondents in general supported the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Accounting and the timely nature of same. The engagement in the consultation offers valuable insights into the opportunities, challenges, and necessary supports for redeveloping and implementing Leaving Certificate Accounting, all of which are outlined below.

### Opportunities and Challenges

Respondents across the consultation supported the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Accounting, recognising the need for modernising the subject. It was noted by several respondents that many of the accounts that are currently covered in the Leaving Certificate syllabus are out-dated and need to be replaced to reflect the realities of modern accounting.

*The course is outdated, very heavy and very hard to get completed in two years. ...and there is no experience in using accounting packages online which is also used in industry (Online survey).*

Some respondents suggested that the current Leaving Certificate course has too much content to cover over 180 hours, and that the redevelopment offers an opportunity to find a better balance in terms of reducing the number of topics to be covered. Some respondents suggested that the introduction of new 'theory-based' elements such as ethics and sustainability would be good in terms of modernising the course. However, reflecting the previous point, this would need to be done in a way so as not to overload the curriculum with too much content. Additionally, it was suggested that it will be challenging to bring new elements into the learning, while at the same time not compromising the problem-solving and calculations-based nature of the subject, which many students enjoy about accounting.

*Cut down the course content to allow students the time to deepen their knowledge on crucial areas. Cut out topics that are not relevant or used regularly in the "real world" (Online survey).*

*Students enjoy the calculation elements and developing the skill. It's almost seen as a practical subject. If there is too much theory added in the new specification the subject will lose its appeal (Online survey).*

Some contributors identified the redevelopment as an opportunity to more closely align Leaving Certificate Accounting with the accounting elements within Junior Cycle Business Studies. Some noted that there is an opportunity to bridge what was perceived by some as a knowledge gap from the learning at Junior Cycle Business Studies. Others noted that the redeveloped Leaving Certificate Accounting course will be more accessible given the ab initio nature of the new course and identified it as an opportunity to appeal to more students.

*A student should be able to take up accounting in Senior Cycle without having completed Junior Cycle Business (Online survey).*

Many respondents commented that the introduction of a new digital element could offer an opportunity to modernise the subject and could assist in giving students a sense of real-world accounting. Some respondents suggested that learning accounting using spreadsheets would be a useful way to incorporate the digital element into the subject. Respondents cautioned about access to technology and suggested that it would require both investment and CPD to ensure the smooth introduction of any proposed digital element.

*The IT element while it has merit will be very challenging to implement without much greater investment in IT equipment in schools. Our school has one computer lab and it is in regular use... (Online survey).*

*The use of Excel in final account preparation & for analysis would be very interesting & is definitely an area that I would be interested in teaching (Online survey).*

Many respondents welcomed the addition of an assessment component, in addition to the written examination. Some noted concerns around the 40% figure, suggesting that as a practical subject, the subject could benefit from the 40% figure being increased. Additionally, others noted that there are inherent dangers in having assessment components given the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It was further noted by some respondents that an assessment component might be an opportune time to possibly embed a digital element into the course. Some suggested that there is potential for a blended assessment approach, incorporating for example, a case study and a monitored/moderated assessment while others highlighted the potential of various digital applications.

*favour the suggestion of the potential use of a case study with students receiving it in advance before completing the assessment digitally under examination conditions, therefore removing the concern of AI (Online survey).*

## Supports for redevelopment and implementation

Contributors to the survey identified several supports considered necessary for both the redevelopment and implementation of the accounting specification. These included appropriate CPD in advance of the introduction of the redeveloped specification, which should focus on supporting teachers in developing the skills that will enable them to teach the subject, given the potential for new and modernised accounting content, and a potential digital element. In addition, support materials (e.g. sample papers) were referenced as being very important in helping teachers navigate their way through the changes.

Access to resources was highlighted by many respondents as a challenge and it was pointed out that schools may have to invest in ICT equipment to ensure that teachers and students have the appropriate access to digital technology. This was seen as particularly relevant in the context of a potential digital-based assessment component. A further support mentioned in the survey responses related to the need for both English language and Irish language supports and resources, including CPD, to be made available at the same time as each other.

*Go gcuirfear ábhair do dhaltáí agus do mhúinteoirí ar fáil ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na hábhair as Béarla (Online survey).*

## Construction Studies

There were 66 responses to the online survey for the consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Construction Studies (NCCA, 2024b). Respondents broadly welcomed the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Construction Studies, and the timely nature of this, noting the old age of the current syllabus. The engagement in the consultation offers valuable insights into the opportunities, challenges, and necessary supports for redeveloping and implementing Leaving Certificate Construction Studies, all of which are outlined below.

### Opportunities and Challenges

Respondents suggested that a revised specification for the subject should align with current building standards, such as focusing on Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) standards and Passive House principles. Additionally, respondents highlighted the importance of integrating new technologies, the need to address environmental and socio-economic issues, and the need to emphasise sustainable practices within the curriculum. Many respondents believed that the current course is too extensive. They advocated for a curriculum that strikes a better balance between breadth and depth by focusing on fewer, more relevant topics in greater detail.

*The subject needs boundaries as it is far too broad. Putting these boundaries in place will be the challenge but are of upmost importance in order to focus in-depth learning and facilitate higher order thinking (Online survey).*

Respondents highlighted the opportunity to further develop practical skills and craftsmanship through project-based learning. This approach would underscore the importance of real-world construction skills in the curriculum, preparing students for apprenticeships and careers, and better equipping them for real-world challenges.

Opinions varied on what the weighting of assessment components should be in the redeveloped subject. However, there was consensus that emphasising practical elements would better reflect the significant time and effort students invest in practical and project work. Suggestions regarding the coursework included increasing its weighting relative to the day practical examination, introducing focused briefs, limiting the folio requirements with a focus on quality and not quantity, and removing the experiments section.

Opinions on the day practical examination varied. Most respondents value it for assessing specific craft skills. Suggestions for improvement included adding a design element or broadening its scope beyond wood craft. A small number advocated for its removal, deeming it outdated or unappealing especially to female students, however most respondents were of the view that the day practical examination should be retained and modernised as needed. They consider it a fair assessment method that accommodates students of all abilities. To alleviate stress and distribute

assessment over two years, some respondents proposed completing the day practical exam at the end of 5th year and completing the coursework by Christmas in 6th year.

Many respondents are concerned about the possible difficulties that could arise if the practical exam is removed, with some respondents noting the potential impact of AI on alternative assessment methods.

*With the popularity of AI and the desire to achieve 50%, the single coursework component could grow out of control and be difficult to assess as the student's true individual work (Online survey).*

Some respondents highlighted the opportunity to align the subject more closely with Junior Cycle Wood Technology to sustain interest and skill progression. Some respondents proposed that the development group should consider ways to encourage more female participation in Construction Studies. One suggestion was to incorporate sustainability practices and design thinking as areas of learning in the updated curriculum. Additionally, other respondents recommended promoting a variety of career opportunities within the construction sector to attract a wider range of students.

As previously noted, it was highlighted that the current syllabus is regarded as too extensive, making it difficult to cover all content within the allocated time. Many respondents noted that defining the boundaries of what will be taught in the redeveloped subject will be a challenge. Respondents also highlighted the challenge of staying up to date with an ever-changing built environment and technological advancements.

*The built environment and technologies will continue to change long after the new syllabus is set out. Striking a balance of what is relevant today and what will be relevant in the future will be challenging (Online survey).*

Connected to this was the identification of the significant challenge of balancing current relevance and future preparedness while also providing ample time for project-based learning.

Opinions on the written examination varied. Some respondents supported compulsory questions, and some respondents preferred more specialised questions. Additionally, some noted that there was currently too much scope in some questions, making it difficult to complete within the allocated time. Some respondents highlighted that 'scaled drawings' posed challenges in terms of the time needed to address them within the current curriculum. Despite differing views on assessment and course content, respondents unanimously agreed on the importance of maintaining a manageable workload that aligns with available school resources.

### **Supports for redevelopment and implementation**

A redeveloped subject that encourages collaboration with industry professionals is viewed as being beneficial.

*Partnering with construction companies, architects, engineers, and skilled tradespeople could provide valuable resources and expertise. Industry professionals*



*could guest lecture, mentor students on projects, or help develop curriculum materials (Online survey).*

Some respondents expressed concerns about the availability of teachers in urban areas and highlighted the need for comprehensive professional development for teachers, including opportunities for practical CPD and opportunities to engage with new technologies used in construction.

Respondents emphasised the need for high-quality resources that align with technological advancements and building standards. The availability of resources through the medium of Irish was also identified as a need. Respondents emphasised the importance of securing appropriate funding to ensure universal access to computers capable of running computer-aided design (CAD) software. They also stressed the need for funding to provide access to building information modelling (BIM) software, laser cutters, and 3D printers.

Respondents called for sample assessment materials, including sample papers and assessment exemplars, to be made available before September 2026. Detailed guidelines and effective communication strategies were also deemed essential.

## Engineering

There were 46 responses to the online survey for the consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Engineering (NCCA, 2024c). Respondents in general supported the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Engineering and the timely nature of this, noting the old age of the current syllabus. Respondents acknowledged developments that have occurred in the world of engineering in recent times which have influenced the examination of engineering and have led to developments in teaching and learning that incorporate modern technologies and processes. Their engagement in the consultation offers valuable insights into the opportunities, challenges, and necessary supports for the redevelopment and implementation of a new Leaving Certificate Engineering specification, all of which are outlined below.

### Opportunities and Challenges

The main opportunity identified in the redevelopment of the Engineering specification is the potential for the incorporation of new technologies in an appropriate manner to enhance a new specification. Respondents noted there is now an opportunity to develop a specification that will focus on the core areas of engineering (efficiency, accuracy, precision and a high-quality finish from working drawings), allowing for in-depth exploration, rather than a broad overview of many topics. A balance between preserving the traditional skills of engineering, developing an engineering mindset and allowing for emerging approaches to engineering design needs to be achieved while being mindful of the 180-hour subject timeframe.

*Care must also be taken in balancing the introduction of these new technologies with the current and main aspects of LC Engineering all within the minimum 180-hour subject timeframe (Online survey).*

Respondents highlighted the opportunity to increase student engagement and participation in engineering through the redeveloped specification, noting that this is an opportunity to develop strategies to attract more female students into engineering and address the gender gap in this field. The respondents suggest this can be achieved through highlighting opportunities for career progression and pathways available to all. Respondents said it was important to make the subject manageable and ensure the subject remains appealing and avoid making the specification overly complex, which would deter students from choosing engineering.

*if you want the subject to appeal to both males and females we need to have a national strategy and not leave it up to individual teachers to promote it in their own schools (Online survey).*

Progression and continuity need careful consideration when developing a new specification for engineering. Respondents noted that developing a specification that is cognisant of students' prior learning when selecting the subject and the skill set required for life after studying the subject is a unique opportunity for the engineering development group.

One of the main challenges facing the redevelopment of engineering is balancing tradition and modernisation of the subject. Respondents highlighted the challenge of integrating modern processes, such as Laser Cutting, 3D printing, Robotics and Computer Numeric Control (CNC) machines, while ensuring traditional skills like forging, smithing, benchwork and sheet metal fabrication are not lost. These traditional skills are seen as being crucial for a well-rounded engineering education and key to developing students as practical problem-solvers.

Respondents emphasised that practical skills are vital for real world applications and student engagement. A new specification must avoid overloading the curriculum with theoretical content at the expense of the development of hands-on skills.

*Engineering is such a broad area, we must not exhaust the student with too much content and assessment within this small timeframe (Online survey).*

Design skills development and understanding of engineering principles and processes were also highlighted as being integral and central to the development of a new engineering specification.

In relation to assessment and project work, participants advocate for appropriate project complexity ensuring a balance in projects that are suitably challenging without being overly difficult. The feedback from respondents advocates for maintaining practical examinations as this is seen as a key assessment opportunity for students to showcase skills developed through their time studying engineering. Most respondents expressed the perspective that the absence of the practical exam could undermine subject integrity and student motivation. Respondents note that the practical examination is seen as a fair examination for all students.

*The practical assessment elements are crucial. The Day Practical exam and Project component should be maintained, though updated with modern practices if needed.*

*These practical assessments, developed over the course of study, need to stay to ensure integrity and fairness (Online survey).*

## Supports for redevelopment and implementation

Respondents identified funding and resource allocation as areas in which supports would be needed for the successful redevelopment and implementation of Engineering. Respondents called for equity of access to funding for the upgrading of machinery, tools, and equipment.

Respondents suggested that successful implementation of the new specification will require standardisation of engineering rooms across schools to ensure all students have access to the same quality of education and resources. There was a need identified to streamline the procurement process for equipment and to prioritise regular upgrades to keep pace with technological advancements.

*Ensure that all workshops are resourced, with equal access to funds, machinery and materials (Online survey).*

Respondents see continuous professional development (CPD) and regular training for teachers on new technologies and updated curriculum content as essential for effective redevelopment and implementation of a new engineering specification.

Some respondents suggested that design skills development in teachers' CPD experiences is crucial as this would enable them to better guide students in innovative thinking and problem-solving.

*Teachers will need a range of relevant in person and hands on CPD in areas supporting new possible material the Senior Cycle Engineering specification may introduce (Online survey).*

A redeveloped subject that encourages collaboration with industry professionals is viewed as being beneficial in keeping the subject relevant.

## English

The online survey for the consultation on the Background paper and Brief for LC English received 122 replies. The detailed and extensive engagement with the survey drew on wide-ranging teaching experience and reflections on international curricula.

## Opportunities and Challenges

Echoing the findings from the school visits undertaken as part of the research for the Background paper (NCCA, 2024d), the majority of respondents stated that there was much to be lauded in the current syllabus and its assessment. There were, however, several issues that received focused attention in the survey results.

Many wished for the revised specification to be more relevant to students, noting the wide spectrum of students in their classrooms and the desire for opportunities to succeed to be available for all students. The integration of language and literature was seen as an essential component of the current syllabus, however, there was a small number of respondents who wished to see a separation of the two elements along the lines of other international examples. There was a considerable discussion on the text prescription model. Many expressed a wish to reduce the rate of change on the text list, notably in poetry, while others warned of the dangers of retaining a list for several years and the related influence of grinds culture on rote learning. The importance of an introduction to the canon of literature was widely supported and was balanced with a desire to expand the experience of literature to include modern and varied texts including theatrical productions. The negative impact of book rental schemes on teacher autonomy and choice and possible ‘*textual stagnation*’ as well as the accessibility of film and drama productions were also raised. Most agreed that a reduction in the breadth of the course would allow for a greater exploration and depth of engagement with the texts, but that autonomy and choice were equally important.

*The number of texts students engage with must be small enough to allow opportunities for deep diving into the intricacies of textual study but diverse enough to allow a natural comparison of texts, whether this comparison is explicit or implicit (Online survey).*

There was a sizable number of respondents who favoured the opportunity to include an oral component in the AAC, while a small number strenuously opposed the introduction of an oral component. Many suggested a portfolio of work, particularly in the development of creative writing stressing the importance of the drafting and crafting of writing.

*The idea of a portfolio piece idea that is used in Scotland is interesting. Instead of students having to produce original work in the current Paper 1 Essay Composition, which currently accounts for 25% of their overall result, they could have time to find a genre that really suits them, draft that piece, craft it, in the case of an argumentative/discursive piece, put real research into the topic, and submit work that showcases their skills to best advantage (Online survey).*

The comparative section was the area most suggested as in need of overhaul and many suggested moving the comparative to the AAC as a means of allowing prolonged engagement with texts rather than a formulaic approach to comparison. There was a repeated call for a focus on critical thinking, critical literacy and relevance for student learning in the modern world.

The one challenge identified by all respondents was the threat of AI on the integrity and authenticity of the AAC. Many suggested alternatives to portfolio or project-based assessments

but felt that AI was ubiquitous in the educational experience of their students and that trying to mitigate its influence would be the main challenge of any AAC.

*AI poses a risk to the integrity and validity of the assessment component task, but this should not be a reason not to exclude process writing as a core aim for the assessment component. Students need to understand how to harness the benefits of AI while at the same time learning to develop their own skill in the process of writing. AI is already a feature of life and education for students... Teaching students about ethical use of AI and the material they use in developing their writing could be most beneficial for students in English (Online survey).*

Other systemic pressures such as the increased teacher workload, the timing of the assessments, increased student stress, the demands on limited technology in schools and lack of resources to support the redevelopment were strongly emphasised across the responses. Curricular challenges identified included maintaining the balance of language skills and literature analysis that are present in the current syllabus, maintaining the perceived fairness, equity and rigour of the current assessment arrangements and a fear of 'dumbing down' the syllabus.

## Supports for redevelopment and implementation

The supports identified for the redevelopment and implementation of the revised specification fell mainly under three headings: resources, CPD and clarity.

The resources identified as necessary included a consideration of the technical equipment and IT training and supports needed in schools to facilitate the recording, editing and uploading of possible assessment items to the SEC portal. The majority also referenced the need for the timely production of sample assessment items such as sample papers, briefs and guidelines, to facilitate the transition to the new specification with confidence. The other resource frequently mentioned was time. Respondents stated that time was necessary to allow for teachers to become familiar with the new specification prior to teaching it, time within the timetable to continue the meaning-making within their schools and clusters, and time to develop resources to support implementation. It was also strongly stated that the specification as designed should fit within the time allocation for the subject. This realistic expectation of what is possible in 180 hours should allow for depth of exploration and eliminate the rush to cover everything with only a surface-level understanding.

In discussion on the resources needed for authentic and valid assessment, it was noted that an oral assessment, based on a *viva voce* style engagement with external examiners would negate the challenges of AI and ensure equity for students.

*Investment is the ultimate support for the implementation of any project. It would be wonderful if the education of our students was valued enough for them to have the opportunity to pass an oral examination in the subject ... akin to a viva voce where they could be called on to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the texts they have studied (Online survey).*

The need for an extensive programme of CPD was widely recognised in the survey. Many referenced the positive experience of clusters, communities of practice and shared platforms which arose from previous CPD events. These spaces for meaning making were seen as central to a positive implementation process. There was some reflection on the CPD previously experienced by English teachers and clear and consistent documentation and messaging was viewed as important for implementation.

The greatest support for redevelopment and implementation was identified as clarity. In the redevelopment space, the need for clear, tangible and defined learning outcomes and targets was widely expressed. The alignment of learning outcomes and assessment with the specification aims was seen as key. In the implementation space, clear communication of the specification and the assessment arrangements was seen as central to successful implementation.

Other commentary was offered during the consultation including raising the possibility of allowing students following the Leaving Certificate Established programme access to the LCA English and Communications module, the supports needed for EAL students, the relationship between higher and ordinary level and discussion on the mandatory inclusion of Shakespeare for higher level students. Some of these are systemic issues but could form part of the discussions of the development group as they progress the specification.

## Geography

42 online survey responses were received for the consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Geography (NCCA, 2024e). In general, respondents welcomed the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Geography as timely, with positive commentary about the effectiveness of the background paper in providing an overview of issues with the current syllabus.

Consultation respondents provided feedback on the opportunities and challenges associated with the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Geography, identifying a range of issues for consideration related to teacher capacity building, assessment arrangements, resources and supports, all of which are outlined below.

### Opportunities and Challenges

Echoing the feedback during school visits undertaken for the Background Paper (NCCA, 2024e), consultation respondents identified the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Geography as an opportunity to make the subject more relevant to and meaningful in the lives of young people. Much of this feedback was linked to commentary about the need to embed flexibility and choice in the curriculum and, insofar as possible, to future-proof the specification.

In the consultation, concern about the decreasing numbers of students choosing Leaving Certificate Geography was evident. Contributors attributed this decline to the fact that Junior Cycle Geography is not studied by all students and to the content load, and/or assessment associated with the Leaving Certificate Geography course. Some respondents are concerned that competition from the new Climate Action and Sustainable Development (CASD) subject may exacerbate falling numbers. Others suggested that the link between geography and other Leaving

Certificate subjects be articulated as a strength and opportunity in the specification, as this would serve to make the subject attractive to students whose career plans align with complementary subjects.

The design of a specification that will achieve a broad balance of cultural, economic, human and physical geography, while supporting understanding of interconnections between these, together with depth of engagement and choice and flexibility, was recognised as challenging. In articulating the need to modernise the specification, respondents variously argued that this will necessitate the incorporation of content related to food production, planning for sustainable cities, disaster risk management, population (health and aging), geopolitics (especially causes of conflict) and the impact of global issues at local levels, and cultural landscapes.

*The introduction of a Geopolitical element is an interesting idea and should be explored. I think this would help root the subject as important in developing our understanding of the world (Online survey).*

Some contributors want an emphasis on general geographical knowledge – countries, mountains, rivers etc. Others felt it important to retain a focus on the European Union. From a physical geography perspective, biomes are viewed as especially important. Respondents generally view climate and sustainability as sufficiently important to be included in geography, regardless of their feedback relating to CASD. It was suggested that sustainability be embedded throughout the specification, rather than as a standalone topic or unit.

Although several contributors urged that the redeveloped specification retain aspects of the current syllabus, a common theme emerging from the consultation feedback was the need to lessen the level of content. In line with school visit feedback in the Background Paper (NCCA, 2024e), there was consensus that Regional Geography should be decreased, with calls for a reduction in the number of case studies and/or more case study choice.

*The subject is far too broad in certain areas and the content is far too dense. ... The [regional] material is just repetition with different examples. They learn about core/periphery/physical/social processes etc and then just repeat it 5 times with different location specific examples. There is serious room there for change... (Online survey).*

Many respondents mentioned the redevelopment as offering an opportunity to enhance geographical skills, including map work, aerial photographs and use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). In terms of feedback around opportunities to build on Junior Cycle Geography, there were mixed views about whether to continue the Geoliteracy cross-cutting strand elements and non-linear approach.

Redevelopment is seen as an opportunity to address some existing challenges in the assessment of Leaving Certificate Geography. Most respondents assume that the Geographical Investigation (GI) will become the Additional Assessment Component (AAC). However, some stated that 20% is appropriate for the GI and suggested a further 20% be allocated to an interview about the GI or a decision-making task (including the use of GIS) under supervision. There was a perception that the GI could be more inclusive if it allowed for multiple recording formats. The potential impact of artificial intelligence on the integrity of the AAC, worries about students who do not submit their AAC, and a perception that AACs will lead to a substantial increase in teacher workload and have negative wellbeing connotations for both teachers and students were mentioned as challenges.

Timing vis-à-vis the availability of AAC topics and whether these will cater for different school contexts were also raised as concerns, as was the scheduling of AAC submission dates.

Respondents urged that redevelopment address perceived challenges with the current written examination, including that it measures recall rather than understanding and application of geographical skills, that there is insufficient time in the exam, and that exam questions are inaccessible. In consequence, it was suggested that the exam should move away from essay-style questions to more inclusive/accessible short-answer questions, including questions about fieldwork and those that will support a demonstration of geographical skills.

## Supports for redevelopment and implementation

In their feedback, respondents identified clarity of learning outcomes as a significant support. This was connected to a call for a more inclusive curriculum, with clear choice and flexibility for students studying the subject at both higher and ordinary level.

Those who took part in the consultation frequently referred to the need for timely and substantial teacher capacity building.

*...CPD must be sufficient that teachers have a good idea of the required content so that it not left to book authors to more or less design the experience for them and students (Online survey).*

Contributors urged that this professional development include detailed explanation of the curriculum changes, time to plan and create resources based on the learning outcomes, support in relation to inclusion, especially with regards to giving effective feedback to all students, GIS, fieldwork for both urban and rural studies, and in relation to the AAC and written assessment components.

Contributors called for sample units of learning as a way of supporting teachers to generate their own units, for clear AAC guidelines, the early availability of AAC samples, sample written papers, marking schemes and an online Frequently Asked Questions facility. Feedback also emphasised the need for adequate funding to ensure equity between schools, with a specific focus on the costs associated with fieldwork and access to the digital technology needed for geographical teaching, learning and assessment. Further, it was emphasised that all implementation supports should be made available at the same time in both English and Irish.

*...the reality of the teaching profession needs to be considered. If you are bringing in changes so rapidly, all of the resources should be available (Online survey).*

## LCVP Link Modules

13 online survey responses were received to the online survey for the consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for the Leaving Certificate Link Modules (NCCA, 2024f).

Contributors to the consultation in general supported the redevelopment of the Link Modules and the timely nature of same. They shared their views on many different aspects of the modules that could be reimaged and modernised within the redevelopment process, identifying both the challenges and opportunities associated with each. In addition, views were expressed on the



assessment arrangements and perceived status of the modules in comparison to other subjects within senior cycle, all of which will be explored further below.

## Opportunities and Challenges

Respondents across the consultation recognised and supported the unique approach and weighting afforded to the assessment of the current Link Modules, which includes a 60% coursework portfolio and 40% final exam currently taking place in May of sixth year. Respondents expressed a strong desire to retain this approach in the redevelopment of the Link Modules.

*Retaining the 60% portfolio is vital as this is a huge benefit to students and the practical element suits many students who do not thrive in other subjects (Online survey).*

Challenges associated with the preparation of the portfolio, as outlined in the Background Paper, appeared to resonate with those responding to the consultation. In particular, the focus on the preparation of the various and expansive items for the portfolio and their influence on teaching and learning activities in the LCVP classroom was highlighted as particularly challenging. The need for an emphasis on the process involved in the development of a portfolio, rather than on the product, was expressed by some, which was further supported by other respondents who outlined difficulties associated with overly structured templates and marking schemes for portfolio items and their influence on the portfolio.

*As we can see in LCVP it is very hard already to get genuine student work for portfolios as they get a lot of help...from teachers, home, past students, now AI, etc. (Online survey).*

A more focused approach to the coursework portfolio, one with fewer items, was considered a more appropriate approach across the consultation. Additional challenges identified by respondents within current approaches to assessment include the narrow focus on digital skills within the coursework portfolio and the modules more generally, with contributors referencing the emphasis on formatting and editing of documents in the portfolio as the current primary digital focus in the Link Modules. There were some suggestions to introduce a digital portfolio with many other opportunities to modernise the approach to the development of broader digital skills within the Link Modules highlighted by respondents in the consultation.

*Too much focus on portfolio and not a lot of original work... often copy and paste with no learning opportunities on ICT skills (Online Survey).*

Most respondents identified opportunities within the world of work to modernise the approach to recruitment, career investigations and work placements, with a focus on workplace legislation and the impact of digitisation on same.

*Re-development is required to keep up with the evolution of skills and knowledge required within the working world (Online survey).*

However, many respondents noted significant challenges around the organisation and management of work experience for students within the Link Modules, echoing feedback heard during the school-based focus groups which helped to inform the Background Paper. Challenges identified in the consultation include organisation and difficulties in supporting students to engage in work placements during term time.

*Work experience in LCE in voluntary schools is nearly impossible to timetable (Online survey).*

Opportunities to build upon learning and work experiences in TY as part of the Link Modules were suggested to overcome this significant challenge, while others suggested including both community and voluntary experiences. Some respondents suggested a renewed focus on different aspects of preparing for a work placement, such as applying and interviewing for a role.

*Interview for an actual job - students be given various jobs to apply for - alter cv to suit it (Online survey).*

Some respondents expressed a desire for the modules to focus on financial and tax literacy and saw opportunities in how this learning connects in an authentic manner to the preparation for the world of work. Others identified opportunities in the redevelopment process associated with a broader approach to enterprise and entrepreneurial skills and the role of being an active citizen. Overall, most respondents wanted students to be prepared to plan for and engage successfully with a range of diverse post-school pathways, with the key competencies considered an appropriate lens for this work, ensuring that the learning would build and progress on learning in junior cycle and Transition Year.

*Opportunity for students to get an even greater understanding of the options for their future in relation to apprenticeships, college, workplace, PLC courses, etc. Maybe more opportunity to sample these or find out more information on them (Online survey).*

The majority of respondents noted challenges on the perceived status of the Link Modules, as outlined in the Background Paper. Opportunities to increase the value associated with the Link Modules, outside of CAO points, such as the recognition and certification of additional learning opportunities were identified by many. However, additional challenges were also identified in how this learning would be acknowledged.

*Providing certification will have to be mutually beneficial to students. Any certification or recognition provided will have to carry weight and be formally acknowledged by future employers and educational institutions (Online survey).*

There was strong support during the consultation for the removal of the ringfencing associated with the programme and for opportunities to diversify the student cohort engaging with the Link Modules. It was suggested that changing the name (LCVP) could help to promote the Link Modules amongst students and parents. Further opportunities to expand the range of subject teachers was also identified and supported by many respondents within the redevelopment process.

*A more diverse range of teachers...not just business teachers teaching LCVP (Online survey).*

However, a minority felt it should be confined to Business teachers only, and there were broader concerns regarding the timetabling of the Link Modules where in some cases it was felt that LCVP may be used as a 'timetable filler'. Challenges around the organisation of activities, the role of the core team associated with the programme and the role of the guidance counsellor were also outlined within this area of focus. In addition, concern was expressed that the Link Modules should not be timetabled at the expense of Irish, with some evidence of this happening where students with an Irish exemption study the Link Modules.

*Many LCVP teachers are timetable fillers and so there is often a gap between assessment success in the portfolio and the written exam because of this knowledge gap. The DES needs to present and promote it to a greater extent and the Inspectorate need to address the timetabling, manning and rationale in schools towards LCVP in their WSE & MML inspections (Online survey).*

## Supports for redevelopment and implementation

Respondents identified a number of supports considered necessary that would support both the redevelopment and implementation of the Link Modules, such as professional learning opportunities, supporting assessment and guidance documentation and resources such as additional teaching allocation hours and increased digital infrastructure. Respondents noted different opportunities within professional development, such as tailored CPD being offered to new and established teachers, school management and the guidance counsellor and noted the importance of receiving CPD training in advance of implementation. Respondents also noted the importance of assessment guidelines and sample exam papers, as well as guidance documents on timetabling and the recommended number of hours to ensure a consistent approach to the Link Modules across all schools. The importance of providing these resources in both Gaeilge and English was also highlighted.

*The issue of timetabling needs support in terms of guidance - The issue of how it occurs at the moment - needs support and guidance (Online survey).*

A number of respondents considered access to digital resources as a necessary resource for the successful implementation of the Link Modules, particularly within the context of the coursework portfolio. Respondents noted the additional pressure that will be placed on these resources, as a result of the introduction of Additional Assessment Components in senior cycle, as a significant issue. In addition, some respondents also noted equity between schools as a significant challenge, as different schools can offer different levels of access to digital resources. Additional resources, in terms of teaching allocation hours and an increase in hours for the guidance counsellor or guidance team was noted by some as a significant factor in the successful implementation of redeveloped Link Modules.

*Timetabling team teachers is very difficult and particularly the role of the Guidance Counsellor cannot take any more, particularly in schools with one guidance teacher and number of around 500 students (Online survey).*

## **Section 3: Conclusion and next steps**

The consultation on the Background Papers and Briefs for the redevelopment of the tranche 2 subjects generated rich feedback from a variety of perspectives. The engagement of those who participated in the consultation is acknowledged and NCCA is grateful for the open, honest, committed, experience-based and expert feedback received.

This report has presented an overview of the range of views and perspectives that emerged from the consultation feedback. Much of this feedback resonates with and echoes what was heard during the school visits that helped to shape each of the Background Papers and Briefs. The feedback presented in this report will provide direction and guidance for the development groups which were convened earlier this year to undertake the task of developing new specifications for tranche 2 subjects. The work of the development groups will continue, informed by the feedback outlined in this report, and it is anticipated that a draft curriculum specification for each subject will be available for public consultation in Q1, 2025.

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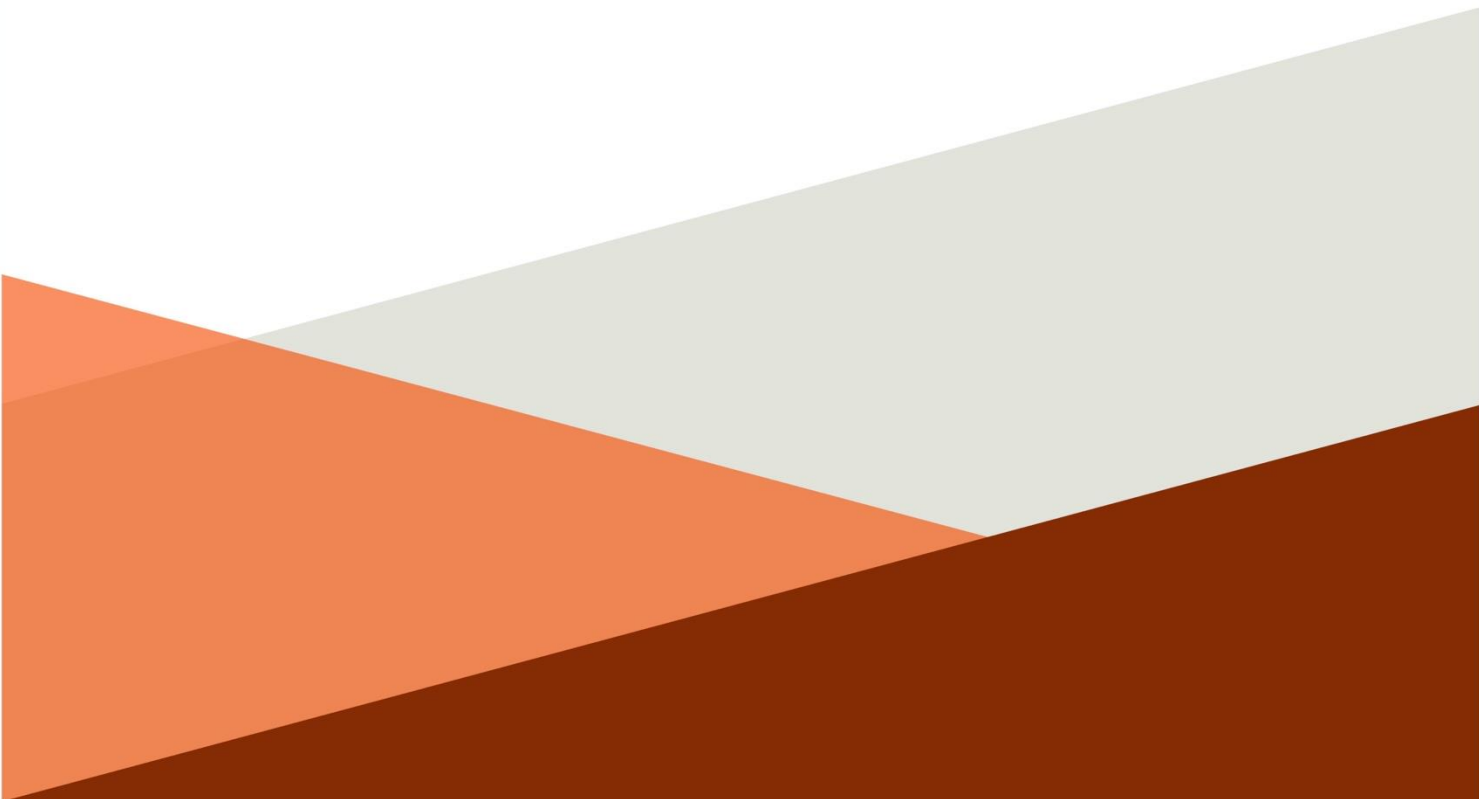
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