



**NCCA**

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

# Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate History

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## Introduction

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The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report (NCCA 2022a) 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 History is included in Tranche 3, which will be completed in 2026 for introduction to schools in September 2027.

This paper provides a context for the review of History and has been informed by the views of teachers, school leaders and students gathered through school visits conducted in a representative sample of schools.

It begins by considering the background of History in the curriculum, with Section 1 presenting an overview of the current context, including consideration of relevant recent developments. Section 2 sets out how history education is currently provided for within the Irish curriculum, while Section 3 provides an overview of the insights gained through the school visits conducted, and the lived experience of schools, teachers, and students. Section 4 considers similar education opportunities internationally and presents an overview of four different jurisdictions. Section 5 draws on the previous three sections to categorise and briefly discuss some issues identified for consideration in the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate History before finally setting out a proposed brief for this work in Section 6, which will guide the work of the development group.

# 1. Background and Context

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This section sets out some of the significant developments in history education over the past twenty years. It also outlines the policy initiatives and developments over the last decade within education which are most relevant to the review of Leaving Certificate History.

The current Leaving Certificate History syllabus was introduced in September 2004, replacing a syllabus which had been in existence since 1969. A key feature of the revised syllabus was its strong emphasis on supporting students to develop their understanding of history as a discipline. This related to understanding the work of the historian and understanding the key concepts that underpin rigorous and objective historical enquiry.

The current syllabus sets out as a fundamental principle that:

‘... the study of history should be regarded as an exploration of what historians believe to have happened, based on enquiry into available evidence’ (DES, 2003, p.8). The current syllabus stresses the provisional nature of historical knowledge and seeks to encourage engagement with ‘such different types of historical sources as eyewitness accounts, public records, memoirs, letters, maps, photographs and political cartoons’, (DES, 2003, p. 10). The focus on different types of evidence is mirrored by the requirement that students look critically at the past from different perspectives and develop the capacity to: ‘look at a contentious or controversial issue from more than one point of view’ (DES, 2003, p.13).

The thinking underpinning the revised Leaving Certificate syllabus also informed the development of the Junior Cycle History specification which was introduced to schools in 2018. Notably, its introduction to the curriculum was soon followed by a decision by the Minister for Education, Joe McHugh TD, to accord the subject ‘special core status’, whereby all students entering first year in the 2020/21 academic year would be obliged to study the specification. Further to the designation of special core status for history, NCCA was also requested to develop a short course in History that would be broadly aligned with Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework.

It is notable that the designation of ‘special core status’ for history and the public commentary that informed the debate about the status of the subject took place during the initial years of the Decade of Commemorations, where the state was promoting critical engagement, including at school level, with the seminal historical events between 1912 and 1923 that led to the formation of the state. An official programme of commemoration was put in place by an Expert Group. This renewed engagement with the revolutionary period in Ireland was supported by the opening up of key archival material, including the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements Collection and the Military Services Pensions Collection. A further significant curricular development in 2016 was the introduction of Politics and Society to the Leaving Certificate curriculum as a discrete subject.

From a broader policy perspective, the importance of History at European level has long been highlighted, especially in the context of enhancing the concept of citizenship and promoting democratic values. A significant recent development is the establishment of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE), under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Its mission is to promote quality history education in order to enhance the understanding of democratic culture. The Observatory provides a clear picture of the state of history teaching in its member states, based on data on how history is taught, through general and thematic reports. The OHTE

acknowledges that History is written amid crises and focuses on how humanity can overcome them and learn the necessary lessons. With its first two thematic reports focusing on 'Pandemics and Natural Disasters' and 'Economic Crises' the OTE has already turned its attention to the study of how these crises are reflected in member states' history curricula and classrooms.

Two other developments of note in the curriculum domain indicate the significance of school history and the role it plays in addressing societal concerns. In March 2023, NCCA published its 'Traveller Culture and History Research Report.' This report was developed to provide an overview of what is currently known, understood and has been recorded about various aspects of Traveller culture and history. The report was significant in addressing the history of a minority ethnic group that is marginalised in Irish history narratives. A second key development in bringing to the fore the stories and experiences of those previously marginalised was the request by the Minister for Education that NCCA develop resources to support learning and teaching about the historical experience of women and children in Mother and Baby homes. This work was informed by engagement with two external groups, consisting of institutional survivors and academics working in the field, namely the Tuam Oral History Project (University of Galway) and the CLANN project, a joint initiative of Adoption Rights Alliance and Justice for the Magdalenes. These initiatives reflect thinking in history research and history education more broadly that seeks to recognise the experiences of those who have been neglected in traditional history narratives, both nationally and internationally. This is also evident, at wider international level, in the acknowledgement of the historical experiences of colonised, enslaved and subjugated people around the world, and the contested narratives that have emerged around much historical enquiry in these contexts.

The redevelopment of the Leaving Certificate history specification takes place during a turbulent period in world affairs. In the twenty years since the current syllabus was revised, the world has changed dramatically. Conflict and political instability in Europe and around the world, and an increased polarisation in global geopolitics, threaten the security of people and nations in a way not seen since World War II. A consequence of an unprecedented global communications revolution has been the widespread emergence and growth of misinformation and disinformation that threatens the upheaval of longstanding social, cultural and political norms, and the existence of democratic practices. Growth in migration levels has been dramatic and has been accompanied by a rise in nationalist and extreme political movements and ideologies. The climate crisis and the lack of agreed global responses to these challenges continues to pose an existential threat to humanity. Various movements campaigning for climate action, social justice and equality have also emerged, striving for the advancement of rights of those who have been victims of discrimination or injustice historically. The importance of supporting young people to acquire and develop the historical consciousness and sensibility to explore these phenomena, and the conceptual understanding to interrogate them critically, is more acute now than ever.

## Section Summary

- The current Leaving Certificate History syllabus, introduced in 2004, and replacing a syllabus that dated back to 1969, places a strong emphasis on students acquiring disciplinary and conceptual understanding, as well as extending their knowledge of historical events, personalities, issues and themes.
- The revised syllabus stressed the importance of students' capacity to work with evidence, and to enable them to appreciate the key focus on exploration of what historians believe to have happened, based on enquiry into available evidence.
- The Junior Cycle History specification sought to build on key emphases in the Leaving Certificate syllabus, with the Nature of History set out as a formational strand. The specification placed a particular emphasis on supporting students to develop 'big picture' understanding of the past. The subject was designated with 'special core status' in 2020, with a short course for students following L2LPs also developed.
- Recent developments in history education, such as the Decade of Commemorations, the publication of the Traveller Culture and History Research Report, and work undertaken to support learning and teaching about the historical experiences of women and children in Mother and Baby Homes, show the relevance of the subject in supporting contemporary society to explore traumatic or contentious aspects of the past. They also reflect developments in historiography and history education that seek to acknowledge the stories and histories of the marginalised.
- The emergence of the Observatory of History Education in Europe, of which Ireland is a member, highlights the importance of the subject in supporting students to deal with the daunting contemporary challenges the world faces in various spheres.

## 2. History in the curriculum

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This section provides an overview of the opportunities for learning related to History currently available to students within the primary and post primary curriculum at junior and senior cycle. It then looks at the level of student uptake of the subject and explores the most recent State Examinations Commission (SEC) Chief Examiner's report and subject inspection reports from the Department of Education (DE).

### History in junior cycle

In line with the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 (DES, 2015) the new subject specification for Junior Cycle (JC) History was introduced to schools in September 2018. This specification replaced the 1989 syllabus and built on the notion that the specification:

...should introduce young people to the job of the historian, and to the sources and techniques which historians use . . . It should also provide young people with a wide tapestry of events, issues, people and ways of life through which they can . . . perceive patterns such as cause and consequence, change and continuity. It is in the past that they will find the roots of the contemporary world (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1989, p. 2)

There are three strands to Junior Cycle history. Strand 1 – 'The nature of history' is a unifying strand that focuses on history as a discipline. Strand 2 relates to the history of Ireland while Strand 3 relates to the history of Europe and the wider world.

The assessment of history comprises two Classroom-Based Assessments: The Past in my Place and A Life in Time. Students complete a written Assessment Task (worth 10% of the overall grade) to be submitted to the State Examinations Commission for marking. Due to Covid provisions, at present students are only required to engage in the first CBA "The Past in my Place" (although they can opt to do the second CBA if they so wish) and are not required to submit an Assessment Task. The final examination, presented at common level is 2 hours in duration and students are required to answer all the questions on the paper.

Further to the designation of special core status for history, NCCA was requested to develop a short course in History that would be broadly aligned with Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework. This Level 2 short course is available to students with general learning difficulties/needs in the low mild to high moderate range of ability, entering first year of Junior Cycle in 2021/2022. Students taking this short course follow a personalised Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP), alongside other curriculum components where appropriate.

### History in senior cycle

There are two discrete fields of study for Leaving Certificate History; (i) Early Modern 1492- 1815 and (ii) Later Modern 1815 – 1993. It is not permitted to choose topics from both Fields of Study, which means that students can choose to study only early modern or later modern history. In 2023, 12,509 students sat the examination in the subject, with 99.7% opting for the later modern course.

Twelve topics are set out for each Field of Study, with six relating to the history of Ireland and six relating to the history of Europe and the Wider World. Students are required to take two topics from the history of Ireland and two from the history of Europe and the Wider World as their course of study for Leaving Certificate. However, one topic is prescribed for the purposes of the Documents-Based Study, to be examined in the form of a Documents-Based Question in the final examination. This prescribed topic is changed on a two-year cycle.

The syllabus is structured around two sections:

- working with evidence
- topics for study.

In terms of working with evidence, students are required to engage with a documents-based study as well as undertaking a research study, following which students submit a Research Study Report (RSR) for assessment.

## History in focus

This section explores participation rates in Leaving Certificate History drawing on statistics from the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and provides an overview of assessment for certification and insights from SEC/DE reports.

### Student participation

Year	Higher Level	Ordinary Level	Total Students	Total LC students	LC History as a % of total students
2019	8824	2919	11743	56,071	20.9%
2020	9470	2825	12295	56,570	21.7%
2021	10053	2498	12551	57,952	21.65%
2022	9432	2632	12064	58,056	20.77%
2023	9503	3006	12509	58,006	21.56%
2024	9574	2839	12413	56,791	21.86%

Table 1: Number of students sitting Leaving Certificate History at higher and ordinary Level 2017-2023/4

### Assessment for certification

Leaving Certificate History is assessed for certification by a terminal written examination worth 80% of the available marks and the submission of a Research Study Report worth 20% of the marks. The written examination and the Research Study Report are assessed at higher and ordinary levels.



### Research Study Report (RSR)

Students are free to choose any topic of historical significance for the RSR within the specified date parameters (in the case of Ireland no more recent than 1993 and in the case of Europe and the Wider World no more recent than 1992). The report is completed on a pro-forma booklet. The word count for the report is 1200-1500 words (Higher level) and 600-800 words (Ordinary level). The RSR is completed under the supervision of the teacher and is authenticated as the work of the student prior to submission. From 2025 students will be required to complete and submit their booklets digitally.

### Final Written Examination

The final written History examination is worth 400 marks (80% of the total). The examination is 2 hours and 50 minutes in duration for both higher and ordinary level students. The first section on both papers is a Documents-Based Question. The documents relate to one of the case studies from the topic prescribed for that year's examinations. There are three case studies associated with each topic and one of those case studies is the focus of the Documents-Based Question in the final examination paper. Students are expected to comprehend, compare, criticise and contextualise the documents in response to questions on the paper.

For Higher level, the remainder of the paper consists of three essay-style questions on the topics studied. For Ordinary level, questions on three topics must also be answered. Each topic section consists of a stimulus followed by comprehension questions, a choice of paragraphs on key events or personalities and a choice of short essay style questions.

### Insights from Chief Examiner's/Inspection Reports

The last Chief Examiner's Report for Leaving Certificate History was published in 2017. As has been the case since the first examination of the new course in 2006, the Research Study Report (RSR) has been the area of assessment where students perform exceptionally well. In 2017 the average mark for the RSR at Higher Level was 89%. The Chief Examiner commented on the obvious enthusiasm of students for their personally chosen research topics. Topics ranged from local history projects to analyses of social or cultural phenomenon. One of the criticisms of the completion of the RSR was the absence of correct citation protocols for internet sources. Other concerns included students exceeding the word count for the extended essay and incidents of plagiarism that were directly transcribed extracts from sources.

For the written examination, the Chief Examiner commented favourably on the handling of the documents-based questions at both levels but noted that the contextualising question was less well answered. Despite the wide range of topics available on the examination paper, the majority of students focused on a narrow selection of topics. In Irish history, Topic 3: The pursuit of sovereignty and the impact of partition, 1912 – 1949, was the most popular choice with 90% of students at higher level and 75% of students at ordinary level answering on this topic. In the history of Europe and the wider world, Topic 6: The United States and the world, 1945 – 1989 was the most popular topic with 83% of higher level and 85% of ordinary level students choosing this topic.

An observation of the assessment at both levels was that a focus on the case studies and key personalities formed the basis for many of the answers presented in the examination. Sometimes

these answers focused on a narrative account of the study or personality without analysis or evaluation of the context that would indicate historical understanding.

### DE Inspection Reports

An overview of the most recent subject inspection reports for history reveals that common themes of concern for the inspectorate are the integration of a skills-based approach to history; the development of historical writing skills and the development of analytical capacity. The use of digital platforms and access to digital repositories were seen as key to developing research skills in the history classroom. It was noted that opportunities to access primary and secondary sources in their research enabled students to develop investigative and critical thinking skills and facilitated independent learning. Access to Digital Learning Technologies (DLT) and the extent to which they are utilised for history, varied from school to school.

## Section Summary

- There are two discrete fields of study in the current Leaving Certificate syllabus, 'Early Modern' and 'Later Modern'. However, only 0.3% of the student cohort take the 'Early Modern' field of study.
- The syllabus is assessed through a pre-submitted Research Study Report (20%) and a written examination (80%). The written examination requires students to answer a Documents-Based Question (at both Ordinary and Higher levels) relating to the prescribed topic, as well as engage with questions on three other topics, with each carrying equal marks. Thus, 40% of marks are awarded for working with evidence.
- Leaving Certificate History participation rates have been relatively stable in recent years (although the actual numbers have decreased the percentage of students participating has risen slightly).
- Inspectors' reports indicate the need for a more skills-based approach to history as well as an emphasis on the development of historical literacy skills and analytical capacity.
- The 2018 Junior Cycle History specification emphasised disciplinary understanding through its formational strand 'the nature of history'. This emphasis built on the increased focus on working with evidence in the revised Leaving Certificate syllabus.

### 3. Insights from school visits

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School visits were conducted as part of the scoping work for this Background Paper. A representative sample was selected from 60 schools that expressed an interest in becoming involved in History curriculum developments. Six schools were selected using criteria relating to DEIS status, gender, school size and type. Visits to these schools took place in September and October 2024 and involved focus group meetings with 42 senior cycle students, 18 teachers of History and 11 school leaders. The following section provides an overview of the insights gathered through these visits.

A thematic approach to examining the focus group feedback unearthed rich insights that can be categorised under the following headings:

- Successes and challenges of the current Leaving Certificate History syllabus
- The aim of Leaving Certificate History
- Assessment
- Vision for a redeveloped specification.

#### Successes and challenges of the current syllabus

It is evident from the consultation that teachers and students enjoy engaging with the current syllabus. Teachers value the broad range of topics set out in the Later Modern Field of Study, and being able to choose from these topics in designing courses of study. Both teachers and students expressed the view that the Research Study and the Documents Based Study were vital in developing students' research and critical thinking skills, which they considered to be essential.

In terms of challenges, both students and teachers stated that although they enjoyed the breadth of the course, they considered the level of content to be engaged with, in the time allocated, excessive. There was also consensus among them that there was a gap between the skills developed at junior cycle and those required at Leaving Certificate, especially in the context of extended essay writing. Teachers frequently mentioned that students struggled to organise their thoughts when writing extended pieces, and that they had trouble structuring their ideas in an essay-type format within the time constraints of the terminal examination. Students frequently mentioned the time pressures of writing several essays in the examination and their preference for the Documents Based Question (DBQ) style questions which they felt engaged their analytical skills in a more authentic way.

Teachers mentioned that although a major part of the course focused on the development and application of research skills, students often struggled to access and engage with appropriate sources, with a reliance on Wikipedia being a major concern. They stated that a thorough grounding in students' research skills, and the development of their capacity to critically examine online sources of evidence, was necessary in order for the aims of the Research Study to be realised. The perceived lack of sufficient time to develop these skills was viewed as a major obstacle to students' understanding of how different research methodologies and skills could be applied within the Research Study Report.

## The aim of Leaving Certificate History

Teachers expressed the view that the stated aims of the current syllabus were appropriate, with the purpose of engaging with the people, events, issues and themes of the past so as to better understand the present, especially affirmed. Students also saw history as being of value for this purpose. Students and teachers mentioned exploring the Troubles and the history of Northern Ireland in this context, as well as examining current developments in areas such as Eastern Europe and the Middle East that have long historical roots. Teachers also believed that the development of critical thinking skills was a key aspect of the aims, and that this development should also support students' broader transferable skills for meaningful engagement with the world of work or in a post-school educational setting. Another aspect of the syllabus aims which teachers noted favourably was the cultivation in students of a lifelong interest in history. They saw this as a way of enabling students to better understand their identity, heritage and the diversity of their world, both nationally and globally, as well as supporting students of varied backgrounds to engage with the learning. Students frequently mentioned their personal interest in history and welcomed the ability to follow these interests and develop skills of the historian in their course of study.

## Assessment

Teachers stated that assessment should reward deep historical understanding and analysis rather than surface-level knowledge. They emphasised the importance of critical thinking skills over memorisation and rote learning and believed that this could only be achieved if students were allowed to engage in more active research skills, source analysis and inquiry-based learning.

Many teachers believed that the terminal examination at Higher Level was too focused on extended essay writing and that it could accommodate more varied approaches to assessment, such as interviews and oral presentations. Students echoed these sentiments when they spoke about their perception of successful students as those who could write quickest, as opposed to those who had a deeper understanding of the subject matter but could not write it down in the time allowed in the examination. For students, the terminal examination was all about time management - they prepared for the exam by practising writing out answers and timing themselves. They believed that if they were given the opportunity to express themselves in different ways there could be more successful outcomes at this point in the assessment process.

Both students and teachers had a high regard for the research study and its associated report format (research study report). They welcomed the opportunity to engage with a theme that interested them and allowed for self-directed enquiry. They further indicated that the focus on research methodologies was useful for developing skills of analytical interpretation and that these skills could be applied across other subject areas as well as in the workplace or in further/higher education.

School leaders indicated that the new AAC (to be allocated minimum 40% of overall marks for the subject) had the potential to be of benefit to students but believed it would be challenging in terms of submitting a large number of AAC's without consideration being given to the timings of these submissions.

## Vision for a redeveloped specification

Both teachers, students and school leaders agreed that the syllabus needed to be redeveloped, especially in the light of significant developments that have taken place since the syllabus was last updated in 2003. Although the vast majority of schools in the country have not engaged with the Early Modern Field of Study, teachers and students indicated that there should be opportunities for students to encounter a far wider chronological scope of topics in a new specification, relating to both Europe and the wider world. Teachers believed this could be done by creating shorter modules of study within the topics prescribed, which would allow for more variety within this space.

Whereas most teachers believed that Irish history should be a core component of the new specification, students were not as sure. In general students said that they had covered enough Irish history in their junior cycle learning. Whilst believing that Irish history should be core, teachers did express a desire for its framing to be revised. Many teachers noted that the existing content did not connect with students, in both the context of their experiences of diversity in modern Irish society and in their role as global citizens.

Local history as a focus of study was mentioned positively by both teachers and students. The experience of engaging with CBA 1 “The Past in My Place” in junior cycle was a very positive one for students. Teachers confirmed this, with many suggesting the investigation process at local level, as set out in guidance for the completion of CBA 1, be a potential model for adaptation in the new specification.

A similar model to the research study was viewed as being an essential and central component of any new specification. Both students and teachers expressed a desire for it to be extended to include a portfolio-style format with an emphasis on source handling, research skills and self-reflection.

The importance of developing critical thinking skills and acquiring research methodologies was raised numerous times throughout the focus group discussions. Some teachers and school leaders stated that there should be a discrete module dedicated to this aspect of the skills of the historian, whilst others believed that these skills should be incorporated or integrated into the learning outcomes of the topics for the students to encounter as their engagement with the course progressed.

Many students spoke about the need for less ‘western-centric’ history and more inclusion of histories from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This was also evident in student discussions in a desire to understand the origins of many modern conflicts across the globe, particularly in the Ukraine and the Middle East. Many also stated that the new course should extend up to (in some cases) 2016, to allow for engagement with such significant developments as UK withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit) and the Irish same sex marriage referendum, which it was suggested could be included in topics for study. There was some discussion on how these topics may possibly overlap with the remit of Leaving certificate Politics and Society. Many students also commented on voices and perspectives absent from the current syllabus. The perspectives of women, the marginalised and those outside the socio-economic elite were often identified as missing from the current course or included in a tokenistic manner.

Whilst most students enjoy the Documents-Based Study, many believed that there should be more focus on demonstrating skills, as opposed to needing extensive memorisation to be successful in their terminal assessment. Following on from this, students expressed the desire to have more opportunities to engage in field studies and non-classroom-based activities, suggesting that such innovation would make history more tangible and relatable, and more attractive to students. It was suggested that these types of activities might include exploring personal historical narratives with neighbours, families and the elderly for example. Leading on from this, students also thought that more collaborative practices within the classroom, where they could share knowledge and research experiences, would be an effective way to learn.

School leaders indicated that it was critical in the light of the introduction of a number of redeveloped subjects that timely, accessible and sustainable continuous professional development (CPD) be offered to support teachers. They also believed that it was important that there was adequate access to technology for all students as well as appropriate resources for the implementation of the new specification. School leaders and teachers alike were concerned that academic integrity could be impacted by Artificial Intelligence issues. They stated that it was something that needed to be addressed within any guidelines introduced to support subject implementation.

Overall, the redevelopment of the history specification was welcomed by all respondents. In particular, school leaders and teachers expressed the view that in this redevelopment, history could be framed as an important and relevant area of learning to support students both in their understanding of the past and how this has influenced the present and indeed the future. In combination with the opportunities afforded through the AAC, the new history specification could, they believed, be viewed by students as relevant, exciting and attractive.

## Section Summary

- Feedback from focus groups with history students and teachers, and with leaders in six schools concentrated on successes and challenges of the existing syllabus, the aim of the history syllabus, assessment and a vision for a redeveloped specification
- Students, teachers and school leaders were very positive about the existing syllabus but saw opportunities to increase relevance in understanding today's society through the study of history.
- The research study was viewed as a very positive aspect of the syllabus and an increase in its value was welcomed by all contributors.
- Teachers and students argued that an emphasis on the skills of the historian and the development of critical thinking skills was essential in the redevelopment of the specification
- Teachers and students mentioned the amount of content within each topic and believed that a more focused and thematic approach would be beneficial to both the learning and the teaching of the subject matter.
- Access to technology and ongoing support is key in both the exploration of the subject matter from the students' perspective and the digital uploads required by the SEC.

## 4. International trends in history education

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This section looks at the teaching and learning of History as offered to students in various international contexts: namely, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, and curriculum arrangements for the subject in New Zealand, Victoria (Australia) and Scotland. Across these settings, the place and purpose of the study of History in the senior phase of upper education is explored, along with trends in curriculum design and assessment.

### The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme is a two-year pre-university programme for students aged 16 to 19 years. The course aims to enable students to develop an understanding of and continuing interest in the past through multiple perspectives, where they can appreciate the complex nature of historical concepts, issues and events. The course aims to develop students' key historical skills, including engaging effectively with sources and exploring history as an academic discipline.

The IB Diploma Programme is a world history course based on a comparative and multi-perspective approach to history which is focused on key historical concepts such as change, causation and significance. It is studied through a political, economic, social, and cultural lens and is assessed at standard level (SL) and higher level (HL). It emphasises the importance of encouraging students to think historically; to develop historical skills; and to develop a sense of inquiry through critical exploration of the past. Teachers explicitly teach thinking and research skills such as comprehension, text analysis, and interrogating primary sources, and have freedom to choose relevant examples to explore with their students, with the aim of ensuring that the course meets their students' needs and interests regardless of their location or context. The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL courses and 150 hours for SL courses. There are three curriculum components for the History SL course and four for the HL course. These include prescribed themes in which the students engage in a case study, a wider world history section, a more in-depth piece for HL students, and an historical investigation, which both SL and HL students engage in. The case study prescription includes options on military leaders; conquest and its impact; the move to global war; rights and protest; and conflict and intervention. The world history topics are defined by dates and themes and include, among others, society and economy (750-1400); dynasties and rulers (750-1500); societies in transition (1400 – 1700); emergence and development of democratic states (1848 – 2000) and the Cold War: superpower tensions and rivalries (20<sup>th</sup> Century). The Higher-Level Depth Study offers options on the history of Africa and the Middle East, the Americas, Asia and Oceania, and Europe.

IB Diploma Programme assessment is designed to record student achievement towards the end of the course of study, and students taking the DP History course are assessed through external examinations and an internally assessed historical investigation.

The IB allows students to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the course of producing coursework for assessment, but their use should be in line with its academic integrity policy. This sets out, for example, that the IB does not regard any work produced, even only in part, by AI tools, to be students' own. As a result, it expects students to be clear if any AI-generated text,

image or graph included in a piece of work has been copied from such software, crediting the software in the body of the text and referencing it in the bibliography.

## New Zealand Certificate of Education

History in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), the senior secondary qualification in New Zealand, aims to enable students to engage with the historical narratives of people, places and events from the past. Students consider and understand how the past influences contemporary understanding of the world around them. They explore local, national, and global contexts to understand historical relationships such as cause and effect, as well as the continuity and change of historical narratives. In the New Zealand context, they nurture a growing awareness of the Treaty of Waitangi (New Zealand's founding document) and its historical principles, values, and ongoing relevance and, by recognising how the past has shaped the present, are able to grow as confident, questioning, and empathetic individuals, with a developing understanding of their own place in, and their connection to, the world around them. Students also develop their understanding of the nature of historical inquiry and how it is based on evidence and are able to critique historical narratives and the various perspectives within and around them.

History in the NCEA is based on five 'Big Ideas' and 'Significant Learning'. Together these form a learning matrix, which teachers use as a tool to construct learning programmes that cover all the essential learning in the subject. There is no prescribed order to the learning matrix. A programme of learning might begin with a context that is relevant to the local area of the school, or an idea that students are particularly interested in. This context or topic must relate to at least one Big Idea and may also link to other Big Ideas.

The five "Big Ideas" are:

- Nature of history: historical narratives are constructed.
- Nature of history: historical narratives are contested.
- Knowledge: power relationships often drive history.
- Knowledge: place shapes the historical narratives of peoples.
- Knowledge: identity is interwoven with history and is shaped by a sense of place, genealogy and relationships and connections.

There is no prescribed content, and teachers use the learning matrix as a tool to construct learning programmes for their students.

In terms of assessment, there are six achievement awards for Level 3 history credits, three of which are externally assessed and three of which are internally assessed. Collection of evidence for the internally assessed standards could include, but is not restricted to, an extended task, an investigation, digital evidence (such as recorded interviews, blogs, photographs or film) or a portfolio of evidence.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Ministry of Education have provided initial advice and guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and using AI for assessment purposes. The Ministry also offers some points that schools and teachers may find useful regarding the acceptable use of AI.



## Scotland: Higher History

Higher History in Scotland aims to enable students to develop a greater understanding of the world by learning about other people and their values, in different times, places and circumstances, and to develop a map of the past and an appreciation and understanding of the forces which have shaped the world today. It provides opportunities for students to develop certain attitudes, including an open mind and respect for the values, beliefs and cultures of others, openness to new thinking and ideas and a sense of responsibility and global citizenship. It also emphasises the development and application of skills, including thinking skills through the evaluation of sources, and skills in literacy through using and synthesising information in different ways. The notional length of time for completion of the Higher History course, which usually takes one year, is 160 hours.

Higher History course content consists of three areas of study: British, European and world, and Scottish history. There is considerable flexibility in the contexts and themes which can be studied to allow for personalisation and choice. Options cover topics from the Medieval, Early Modern and Later Modern periods, and include elements of political, social, economic and cultural history. The course aims to develop a detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of complex historical issues in a British, European and world, and Scottish context as well as a conceptual understanding of the past and skills of analysing, evaluating and synthesising historical information in a well-structured manner.

Assessment for Higher History is via written examinations, plus an assignment. There are three assessment components (two written examination papers and one assignment):

- British, European and world history.
- Scottish history.
- Assignment.

The assignment is set within Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) guidelines and the SQA provides a brief for what is assessed. Students have an open choice of historical topic, question or issue to research, and evidence is submitted to the SQA for external marking. The assignment has two stages: research and the production of evidence. Students undertake the research stage at any appropriate point in the (one-year) course, normally when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding. The SQA has published statements on the use of generative artificial intelligence in assessments.

## History in the Victorian Certificate of Education, Victoria (Australia)

The study of History for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the upper secondary leaving certificate, aims to help students to understand themselves, others, and the contemporary world, and to broaden their perspective by examining events, ideas, individuals, groups and movements in the past. Students of VCE History develop social, political, economic and cultural understandings of the conditions and features which have helped shape the present. They also explore continuity and change, and develop the ability to ask searching questions, engage in independent research and construct arguments about the past based on evidence from historical sources. They develop historical comprehension, that is, understanding a source in relation to its

context by making links between the historical source and the world context in which it was produced.

Students explore a variety of eras and periods, events, people, places and ideas, across a series of units. Students combine units 1-4 across the choices on offer. The offerings include options on Empires; Modern History; Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome; Early China; Australian History; and Revolutions. Demonstration of achievement of outcomes and satisfactory completion of a unit are determined by evidence gained through the assessment of a range of learning activities and tasks, and teachers are expected to develop courses that provide appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

In the VCE there is a combination of internal and external assessment procedures. The first two units are assessed in school. For the latter two units, the student's level of achievement is determined by School-Assessed Coursework (SAC) and external assessment (end-of-year examination). For the SAC, four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4. These tasks are a historical inquiry; an evaluation of historical sources; extended responses; and an essay. School-Assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning programme and must not unduly add to the workload associated with the programme.

## Observations

Across the four jurisdictions, the political, social, economic and cultural contexts explored across these curriculums aim to build awareness and skills in students so that they can navigate the world in which they live. Both New Zealand and Scotland are particularly aware of promoting students' awareness of their cultural heritage within the British Empire and the need to explore how these have interacted with their respective societies, which gives meaning to the social structures in which they live today. The IB has a more global perspective due to the international nature of its educational programmes and Victoria, although keen to explore Australian history, puts an increased emphasis on ancient societies for meaning and understanding within their own cultural setting.

The inclusion of a research study-type model is consistent across all the jurisdictions and concern about the influence of generative AI is evident in the development of policies to tackle the problems that may arise in this context. The level of specificity varies across the jurisdictions, with some jurisdictions having defined date and context parameters while others allow for teacher autonomy in terms of devising courses. In contrast to the current Irish syllabus, the ancient world and early dynastic empires form part of specifications at this level. The division of the fields of study in the LC History syllabus precludes a student from studying options across those date ranges.

## Section summary

- Across the jurisdictions examined, the study of national history is common, but this is not always a core component.
- The development of research skills and historical literacy is a common aim.
- How a course is described or prescribed varies greatly. Some jurisdictions offer thematic topics that range across geographical areas or date ranges, other jurisdictions focus on a more chronological prescription of events to be studied. In some jurisdictions, no content is prescribed but the learning outcomes allow for teacher autonomy to choose events or themes that are relevant to their students.
- In describing the areas and date ranges available for study most allow for a greater range of dates and more flexibility than is currently available in the LC History syllabus.
- The geographical focus of historical study tends to be wider in jurisdictions outside the European context.
- Many jurisdictions place a greater emphasis on including diverse perspectives and voices of those previously under-represented in history discourse.
- Assessment often includes a research study to develop and apply research skills. Examinations often include engagement with documents and sources as a means to assess the skills of the historian. Many jurisdictions have set out criteria on verification and authenticating work in response to AI developments.

## 5. Issues for Consideration

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This section sets out a number of issues for consideration in the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate History. These arise from the nature of the subject itself, in addition to drawing on themes emerging in the previous sections of this background paper.

### Scope and structure

Any redevelopment of Leaving Certificate History should take into consideration the scope and structure of the course. The present course is divided into two discrete fields of study focusing on the early modern and later modern eras. Students following the early modern era may not study topics from the later modern era, and vice versa. The numbers of students undertaking the early modern field of study make up approximately 0.3% of the history cohort. An overview of the topics available for study in other jurisdictions reveal a broader range of date and geographical parameters than are currently available for study at Leaving Certificate. Students in the school consultations undertaken in the development of this paper commented on the absence of certain geographical areas such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the range of topics available for study. However, it must also be noted that while there are 12 topics available in each field of study, as noted by the Chief Examiner's Report (SEC, 2017) the majority of students engage in the same four topics.

Considerations for redevelopment include the following:

- How to incorporate more broadly the broad sweep of history over time to allow greater choice and flexibility in the range of topics available to students.
- How to define the scope of the course of study to ensure breadth and depth without overburdening the realistic expectations of what can be achieved in 180 hours.
- How to structure a learning outcomes-based specification while also giving guidance to teachers and students.
- Should a chronological or thematic approach be considered?
- Up until what point should the course be extended? Or should a rolling approach (such as that used to archive materials) be used?
- How to balance the local with national and global perspectives on history.

### Development of conceptual understanding of the discipline of history

The introduction of the Research Study and the Documents-Based Study to the Leaving Certificate History syllabus was a welcome addition in 2003. The emphasis on working with evidence underpinning these features promoted the development of research and critical thinking skills, and rewarded students for undertaking an historical investigation. These skills reflected students' awareness of the key concepts that underpin rigorous historical study, such as appreciating the provisional nature of historical judgements, striving for objectivity in analysis, exploring historical issues, especially contentious ones, from different perspectives, examining the significance of historical phenomena, and being open to revising judgements based on the emergence of new evidence. Further expansion of opportunities to develop these skills and conceptual understanding would complement the senior cycle redevelopment focus on the

development of key competencies. The skills developed in the analysis of information, interrogation of sources, comparison of perspectives and evaluating authenticity are considered important transferable skills in modern society. Identifying information, misinformation and disinformation and recognising bias, propaganda and manipulation of evidence are critical skills as students prepare to enter the post-leaving certificate world.

Considerations for redevelopment include:

- How to incorporate conceptual understanding, skills development and in particular research methodologies and critical thinking skills into the overall specification in a consistent and practical manner.
- How to ensure that the development of these skills is afforded time and space to develop.
- How to enable teachers and students to access facilities and resources to aid them in the development of these skills?

## **Representing the historical experiences of diverse people and from diverse perspectives**

In the overview of the international jurisdictions the broad scope of what could possibly come under the remit of this course of study was clearly illustrated. The teachers and students who were consulted at this stage of the development process spoke of their awareness of the voices and perspectives that were missing from the history they had previously studied. Developments in history education and historiography, along with ever greater access to archival sources and supported by new technologies, have led to research onto the experiences of people in the past from many different perspectives, and through different prisms, such as for example, gender, class, ethnic identity or age group. The increasing diversity of the classroom underscores the homogeneity of the subject matter students are currently presented with. Unconscious bias is a challenge that needs to be navigated in the redevelopment of this subject. Considerations for redevelopment include:

- How to incorporate the perspectives and voices of those omitted from the courses of study, specifically those from marginalised communities and the underrepresentation of the experiences of women in history.
- How to incorporate these voices without the risk of tokenism?

## **Ensuring equity of access**

Issues of equality were raised in every visit to schools. This equality ranged from access to the necessary technology to complete research and fulfil the obligations of the RSR, to accessing books and repositories of historical or archival materials. It was evident that teachers go to great lengths to provide a rich range of materials for their classes to investigate and to bring history alive in the classroom. In any redevelopment, the risk of increasing inequity must be considered.

Some of the implications that should be considered in the redevelopment of history include:

- How does the increasing digitisation of historical sources help students access materials?
- Can this aggravate inherent inequity experienced by students?

- Can the specification mitigate against inequalities of access to materials, resources and technology in the design of the specification?

## Assessment

Assessment through two modes (the RSR and the written examination) were positively acknowledged by those involved in the school consultation. It was noted that the RSR provided an outlet for students to show evidence of their learning and skills development in a way that would not be achieved in the terminal examination. It was further noted that the open choice of theme for the research study (within certain parameters) allowed students to follow and investigate their areas of interest. It was considered that the need to justify and define these areas of study and evaluate the sources used supported students with some basic skills of historical enquiry. A further expansion or redevelopment of this mode of assessment would seem to fit with the aims of the subject. Some aspects of the terminal written assessment such as the engagement with documents and primary sources as part of the DBQ also reflect the aims of the course in the development of research skills. Concern remains among teachers and students about the necessity to write at length under pressure of time in a high-stakes environment.

Some of the considerations for redevelopment include:

- How to structure the Additional Assessment Component (AAC) in order to allow students to show evidence of their learning while also mitigating against the increasing influence of Artificial Intelligence.
- How to structure the specification to allow for the minimum of 40% allocated for the AAC.
- How to advise on assessment arrangements that allow for an assessment of learning outcomes within the time constraints of a written examination.

## Section Summary

The redevelopment of Leaving Certificate History should consider:

- How to define the scope and structure of the new specification to allow for choice and flexibility across a range of date parameters and geographical settings in a way that is coherent and aligned with sound history principles
- How to incorporate the development of the skills of the historian in a way that will integrate the learning across the course and allow students to gain the necessary conceptual and disciplinary understanding
- How will the new specification acknowledge and build on historical understanding that recognises diversity, representation of multiple perspectives and inclusion
- How to build on current assessment arrangements and incorporate the introduction of the AAC in a way that is coherent and allows the students to show evidence of their learning in a way that is valid and reliable?

## 6. Brief for the review of Leaving Certificate History

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NCCA has established a development group to undertake the task of redeveloping a curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate History. The work of the Development Group is, in general terms, agreed by the NCCA Board for Senior Cycle and by the Council in the form of the brief set out below.

This brief is designed to provide the basis for redeveloping Leaving Certificate History. While the brief is derived from the key insights and issues for consideration identified in the previous sections of this paper, it is also guided by the parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects (Appendix 1).

The specification will be student-centred and outcomes-based and in general terms, the specification should be broadly aligned with levels 4 and 5 of the National Framework of Qualifications. It will be available at both Higher and Ordinary level, and it will be designed to be taught and assessed in a minimum of 180 hours.

The specification will align to the template, agreed by Council, for curriculum specifications as set out in the Technical form of curriculum specifications for subjects and modules in a redeveloped senior cycle (NCCA, 2023). The Senior Cycle Key Competencies will be embedded in the learning outcomes.

The specification will be completed for Q2 2026.

More specifically, the development of the new specification for History will address:

- How the specification aligns with the guiding principles of senior cycle and the vision for senior cycle education.
- How the specification can support continuity and progression, including how to connect with and build on related learning at junior cycle, Transition Year, and in other senior cycle subjects and modules, as well as future learning in life, study, entrepreneurship, further education and training, higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships, and the world of work.
- How the specification can support the development of Senior Cycle Key Competencies and the development of a range of digital skills relevant to future life, work, and study.
- The rationale for Leaving Certificate history
- How the specification, in its presentation and language register, can be strongly student-centred and have a clear focus on how students develop and demonstrate their historical knowledge and conceptual understanding
- How students' historical consciousness and disciplinary understanding can be cultivated
- How students can be supported to make considered and informed judgements about the past, supporting their viewpoints with reference to evidence
- How students can be best supported to develop an informed overview of the broad arc of the past in time and space
- How students can be facilitated to investigate the experiences of people in the past from different perspectives
- The assessment of LC History that is aligned to the parameters for the design of

assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects and modules (Appendix 1).

- How the AAC can support and extend the agency of teachers and students, offering choices that support the inclusiveness of the curriculum and allow for students with varying abilities and linguistic levels to engage meaningfully with relevant tasks, whilst continuing to develop their competencies.
- How the specification, in its presentation, can support teachers in planning for teaching, learning and assessment.
- How to embrace and embed technology in teaching, learning and assessment.

The work of the Development Group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. In the course of the work and deliberations of the Development Group, elaborations of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.



## Appendix 1: Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects.

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### 1. Executive summary

- The Minister for Education announced an update on September 20, 2023, on the approach to be taken to the introduction of new and revised subject specifications including how assessment would be addressed in those specifications. Specifically, each subject shall have an assessment component in addition to the final written examination.
- This assessment component (an AAC) will be worth at least 40% of the total available marks.
- Each subject is to have one written examination; typically marks for the written examination will be 60%.
- Typically, there should be two assessment components: One written examination and one other assessment component (an AAC).
- More than one AAC or written examination may be justified in exceptional circumstances and after extensive consideration of the overall assessment load on students. Such exception, however, would be based on strong, clear evidence that a second AAC or a second written paper in the final examination is essential to assess student learning which cannot be achieved through a single AAC and a single written examination paper.

### 2. Introduction

This document outlines the overarching assessment arrangements and parameters to guide the design of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects which include:

- Agricultural Science
- Computer Science
- Design and Communication Graphics
- History
- Home Economics
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physics and Chemistry.

This advice is informed by ongoing work with Tranche 1 and 2 subjects and will be amended, as appropriate, for future tranches which may take account of their subject areas and existing assessment arrangements.

The arrangements as detailed here reflect the policy direction issued by the Minister of Education that all subjects will have an assessment component, to be in a form that is not a traditional written examination, for those components to be set and assessed by the SEC and thereby lead to a reduced emphasis on final examinations in June of 6<sup>th</sup> year.

Specifically, the arrangements for all assessment components as outlined in this document are framed by the Minister's announcement(s) on March 29, 2022, and subsequently on September 20, 2023. Underpinned by the following understandings, the assessment components:

- will not take the form of traditional written examinations.
- will be set and marked by the SEC.
- will be subject to SEC arrangements for their completion, authentication, and submission.

In developing the arrangements outlined below, the following rationale for moving towards all subjects having another assessment component is central. This rationale is informed by deliberations on research commissioned by the NCCA and the SEC, and on the assessment literature more generally. From this work, it is evident that these components have the potential to:

- **Reduce dependence** on written summative examinations and therefore provide for a **broader assessment system**; written examinations have an important role but can be seen as a 'snapshot' of learning and can lead to teaching and learning having an excessive focus on examination preparation; other forms of assessment can mitigate the potential for this narrowing of learning by assessing aspects of student learning better and/or more comprehensively than written examinations alone can do; or assess learning that is not readily assessable through written examinations.
- Support and enhance teachers' understanding and assessment of **key competencies** by contributing to a greater understanding of how students' knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions are assessed.
- Provide opportunities for students and teachers to **reflect on student learning**, boost students' motivation to learn and enhance opportunities for formative feedback practices.
- Extend the range and diversity of assessment opportunities; including **spreading the assessment load** over the course of the last two years of senior cycle and thus contribute to a reduction in or spreading of pressure on students.
- Build and develop **teachers' assessment skills and assessment literacy** as teachers support students in working through the assessment activities as detailed within assessment briefs or guidelines.
- Generate student assessment data which can help reduce the vulnerability of the system to future unprecedented or unexpected system shocks such as COVID.
- Allow for assessment opportunities that are more **authentic** than a system relying on terminal written examinations solely.

It is also important to note that a review of the assessment literature more generally also indicates that when introducing other assessment components, it is necessary to consider how to mitigate risks, for example, of:

- over-assessment of students
- over-rehearsal of assessments
- the assessments becoming overly structured, compartmentalised, repetitive, and routine.

As is already the case where other forms of assessment apply, the new assessment arrangements will be guided by the overarching principles of equity, fairness, and integrity.

In addition, at a programme wide level (i.e. taking account of all subjects and modules implemented across schools), it is necessary to have regard to the overall assessment load on students primarily as well as on schools more generally. Whilst it can be expected that SDGs might focus on the approach to assessment in their own subject initially, they are encouraged to be mindful of the overall assessment load across all subjects and modules. Such programme level considerations will also include the methods of assessment being undertaken. As stated above more than one AAC or written examination may be justified in exceptional circumstances and the following section outlines the process for such cases.

### 3. Process

This section sets out the process through which a variation to the parameters defined in this document will be considered and decided upon; for example, an additional AAC or a second final written examination.

1. Following extensive discussion by the SDG and after exploration of a range of options for a single suitable AAC/single written examination for the subject, the NCCA Executive generates a written note setting out the strong, clear case being made by the Development Group.
2. The written case is agreed and signed off by the Development Group.
3. The written case is discussed with the Board for Senior Cycle.
4. The written case is discussed with the Council. On foot of this discussion, the Council decides whether or not to send the case forward to the Department.
  - a. Having considered the importance of managing and spreading the assessment load for students, if the Council decides that the case isn't sufficiently strong to merit consideration by the Department, the Council requests the Development Group to work on the basis of one AAC and one written examination.

OR

- b. Having considered the importance of managing and spreading the assessment load for students, if the Council decides that the case is sufficiently strong to merit consideration by the Department, the Council agrees to send the case forward to the Department of Education.
5. In the case of 4b, the written case is sent to the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office (SCRPMO) in the Department of Education for consideration and response.
6. The Department may convene the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Group (SCRIG) to support its consideration of the request for a variation. The SCRIG is a Department-led structure established to provide oversight and support the co-ordination of work across the key agencies/organisations contributing to the redevelopment of senior cycle. Its members include senior officials from the Department (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, Inspectorate, Teacher Professional Learning [TPL]), NCCA, SEC and Oide.
7. The Department decides to support or decline the request for the variation sought and communicates its decision in writing to the NCCA in a timely manner.
8. The Subject Development Group progresses its work in line with the Council's response (arising from 4a) or the Department's response (arising from 4b and 7).

#### 4. Timelines

The process outlined above will require time. Such time, if involving a number of weeks, could have significant implications for the timeline for specific stages of work on the subject specification and/or the overall completion of the specification ahead of sending it to the Department for consideration. This time factor may necessitate NCCA organising additional online meetings of the Board for Senior Cycle and the Council in order to ensure the development work remains within the overall timelines.

Table 1 below sets out the general parameters and processes to guide the work of the subject development groups (SDG) as they consider the most appropriate assessment for each subject. The specific parameters for each of the Tranche 3 subjects are set out in Table 2.

**Table 1: Assessment parameters and processes – general application to tranche 3 subjects**

Considerations	Parameters to guide the work of the development group.
<b>Nature</b>	<p>The purpose and nature of the assessment component will be clearly outlined in the subject specification and accompanying guidelines to support the completion of the assessment. Details will be provided on the nature of the component. Existing examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research project/extended essay</li> <li>• oral assessment</li> <li>• performance assessment</li> <li>• portfolio assessment</li> <li>• creation of an artefact</li> <li>• field study</li> <li>• experiment/ proof of concept/ practical investigation.</li> </ul> <p>The subject specification and the accompanying guidelines will articulate clearly what the students are required to do, the form(s) in which it can be carried out and submitted, and the workload expectations associated with the assessment. The alignment of the assessment component to a particular set of learning outcomes from the subject specification will be provided, as well as details on which key competencies and associated learning outcomes will be assessed. This does not preclude the same LOs from being assessed in the final examination.</p>
<b>Weighting</b>	The assessment component in each subject will be worth at least 40% of the total available marks.
<b>Timing</b>	The SDG will advise on the time required for the carrying out of the assessment component across the course of study.
<b>Completion and Submission</b>	While the SDG may suggest when this may occur (as referenced above having regard to the assessment load on students in particular), a final decision will be made by the SEC following consideration of the overall

	<p>schedule of completion dates for all assessments across all subjects. This will be finalised by the SEC following engagement with the NCCA and DE.</p> <p>The dates for final completion and/or submission of the assessment component by the student will be published by the SEC and this detail will not be included in the subject specification. (See table 1 below in relation to Mathematics also)</p>
<b>Design</b>	<p>The majority of assessment components will result in a completed item that is materially different to a traditional written examination and which tests different competencies being transmitted to the SEC and assessed by the SEC.</p> <p>In some instances, the design of the assessment may require examiners to visit schools to conduct the assessment but manageability at school and system level will need to be considered.</p>
<b>Guidance</b>	<p>Guidelines to support the assessment components will be specific to each subject. These guidelines will be developed collaboratively by the NCCA and SEC. They will be informed by the deliberations of the SDG during the development of the specification and will detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the purpose of the component concerned i.e., what it is intended to assess.</li> <li>• the nature of the assessment component/activity.</li> <li>• descriptors of quality in the form of a graduated rubric and details on assessment standards at higher and ordinary levels if deemed necessary by the assessment method.</li> <li>• details on the timing of the assessment (its duration and when it could happen).</li> <li>• guidance on the processes that may be used for the administration of the assessment.</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Parameters for assessment arrangements for each Tranche 3 subject**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Current arrangements</b>	<b>Parameters for new assessment arrangements</b>
<b>Agricultural Science</b>	<p>Written examination is 2.5 hours duration for higher level and ordinary level students and is awarded 300 of the 400 marks available (75%).</p> <p>Coursework is an Individual Investigative Study, which is done in</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p>

	<p>response to a common brief from SEC and is worth 100 marks (25%).</p>	<p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>
<b>Computer Science</b>	<p>The final examination is worth 70% and is 2.5 hours duration on one day towards the end of May. There is a paper-based element (1.5 hrs.; 130 marks) followed by a computer-based element (1 hr.; 80 marks).</p> <p>The coursework is worth 30% of the final marks. The common brief is released in December of 6<sup>th</sup> year and a report and summary video (90 marks) is typically submitted in March of 6<sup>th</sup> year. This is completed over a 10-week period.</p> <p>Coursework and practical are set at a common level but are graded in line with the standards that apply to the level at which the candidate sits the written examination.</p> <p>Written examination is examined at higher and ordinary levels.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>
<b>Design and Communication Graphics</b>	<p>Written examination has 1 paper worth 240 marks which is 60% of the marks available. This paper is 3 hours in duration.</p> <p>Written examination is examined at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Student assignment is worth 160 marks which is 40% of the marks available.</p> <p>The student assignment at higher level differs from the student assignment at ordinary level with a different brief set for HL and OL students. There are 9 outputs required in a portfolio for both levels with the HL page limit set at 14 pages and OL page limit 12 pages.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>

<p><b>History</b></p>	<p>Written examination is worth 80% of the total marks available, and the exam is 2 hour 50 minutes in duration.</p> <p>Coursework is a Research Study Report (RSR) and is allocated the remaining 20%. There is a different word count for HL and OL students, with the OL word count set at 800 words and the HL word count set at 1600.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>
<p><b>Home Economics</b></p>	<p>Written examination is 2 hr 30 minutes duration and worth 280 or 320 marks (out of 400) depending on the elective chosen.</p> <p>For students who choose the <b>Home Design and Management</b> or <b>Social Studies</b> electives, the written examination is worth 80% and the <b>Food Studies Coursework</b> is worth 20%.</p> <p>For those who choose the <b>Textile Fashion and Design</b> elective, the written exam is worth 70%; the <b>Food Studies Coursework</b> is worth 20% and the <b>TFD Coursework</b> is allocated 10%.</p> <p><b>Food Studies Coursework</b> is based on 4 assignments completed by the beginning of November of 6<sup>th</sup> year and submitted to the SEC.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>
<p><b>Mathematics</b></p>	<p>There are 2 written papers that are worth the full allocation of marks.</p> <p>Paper 1: HL OL and FL is 2.5 hrs duration.</p> <p>Paper 2: HL and OL 2.5 hrs duration.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher ordinary and foundation levels and it would be expected to take the form of a single paper.</p>

		Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief. Assessment component to be completed in Year 1 of the two-year programme.
<b>Music</b>	<p>There are 3 areas for assessment:</p> <p>Composing element is worth 25% and assessed by a written paper of 1.5 hours duration.</p> <p>Performing element is worth 25% and is assessed by a performance of 3 or 4 pieces depending on the selection of one performance format or 2.</p> <p>Listening element is worth 25% and is assessed by an aural exam and written paper of 1.5 hours duration.</p> <p>HL Elective: Higher level students select one of the 3 areas above and choose to increase mark allocation to 50% by including an additional assessment activity.</p> <p>For ordinary level students, their best mark in one out of the three areas is doubled to reach 100%-mark allocation.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component will be based on a brief issued by the SEC.</p>
<b>Physics and Chemistry</b>	<p>Written paper at HL and OL worth full mark allocation of 400 marks. 3-hour paper.</p> <p>Section 1 Physics worth 200 marks.</p> <p>Section 2 Chemistry worth 200 marks.</p>	<p>Written examination: typically, 60% weighting.</p> <p>Assessment component: minimum 40% weighting.</p> <p>Written examination will be set at higher and ordinary levels.</p> <p>Assessment component would be based on one submission to SEC in response to a common brief.</p>

Whilst an AAC in each subject must have a minimum weighting of 40%; an SDG may propose a weighting of 50%. In these circumstances, the process outlined at Section 3 above will apply to determine if such a weighting receives further consideration as to whether it shall be applied or not. It would not be anticipated that an SDG would seek to apply a weighting to the AAC above this level.



## References

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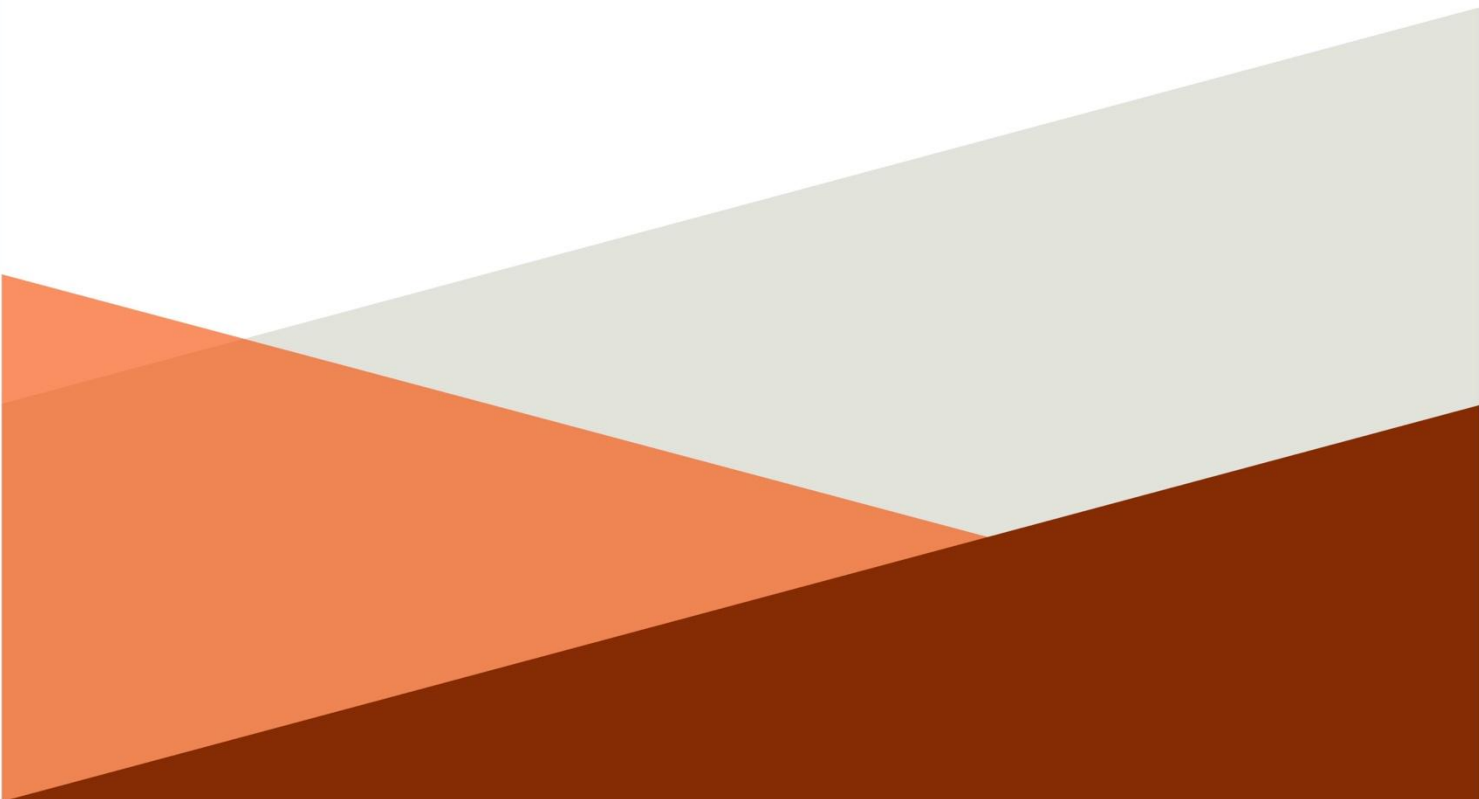
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