An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Senior Cycle Redevelopment

Schools Information Note

December 2023, Issue 2

Senior Cycle Redevelopment Information and Updates

Introduction

This is the second edition in a series of Department of Education Senior Cycle Redevelopment information notes. These notes will provide updates to school communities on the roll-out of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme. The Department has issued this note to all post-primary schools and requests that it be circulated to students, parents and staff in each school. The information note will also be available online and schools are welcome to provide links from their websites and other digital presences to it.

Main updates

A number of Tranche 1 subject draft specifications are now out for consultation following approval by the NCCA Council. The consultation will run until Friday the 23 February 2024.

Tranche 2 subjects are now confirmed, and nominations are sought for Subject Development Groups

The inaugural Senior Cycle Redevelopment Conference will take place in February 2024

Useful links and further reading
The agreed schedule of Senior Cycle Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 subjects for redevelopment

Minister for Education and CEO of the NCCA mark recent launch of consultation for six Leaving Certificate specifications

Have your say

Tranche 1 subject draft specifications consultation is now open

The first tranche of new and revised Leaving Certificate subjects will be introduced in schools in 2025.

Following approval by the NCCA Council recently, draft specifications for the following subjects are now out for consultation:

Biology
Chemistry
Physics
Arabic
Latin
Ancient Greek

The consultation involves in-depth engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders across Ireland. The NCCA has also contacted schools to participate in school-based focus groups involving teachers, students and school leaders. The feedback from the consultations will help to inform the work of each subject development group to refine final curriculum specifications that will be introduced in schools in the school year 2025/26.

The consultation will run until Friday 23 February 2024. Views can be shared via an online submission or an online survey. For each of the science subjects, applications can be made to attend a consultation event.

Find out more

Draft subject specifications – what to expect

The format of the draft specifications was informed by extensive deliberations with stakeholders. The paper which provided the research-informed basis for the deliberations can be accessed here. Further feedback on the template may arise during the public consultations and this will be considered when finalising all of the redeveloped senior cycle specifications .

Some common features include:

- senior cycle key competencies
- additional assessment components
- greater level of scaffolding of learning outcomes.

Senior cycle key competencies

A redeveloped Senior Cycle will focus more on our young people's key competencies. NCCA listened to teachers, students, parents and others during the review of senior cycle. Many of them emphasised that who you become during your last years in school and who you are when you leave school matters. They said that your values and dispositions are as important as your knowledge and skills.

This feedback has shaped the redevelopment of the senior cycle curriculum, which focuses on the importance for students on enhancing their key competencies and integrating knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to help students learn, grow and develop as human beings.

Additional assessment components

Each of the draft specifications incorporates additional assessment components that are not a traditional written examination, which will be worth a minimum of 40% of the available marks and will be externally assessed by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Greater scaffolding of learning outcomes

A greater level of scaffolding of strands of study and learning outcomes is evident across all draft specifications. This is achieved through a combination of an over-arching narrative, the inclusion of the 'students learn about' column and learning outcomes that clearly state what students will be able to know, do and understand at the end of the course.

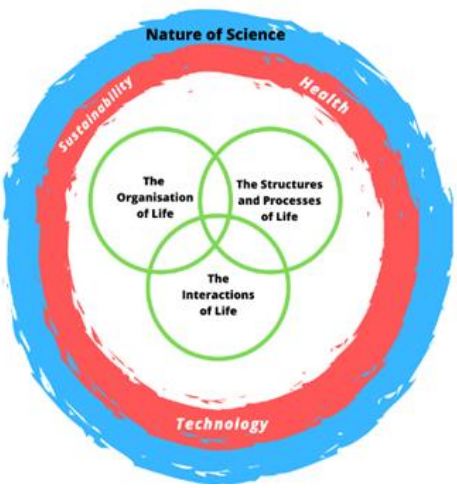
Draft subject specifications – what to expect

Biology

Biology is described as the scientific study of life and is consistently one of the most popular subjects chosen at Senior Cycle.
The Leaving Certificate Biology draft specification has four strands; a unifying strand, The Nature of Science, and three contextual strands, The Organisation of Life, The Structures and Processes of Life, and The Interactions of Life.

The draft specification has two assessment components:
a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a Biology in Practice Investigation.

Find out more.



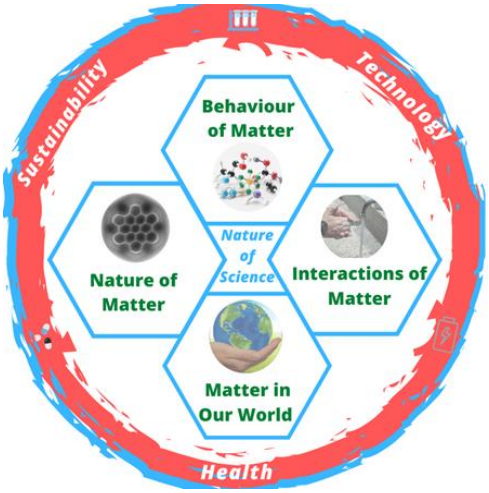
Chemistry

The study of Chemistry involves understanding how atoms and molecules, while invisible, make up the visible world we can see around us, and explains how all matter in the universe behaves and interacts.

The LC Chemistry draft specification has five interrelated strands: The Nature of Science, which is the unifying strand, and four contextual strands: The Nature of Matter, Behaviour of Matter, Interactions of Matter, and Matter in Our World.
Three themes that cut across all strands are identified as Health, Sustainability, and Technology. They act as lenses through which students can explore the application of knowledge from chemistry.

The draft specification has two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising of a Chemistry in Practice Investigation.

Find out more.



Physics

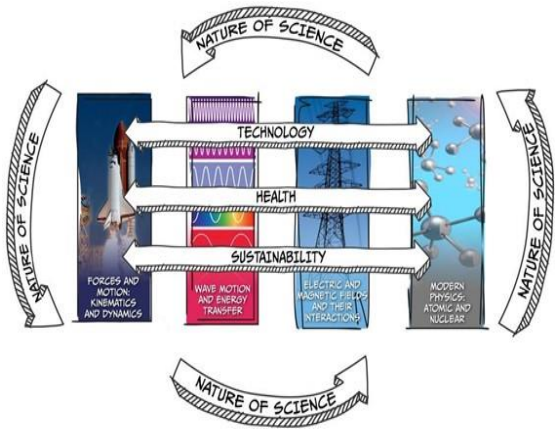
Physics attempts to develop a unified description of how matter and energy behave and interact with each other. It involves asking fundamental questions and trying to answer them by observing, measuring, experimenting and developing models to explain the physical world.

The LC Physics draft specification has five strands; a unifying strand, The Nature of Science, and four contextual strands, Forces and Motion, Waves and Energy transfer, Electricity and Magnetism, and Modern Physics.

Three themes are identifiable in the draft specification; Technology, Health and Sustainability to act as lenses through which students explore the application of the knowledge from physics. Through these lenses they pose questions, examine the benefits of applications of the core concepts, models and theories to individuals, the community and the environment, and evaluate associated risks and any unintended consequences.

The draft specification has two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a Physics in Practice Investigation.

Find out more



Arabic

Arabic is one of the most widely spoken languages globally. This draft specification will support students to use Arabic to communicate for meaningful purposes, inspire in them an interest and curiosity about how they can use and learn languages in general, and cultivate an appreciation of the similarities and differences between different countries, communities, and cultures.
This Leaving Certificate Arabic draft specification is intended for students from all language backgrounds. It aims to support social integration and active citizenship as well as an appreciation for the unique and exciting opportunities offered by languages at school, outside the classroom and in the workplace.
The draft specification has three assessment components: a written examination and two additional assessment component(s) comprising an aural and oral examination.

Find out more.

The remaining three specifications in Tranche 1

It is planned that the draft subject specifications for the remaining Tranche 1 subjects Business, Climate Action and Sustainable Development, and Drama, Film and Theatre Studies, will be out for consultation in early Spring 2024, subject to approval by the NCCA Council.

Draft subject specifications – what to expect

Latin

Latin is the ancient language of Latium, the region of the city of Rome. As Rome became a dominant international power, Latin was spoken and written in all of Europe, North Africa and the Near East. In the medieval and early modern periods, the literature and culture of Rome's late Republic and early Principate was increasingly regarded as 'classical,' providing models to study and follow, while Latin remained the international language of literature, diplomacy, science, philosophy, scholarship and religion throughout Western Europe.

This draft classical language specification takes cognisance of the framework approach used for the learning and teaching of Leaving Certificate curricular languages. This framework involves a common approach across foreign language specifications, including the aims, expectations for students and assessment approaches. The specifications are intended for students from all language backgrounds.

The draft specification has two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a research study.

Find out more.

Ancient Greek

Ancient Greek was spoken and written in Greece from the late Bronze Age. It is difficult to form an English sentence without using words that are derived from Greek, and Ancient Greek remains central to the technical terminology of fields such as law, medicine, and the sciences.

The Leaving Certificate Ancient Greek draft specification is presented in two strands: Ancient Greek Language and Literature in Context. They are divided to distinguish between skills related to language acquisition and skills related to understanding texts written in its original language, their literary value, historical context, and cultural significance. They are, however, fundamentally inter-related and inter-dependent, and the strands and learning outcomes should not be considered in isolation but approached in a fully integrated way.

The draft specification has two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a research study.

Find out more.

Come talk to us – Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office will be at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2024

The BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2024 will take place on 11 – 13 January 2024. The Department of Education, along with colleagues from The Teaching Council, will have a stand at the exhibition.

The Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office will be on hand to speak about Senior Cycle Redevelopment and how the changes will benefit students.

Reminder!

Subject Development Groups play a key role in redevelopment of the senior cycle curriculum. The Groups include nominees of the education partners, the Department of Education and other key education agencies.
The NCCA is currently convening a number of Subject Development Groups and is seeking expressions of interests from individuals who would like to contribute to work on the following specifications: Leaving Certificate Accounting, Leaving Certificate Construction Studies, Leaving Certificate Engineering, Leaving Certificate English, Leaving Certificate Geography, LCVP Link Modules and Leaving Certificate Physical Education.

Full details on the application process are available online. The deadline is **10 January 2024**.

It is envisioned that Subject Development Groups will meet in February 2024.

SAVE THE DATE

Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Conference for School Leaders

When: 27 February 2024
Where: Croke Park Meeting & Events, Dublin

More details to follow

Further information on Senior Cycle Redevelopment can be found at gov.ie/seniorcycle.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Queries in relation to this information note can be directed to: scr_info@education.gov.ie.