

LEAVING CERTIFICATE REDEVELOPMENT

Your voice matters



Message from ASTI President Miriam Duggan:

Other than a press release on March 29th and a small number of interviews, the Minister for Education Norma Foley has provided little additional detail about her plans for Senior Cycle change. Nonetheless, the ASTI has been busy examining her proposals and refining our response.

I wish to draw your attention to two imminent issues which I will be putting top of our agenda over the coming months.

Many members have voiced concern about the Minister's plan to hold English and Irish Paper 1 at the end of 5th year. The announcement has also been met with universal censure from subject associations, not least because it ignores the structure of both syllabi which involve an integrated approach to teaching language and literature. The State Exams Commission warned that holding Paper 1 in 5th year would "significantly disadvantage boys" and that holding Paper 1 and 2 too far apart may lead to "likely performance variables between males and females".

The Minister has since suggested that holding Paper 1 in 5th year would be an interim measure. This demonstrates scant regard for the students who may be required to undergo the exam and will have to move forward based on the results they achieve. For them, the implications could be far from interim. And, frankly, the Minister's suggested "remodelling and reshaping" of Paper 1 is an added concern rather than a comfort.

At our Special Central Executive Council (CEC) meeting in mid-October we passed the following motion: that ***the ASTI emphatically rejects the proposal to hold Paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of 5th year.***

The Minister also announced her intention to hold orals and music practicals during the first week of the Easter break. This decision is unacceptable and was arrived at without any consultation. Our deepest concern is with our colleagues who teach the subjects involved. Gaeilge and modern language teachers have always given extra support to their students coming up to and during the orals. Music teachers are often required to accompany their students during their performance practicals and for them, this is a terms and conditions issue. The Minister's announcement takes no account of these facts and the pressures which would be experienced by these teachers who want to do their best to support their students.

At our Special CEC in mid-October, we passed a motion which is now ASTI policy: that ***the ASTI demands that the Easter and mid-term breaks and weekends are not used for sitting any part of the State examinations.***

ASTI policies on State exam assessment and on Senior Cycle are set out in this Nuacht. We have a lot to do but as you will see in this Nuacht, we have done much background work to clarify and strengthen our policy positions. Our next initiatives are outlined on pages 3 and 4 – ASTI Senior Cycle campaign – and include forging links with subject associations and a survey of ASTI members.

I urge you to keep up-to-date by getting reports from your Branch and checking the ASTI website.

Our experience as teachers should be central to any change process and we must work together to ensure our voice is heard.

Miriam Duggan, President



It is longstanding
ASTI policy that
state examinations
for certification
purposes are
entirely externally
assessed.

The ASTI is committed
to a consultation
process with
members on all
aspects of the
Minister's
announcement.

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On 29th March, the Minister for Education announced her plans for redevelopment of the Senior Cycle. Details of the planned changes are set out on pages 4-6. The standout measure is to change the final assessment procedure to significantly reduce reliance on final examinations and introduce teacher-based assessment components.

The ASTI believes that Senior Cycle change must protect the integrity of the examinations and any changes must be built upon fairness for students and trust in the system. It is longstanding ASTI policy that state examinations for certification purposes are entirely externally assessed and this must be retained in all aspects of the development of the Leaving Certificate.

Furthermore, it is essential that the mistakes made in the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle in recent years, which side-lined the voice of teachers, must not be repeated.

The Minister's announcement is not entirely without merit.

The ASTI acknowledges the retention of the existing broad subject range and the addition of two new subjects. The continuation of the successful Transition Year programme is welcome. Changes announced to Leaving Cert pathways will offer improved opportunities for students with special education needs.

However, it is clear that a vigorous campaign will be necessary to secure crucial changes to the plan over the coming period.

The ASTI will be proactive in ensuring that the voice of teachers is heard and plans a number of initiatives in response to the Minister's plan.

ASTI policy on Senior Cycle

Assessment

Annual Convention 2022 adopted the following motion:

- *That ASTI reaffirm its policy that members do not assess their students' work for State Certification purposes. Moreover, ASTI commits to a comprehensive consultation process with members on all aspects of the announcement on 29th March, 2022, by the Minister for Education, regarding redevelopment of the Senior Cycle.*

At its meeting on October 15th 2022, the ASTI Central Executive Council passed a number of motions in response to the Minister for Education's announcement on Senior Cycle redevelopment.

The ASTI insists
language oral exams
and music practical
exams do not take
place during the
Easter break.

The ASTI rejects the
proposal that students
sit Paper 1 in English
and Irish at the end
of 5th year.

These motions included:

Orals/practicals

- *That the ASTI demands that the Easter and mid-term breaks and weekends are not used for the sitting of any part of the State examinations.*

And

Paper 1 in 5th year

- *ASTI emphatically rejects the proposal to hold paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of 5th Year.*

List of motions adopted by CEC, October 2022

- *That the ASTI demands substantial consultation on the selection criteria for and operation of Network Schools and clarification on the exact nature of the role of students as co-constructors of the curriculum and assessment arrangements.*
- *ASTI affirms that Transition Year must remain a standalone programme.*
- *That the ASTI demands that the Easter and mid-term breaks and weekends are not used for the sitting of any part of the state examinations.*
- *That the ASTI demands the provision of a programme of initial teacher education and meaningful CPD prior to the introduction of new subjects and revised Syllabi and specifications on the Curriculum. Further, the ASTI demands that the full range of syllabus documentation (including sample examination papers, sample marking schemes and, if applicable, teacher's notes) should be officially published at the same time as the new syllabus.*
- *ASTI emphatically rejects the proposal to hold paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of 5th Year.*

ASTI Senior Cycle campaign

The ASTI is undertaking a membership-wide consultation on Senior Cycle. Actions include:

- The ASTI Central Executive Council met on October 15th to progress ASTI policy (see motions adopted by CEC above).
- ASTI branches have been asked to have dedicated branch meetings on Senior Cycle where possible.
- Branch reports are being fed back to ASTI Standing Committee for consideration.

It is vital that
members participate
in the ASTI's Senior
Cycle campaign.
Together we can
ensure teachers'
collective voice
is heard.

Visit www.asti.ie

Planned events/actions

- CEC will meet again in January 2023 and will continue consideration of ASTI policy in relation to the Minister's Senior Cycle announcement. This will include discussion regarding additional components and marking and assessment.
- The ASTI and TUI are working on developing a common approach to the Minister's Senior Cycle announcement. ASTI and TUI executive members and the NCCA subject/programme representatives from the two unions will meet on November 26th.
- A survey of members on Senior Cycle.
- A Special Convention on Senior Cycle.
- An Education Conference on Senior Cycle.
- A petition signed by members, if appropriate.
- The ASTI will forge links with subject associations.

Professor Hyland addresses CEC

A meeting of the ASTI Central Executive Council on October 15th was addressed by Irish educationalist and Emeritus Professor of Education at UCC, Áine Hyland who provided a summary of second-level curriculum change in Ireland and also highlighted key research pertinent to Senior Cycle change. Read the ASTI's report of Professor Hyland's address at www.asti.ie

Minister Foley's plan for Senior Cycle redevelopment

The redeveloped Senior Cycle will include the development of new subjects and revised curricula for all existing subjects. These will include a significant emphasis on additional assessment components outside of the traditional final written exams.

The Minister has stated that the plan has been informed by the Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Key excerpts from Minister Foley's announcement on March 29th 2022:

- *Introduction of new curricula for subjects across Senior Cycle, updating subject content.*

The Minister's
announcement
includes the
introduction of
teacher-based
assessment
components.

- *The introduction of new subjects, providing greater choice for students to better reflect their range of interests and support the development of a wider range of talents and skills. Two new subjects – Drama, Film and Theatre Studies; and Climate Action and Sustainable Development, will be ready for students in network schools starting fifth year in 2024.*
- *Changing the final assessment procedure to significantly reduce reliance on final examinations and introduce teacher-based assessment components.*
- *As Leaving Certificate subjects are revised they will have assessment components additional to the conventional written examination worth 40% of the total marks; with the written examination worth 60% of the final score.*
- *The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and State Exams Commission (SEC) will jointly research and define, in consultation with education partners, how an SEC-externally moderated, school-based form of assessment would operate.*
- *The initial tranche of new and revised subjects will be available in September 2024, when students entering fifth year in network schools will study updated subject curricula, with updated assessment models in the optional subjects of Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Business.*
- *Leaving Certificate Established students entering Senior Cycle in September 2023 will sit Paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of fifth year.*
- *It is intended that into the future Oral examinations and the Music practical performance will take place during the first week of the Easter break of 6th year as is the case this year.*
- *Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students will have improved access to Mathematics and Modern Foreign Languages from September 2022, broadening the options for LCA.*
- *A new qualification will be introduced at level one and two on the National Qualification framework to provide an appropriate level of assessment to some students with special educational needs, building on the equivalent programme at Junior Cycle level.*
- *A revised Transition Year programme will be established, and greater access to Transition Year for all students will be encouraged.*

The mistakes made in
the implementation of
the Framework for
Junior Cycle must
not be repeated.

- *A Senior Cycle Programme Delivery Board will be established which will have responsibility for overseeing the achievement of actions forming part of this suite of reforms.*

A detailed implementation plan will be developed through ongoing collaboration and co-creation and consultation with education partners, including teachers, students, school leaders and parents.

Minister Foley has requested the NCCA to invite a selection of schools, representative of the different types and sizes of schools, to become “network schools”.

Network schools will be given the opportunity to participate at an early stage in revised curriculum and assessment arrangements. These schools will receive support through a variety of forms to enable their participation.

Key points:

- **ASTI members will not assess their students for State Certification purposes.**
- **The ASTI rejects the proposal that oral exams and music practical exams take place at Easter.**
- **The ASTI rejects the proposal that students sit Paper 1 in English and Irish at the end of 5th year.**
- **Any changes to Senior Cycle must be based on independent, rigorous research and be appropriate to the Irish education system.**
- **Any changes to Senior Cycle must be properly resourced and take account of teachers’ workload.**
- **Any changes to Senior Cycle must protect the integrity of the State Exams and ensure fairness for all students.**
- **The mistakes made in the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle must not be repeated.**
- **Teachers’ collective voice must be heard.**

Read about the ASTI’s Senior Cycle campaign at

www.asti.ie