Senior Cycle Redevelopment
Implementation Support Measures

8 May 2025

Contents

1 Purpose of this document

This document sets out a range of measures to support the ongoing implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment (SCR) programme including those measures forming a proposed collective agreement between the Department of Education and Youth, the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI). The benefits of this Agreement are dependent on parties to it approving the agreement and complying with it.

1.1   Summary of Key Measures outlined in this document

This document contains a package of measures designed to support the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme in schools and the related curriculum development, assessment and teacher professional learning processes. Key measures in summary include:

- Confirmation of the Minister's announcement of 21 April in regard to revised arrangements for teachers securing permanent contracts;
- A reconfiguration, on an interim basis, of the operation of the whole school component of the Croke Park Hours (CPH) arrangements as applicable to teachers;
- Confirmation of the management side requirements to satisfy the local bargaining clause of the Public Sector Agreement, whilst noting that those elements are subject to approval by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in accordance with the Public Service Agreement;
- Specific posts of responsibility to support the implementation of the SCR programme;
- The establishment of various working groups to support the implementation and monitoring of the SCR programme including in areas related to AI, the implementation of this agreement and workload in schools;
- A commitment to early rapid reviews related to the implementation of revised subject specifications including the operation of their assessment arrangements and emerging trends in student uptake levels;
- The development of a right to disconnect policy applicable to schools; and,
- Specific subject specific supports focused on the Tranche 1 subjects including an increase in the amount of the current annual Physics and Chemistry grant and the extension of its scope to include Biology and Agricultural Science.

The payment of the 1% and 2% element of local bargaining are subject to this agreement being complied with for the duration of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme. The Department reserves the right to seek a pause or clawback of these increases in the event of industrial action or other non-compliance in the future in respect of Senior Cycle Redevelopment, through the appropriate Public Service Agreement structures.

The outstanding payments due under the Public Service Agreement 2024 to 2026 (PSA) are subject to compliance with the PSA, including commitments relating to supporting, and co-operating with, Senior Cycle Redevelopment. In the event that cooperation ceases at any stage, the Department of Education and Youth will refer this to the normal dispute resolution mechanisms under the PSA for appropriate consideration.

1.2 Summary of Department and post-primary teacher union engagement

Since the announcement of the programme in March 2022, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the redevelopment programme. There has also been significant engagement between the Department and the two post-primary teacher unions regarding SCR. This engagement includes participation in multilateral forums such as the SCR Partners' Forum, and bilateral meetings between the Department and the unions.

In late 2024, both post-primary unions called for a pause to certain aspects of the SCR Programme. In particular, a pause in the introduction of seven of the nine new and revised subjects in Tranche 1, which had been approved by the then-Minister for introduction in schools for students starting fifth year in September 2025 was sought. This would also necessitate changes to the schedule for the introduction of subsequent annual tranches.

In response to these calls, the Department intensified its direct engagement with the unions in order to understand and respond to the concerns raised, seeking clarification on which elements of the SCR programme were encompassed by the call for a pause in implementation, and discussing the implications of any delays.

At the meeting of 11 December 2024, officials invited the unions to submit a list of questions in writing for formal response by the Department. These questions were received from the ASTI and the TUI on 18 December 2024 and 14 January 2025, respectively. Initial responses to the questions issued on 28 January 2025, with final responses issuing on 19 February 2025.

Through the continuing engagement over subsequent meetings, the Department sought to understand how the unions believed the requested pause in implementation could be used to address the concerns they had outlined. The ASTI and the TUI each made a submission to the Department in writing, on 24 and 27 March 2025, respectively, setting out their views. These submissions are included in the appendices to this document for reference and can be noted as encompassing both matters directly related to SCR and matters of a more general nature, including longstanding or outstanding claims previously made by the unions.

Following careful consideration of the unions' request for a pause, and of the submissions received, on 8 April 2025, Minister McEntee wrote to the unions confirming that the implementation of the programme would continue with the introduction of Tranche 1 in September 2025 as previously announced. The Minister's letters to the Presidents of the unions are also included in the appendices.

In her letters, Minister McEntee noted that the consideration of the review of Senior Cycle commenced in 2016, and that at each subsequent stage there has been substantial engagement with stakeholders including teachers, parents and students. The Minister also noted that since the SCR programme was formally announced in 2022, significant revisions had already been made in line with and in response to the views of both unions.

The Minister went on to highlight the progress made to date in implementing the SCR programme, and the commitment in the Programme for Government 2025 "to continuing the programme of reform of Senior Cycle to ensure that students benefit from up-to-date curricula, more diverse skills and competencies development and assessments, and reduced stress levels."

While acknowledging the concerns raised by teachers' representatives, the Minister concluded that a further delay to the previously announced timelines would not be in the best interests of students. In confirming this position, the Minister acknowledged the proposals made by the

unions in their submissions of 24 and 27 March, and gave an undertaking that her officials would engage intensively with them in order to identify how schools, teachers and students can be best supported in realising the ambitions underlying the SCR programme.

Officials and union representatives have subsequently continued to meet frequently (see Appendix 1: List of meetings) to discuss these supports, leading to this document. This document represents a proposal developed between the Department and the post-primary teachers' unions as to how the implementation of the redevelopment programme will be further supported going forward. If accepted, it will form the basis of a national collective agreement between the Department and the teacher unions.

Section 2 summarises the progress made in implementing the programme since 2022 and does not form an operative part of this collective agreement. Sections 3-6 set out the supports and related actions that have been committed to by the Department, including its agencies. In regard to sections 5 and 6, where applicable, the measures directly related to teachers and their conditions of employment shall apply only to those teachers who become parties to this collective agreement. The measures outlined in this document have been informed by extensive engagement and negotiation between the Department and the ASTI and TUI.

2 Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Progress to date

SCR is an ambitious programme of change that will ultimately impact every programme, subject and module across the three years of Senior Cycle. Work to review and update the Senior Cycle experience formally started almost a decade ago when the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commenced its Senior Cycle Review in 2016.

Following the completion of the review and consideration of the resulting Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report, in March 2022 the then-Minister for Education announced the SCR programme. This ambitious programme for a reimagined Senior Cycle of education for post-primary students, summarised as "Equity and Excellence for All: where the student is at the centre of their Senior Cycle experience", is based on three central tenets:

- Empower students to meet the challenges of the 21st century
- Enrich the student experience and build on what's strong in our current system
- Embed wellbeing and reduce student stress levels

Underpinning these tenets is a vision to –

- Enable students to follow a broad curriculum, and develop their interests and skills
- Enable students to participate in a final assessment process consistent with international best practice, which will support them in third level, further education and training, apprenticeships or the world of work
- Reduce the pressure on students that comes from final assessments based primarily on examinations
- Maintain the high standards and quality that we need to continue to achieve in our schools to serve our students well and support them to take the next steps in their lives and learning (including their education and career journey), whatever they may be.

In February 2023, the then-Minister announced that, in response to significant stakeholder engagement, the planned interim measure to hold one of the papers in Leaving Certificate (LC) English and Irish at the end of Fifth Year, starting with students beginning Fifth Year in September 2023 was deferred.

In September 2023, the then-Minister made a further announcement, providing updates to the roll-out of SCR, which would see more students benefit from the earlier roll-out new and revised subjects at an earlier date than previously planned.

Since those announcements, significant progress has been made in the rollout of SCR, as outlined in this chapter.

2.1 Implementation structures

2.1.1 Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office and Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Group

In October 2021, the SCR Programme Management Office (SCRPMO) was formed in the Department of Education, as part of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit.

The Department, the NCCA, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and Oide are working together to ensure their programmes of work are aligned with changes as they arise. All relevant agencies have been provided with significant dedicated resources to ensure the success of the programme. The Department and the Agencies meet collectively as a SCR Implementation Group (SCRIG) (formed May 2023) to consider cross cutting or programme level considerations.

2.1.2   Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board

The SCR Programme Delivery Board was formed in February 2023, with responsibility for monitoring the Senior Cycle redevelopment work and reporting regularly to the Minister on its progress. It is chaired by former Chief Inspector Dr Harold Hislop.

2.1.3   Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum

The SCR Partners' Forum was established in February 2023. The Partners' Forum includes representatives of students, parents, teachers, school leadership and management bodies, the SEC, the NCCA, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and other relevant organisations. It is also chaired by former Chief Inspector Dr Harold Hislop.

2.2   Subject specifications

The NCCA has published the schedule for the revision of all Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) subjects and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) link modules spanning five annual tranches from 2025 to 2029. Tranche 1 was announced in March 2022 initially with a phased introduction commencing in 2024 before expanding to nation-wide rollout in 2027. Its earlier implementation on a nation-wide basis from September 2025 was confirmed in the Minister's announcement in September 2023.

The format of the Tranche 1 specifications is based upon the Technical Form of Curriculum Specifications for Subjects and Modules in a Redeveloped Senior Cycle, which in turn was informed by extensive research and deliberations with stakeholders, including teachers. A redeveloped Senior Cycle will focus on young people's key competencies. A greater level of scaffolding of strands of study and learning outcomes is evident across all specifications and achieved through a combination of an overarching 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.

Revised specifications in Business, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Arabic, Latin, and Ancient Greek (known as the Tranche 1 subjects) are scheduled for introduction for fifth years from the start of the next school year, i.e. school year 2025/26. Two new subjects (1) Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (DFTS), and (2) Climate Action and Sustainable Development (CASD), are scheduled for introduction in a number of selected schools in the 2025/2026 school year.

Final Tranche 1 specifications were approved by the then-Minister and published on curriculumonline.ie in September 2024.

In addition, specification development work related to the Tranches 2 and 3 subjects has been advanced by the NCCA through its structures which include teachers and their unions at all levels. In respect of Tranche 2, consultations on draft specifications concluded in late April and early May 2025.

2.3   Science Implementation Support Grant

In December 2024, details of a new [Science Implementation Support Grant](#) to support schools with the rollout of revised Senior Cycle science subjects were announced.

Under this grant, all schools in the free scheme received additional funding with a minimum base payment of €13,000 up to a maximum of €22,000, with a further 10% uplift in the grant level for DEIS schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). Funding for the Science Implementation Support Grant was allocated based on four bands of student enrolment.

Schools were given the autonomy to use this additional funding in a way that best suits their school and apply it to their locally identified Science needs. It is expected that schools will prioritise the purchase of consumables and related equipment needs. The funding may be used to support the implementation of the new Senior Cycle sciences or more generally to support the broader science programme which may include, for example, Agricultural Science, Transition Year (TY) Science or Junior Cycle Science.

2.4   Phase One schools

Schools introducing CASD will receive grant support in addition to being able to avail of existing frameworks for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and science equipment.

The application process to become a Phase One School concluded in April 2024, and the full list of selected schools is available online [here](#).

Schools introducing Drama, Film and Theatre Studies will receive camera, lighting, audio, computer, and staging equipment in addition to a grant to support attendance at live performances. Procurement processes are being overseen by the SCRPMO.

All Phase One schools will receive an additional teaching allocation of four hours for 2025/26 in accordance with Circulars [0006/025](#), [0007/2025](#) and [0008/2025](#), rising to a total of eight hours in 2026/27.

2.5   Sample assessment materials

[Guidelines to support the completion of Additional Assessment Components (AACs)](#) in the first tranche of new and revised LC subjects were published by the NCCA in December 2024. These guidelines were developed in close cooperation with the SEC and followed engagement with Oide, the Inspectorate and teacher focus groups.

A schedule for the provision of resources, including sample examination papers, sample AACs Briefs and live AAC Briefs for all of the Tranche 1 subjects was outlined by the SEC at the Partners' Forum in May 2024 and communicated to schools in an [Information Note](#) that month.

Four sample [examination papers](#) (two Higher Level, two Ordinary Level) in each of the Tranche 1 subjects were published by the SEC in April 2025. This came to 72 papers, when Irish language versions are included, and represents a much earlier provision of these resources than previous practice when new or revised specifications were introduced.

A sample brief for AACs in each of the Tranche 1 subjects will be available to schools in September 2025, and a live brief for AACs for all Tranche 1 subjects will be issued in January 2026.

2.6 Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

Students are already benefitting from changes introduced in September 2022 providing access to the LCVP Link Modules without meeting the criteria or requirements set out in Circular Letter 0040/2013. An updated LCVP Programme Statement reflecting these changes is available here.

These changes have already had a visible impact, with a significant increase in the number of students participating in the LCVP in recent years. Prior to the changes, during the 2015/16-2021/22 school years, the overall number of students enrolled in the LCVP (across both years of the programme) ranged from approximately 29,000 to 33,000. Since the introduction of these changes in the 2022/23 school year, the number of students enrolled in the LCVP has increased in every year, rising to a high of 49,972 students in the 2024/25 year (across both Years 1 and 2 of the programme).

2.7 Leaving Certificate Applied

Since September 2022, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students have had access to LCE Mathematics and access to an LCE Modern Foreign Language (MFL), subject to their school's timetabling. Students may study LCE Mathematics either in addition to LCA Mathematical Applications or instead of LCA Mathematical Applications. In such cases, students receive an integrated statement of results from the SEC. The first group of such students received integrated results in 2024.

From the start of school year 2025/26, for students entering year one of the LCA programme, the new specification for Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) will replace the current Social Education modules 1 and 4. An updated LCA Programme Statement reflecting these changes for students entering LCA in the 2025/26 school year is available here

2.8 Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

In line with the redevelopment programme's vision of equity and excellence in education, real opportunities to progress and consolidate learning are becoming available for students of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes, similar to those programmes at Junior Cycle. The introduction of Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1/L2LPs) provides enhanced options so that students can follow the Senior Cycle curriculum areas and pathways that are most appropriate to their needs.

The Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes Statement was published in September 2024 and currently two Curriculum Areas and associated modules have been published and are available to schools: Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy. These curriculum areas and associated modules were developed to consolidate, continue and progress students' learning from their Junior Cycle learning experiences.

Additional modules in Personal Care and more electives are in various stages of development. These elective modules are Drama, Literature, Looking After My Environment, My Life, my Finance, and Physical Education (PE). It is intended that these elective modules will be available for introduction in September 2025.

The SEC has taken responsibility for the development and implementation of the accreditation process.

The SCRPMO has established a Level 1 and Level 2 Working Group to ensure successful implementation of the Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes in schools. Membership includes officials from the DOEAY – SCRPMO, the Inspectorate, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Special Education Unit – as well as NCCA, SEC, National Council for Special Education (NCSE), and Oide.

2.9   Transition Year

A new Programme Statement for TY was approved and published in September 2024. The Programme Statement looks to guide schools in developing innovative programmes that facilitate students to explore diverse future pathways, gain first-hand workplace experience, and develop career-related competencies.

In January 2025, the NCCA, in collaboration with Education Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and SOLAS, published the initial vocational education and training (iVET) module. This is a flexible module that gives students the opportunity to engage in interactive programmes and off-site learning through collaboration with industry and Further Education and Training (FET) providers during their TY. The specification is available here.

Schools can also offer students specific micro-modules during TY. A TY micro-module is typically designed to provide a concentrated learning experience, within the parameters of the TYPS, to enhance the educational experience of students. They can be designed and delivered as standalone components or designed to be integrated with other TY components.

TY micro-modules can be developed for a duration of up to 10, 20, or 30 hours, whilst having the flexibility for schools to decide on the most suitable balance of class contact time and self-directed, independent learning. Schools can offer micro-modules that are designed by the NCCA or external providers, and the NCCA offers support to schools that decide to design their own micro-modules.

NCCA has developed a suite of resources to support the implementation of the revised TY Programme Statement.

The resources, supplemented by exemplars, were designed by a team of TY coordinators and are available online here.

2.10 Senior Cycle SPHE

An updated Senior Cycle SPHE specification was approved and published in September 2024. Schools have until September 2027 to introduce the specification for students entering fifth year of the LCE programme, to accommodate the necessary planning and preparatory work. This

includes the development of resources and the provision of training for teachers, as key elements of this work.

2.11 Communications

In response to a demand for clearer communication with all stakeholders in respect of SCR, the Department has increased efforts to ensure widespread awareness across the sector.

The Department has, to date, issued eleven Information Notes for schools. These notes provide regular and timely updates on the roll-out of SCR and are available online [here](#).

The Department has embedded specific SCR branding, ensuring it is easily recognisable to school communities and beyond. This branding fed into an improved dedicated website for SCR, [gov.ie/SeniorCycle](#)

The Department has worked proactively to produce resources and materials for students and parents in respect of the changes under SCR, including podcasts, videos, written guides, school journal text, Instagram posts. The SCRPMO has also provided dedicated workshops to students through the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, has participated in panel discussions focussed on young people and attended outreach events including the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition.

2.11.1 Events

A SCR Conference was held both in [February 2024](#), and February 2025, attended in both cases by the Minister for Education and over 400 delegates. The conferences brought together school principals, deputy principals and key education stakeholders, to discuss the roll-out of the SCR.

The conferences have focussed on providing timely updates to leaders, workshops on specific areas of interest, information sessions and space for networking and dialogue.

An event to launch Phase One Schools took place in September 2024. The event saw an invitation extended to all participating schools, as well as key figures in the climate action sector and the arts, to celebrate two new Senior Cycle subjects.

2.11.2 Circulars

The SCRPMO has published the following circulars to inform the roll-out of SCR:

- Prescribed Material for the LC 2027 and Notification about the removal of restrictions on students studying combinations of Classical Studies, Latin and Ancient Greek (available [here](#))
- Prescribed Material for the LC Drama, Film and Theatre Studies Examination 2027, 2028, 2029 (available [here](#))

2.12 Teacher Professional Learning – Tranche 1 subjects

As of 7 May, ahead of the introduction of the revised Leaving Certificate science subjects and Business in September 2025, 3,390 teachers have attended science cluster days (PLE Day 1), and 3,757 teachers have attended the PLE Day 2 for Biology, Chemistry and Physics. 3,716

teachers have registered to attend Oide Sample Paper Webinars for individual science subjects, with 2,522 having attended to date.

2,217 teachers have attended Business cluster days along with 353 teachers attending Business Collaboratives. 1,831 teachers have registered to attend Oide Business Sample Paper Webinars, with 1,579 having attended to date.

In preparation for the introduction of the new Senior Cycle Climate Action and Sustainable Development (CASD) specification in September 2025, Oide hosted an initial meet and greet in October 2024 with Phase 1 schools. This was followed by a two-day residential Professional Learning Experience (PLE) entitled 'Introducing Climate Action and Sustainable Development' which was further supported by a follow-up webinar which provided further resources to support planning and collaboration among CASD teachers. In term 2, collaboratives and a second PLE took place, which revisited the non-linear, integrated approach across the strands. Combined, these events recorded a total of 478 teacher interactions.

A total of 63 teachers have registered for the Oide Sample Paper Webinar for Climate Action and Sustainable Development, with 73 having attended to date.

In October 2024, a meet and greet was held for Phase 1 schools who are introducing the new Senior Cycle Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (DFTS) specification from September 2025. This introductory session offered an opportunity to build connections, share initial reflections, and establish a sense of community among early adopters. A subsequent live webinar introduced teachers to the aims and rationale of the DFTS specification. A two-day residential PLE entitled 'Collaborate and Create: Activating Learning in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies' followed, supporting teachers to deepen their understanding of the specification, explore its classroom application, and collaborate on ensemble-driven creative work. In term 2, collaborative events and a second PLE event entitled 'Film in Focus' took place. This focused on the three interconnected strands of the subject through the lens of filmmaking. Combined, these events recorded a total of 548 teacher interactions.

A total of 93 teachers have registered for the Oide Sample Paper Webinar for Drama, Film and Theatre Studies, with 52 having attended to date.

2.13 Overview

There is momentum across all elements of the SCR programme. Students are already seeing the benefits of the programme in areas such as expanded participation in LCVP and the introduction of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. With the implementation of Tranche 1 this coming September, further significant numbers of students will see similar benefits, and this will continue to grow annually until roll out of the programme concludes in 2031. Realising SCR requires support. The Department and agencies under its aegis are committed to providing appropriate supports and keeping those supports under active review as the programme evolves.

3 Curriculum and assessment

3.1 Development of subject specifications, sample assessment materials and guidance

Subject specifications, AAC guidelines, sample examination papers, and sample AAC briefs will be made available in the school year prior to the specifications being implemented in schools. In particular, AAC guidelines will be published by the NCCA in the preceding November, with sample examination papers published by the SEC in the April and sample briefs from Tranche 3 onwards to be published by the SEC in the May of the school year preceding the introduction of the specifications to schools. The NCCA has committed to reviewing how to make access to consultation feedback as initially received available to subject development groups, and subject to NCCA Council approval of the processes involved will share such feedback received as part of all new consultations from September 2025.

The Department will continue to work with the NCCA to promote appropriate depth of treatment (as has been established in the sciences and the new subjects) and clarity on student learning in all new specifications, and to provide resourcing guidelines to support AAC implementation as necessary.

The Department will continue to engage regularly with the NCCA on the delivery timelines of Tranches 2-5 and, where considered appropriate and necessary for development and/or implementation reasons, the implementation of individual subjects may be delayed from the current published schedule. This will be done respecting existing structures and processes for specification or module development, noting that consultations on the draft specifications for Tranche 2 conducted by the NCCA have just concluded. It is acknowledged that certain subjects in Tranche 2 may require additional time to facilitate further development and/or implementation work.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
1	Publish AAC Guidelines in each new and revised subject	NCCA	November prior to introduction of specification in schools
2	Publish sample examination papers in each new and revised subject	SEC	April prior to introduction of specification in schools (already published on 9 April 2025 for Tranche 1 subjects)
3	Publish sample AAC briefs for each revised subject in Tranche 1	SEC	Sept 2025

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
4	Publish sample AAC briefs for each revised subject in Tranche 2	SEC	Sept 2026
5	Publish sample AAC briefs for each revised subject in Tranche 3-5	SEC	May prior to introduction of specification in schools
6	Provide resourcing guidelines to support AACs in new and revised subjects as necessary	DOEAY	Ongoing
7	Consider feedback received by NCCA from Tranche 2 draft specification consultation focused on implementation implications including timelines for implementation	DOEAY	May 2025
8	Monitor development and implementation timelines for tranches 2-5 of revised subject specifications	DOEAY	Ongoing

3.2   Additional Assessment Components (AACs)

3.2.1   AAC weighting

Currently, a majority of LCE subjects include additional assessment components (AACs) outside of written examinations. Of the 28 subjects that currently have such non-examination components, 18 have a weighting of 40% or greater, of which 12 have a weighting of 50% or greater. The appropriateness of the allocation of 40% of available marks in LCE subjects to AACs in new and revised subject specifications will be a specific area of focus in programme evaluation including early rapid reviews. It is agreed that unions will have the opportunity to actively contribute to these reviews.

Where current coursework or other component (the current equivalent of AACs) is above 40% (including on a combined basis where there is more than one such component currently) there is no policy to reduce this to 40%, and the appropriate weighting may still be informed by specific proposals made by a relevant subject development group and considered by the Department as appropriate (in line with procedures developed and applied to Tranches 2 and 3). This has already been demonstrated in the Tranche 3 and draft Tranche 4 assessment parameters documents, e.g. Art, Music. Equally, it is anticipated that in language subjects which currently have an oral and aural element, these elements will be retained in formats developed by the relevant subject development groups initially.

Within Tranches 1 and 2 as further examples, DFTS, Arabic, Construction Studies, Engineering, PE and the redeveloped LCVP Link Modules have AAC weightings above 40%.

3.2.2   Student/subject enrolment data

The Department also commits to monitoring (from 2025 onwards), via Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) enrolment data, uptake in redeveloped subjects and the numbers of LC

examination candidates (see also section 3.3 on subject choice below). This analysis will commence with monitoring of uptake in relation to the Tranche 1 subjects and will be continued for subjects in subsequent tranches. This analysis will be shared with the teacher unions.

3.2.3 Authentication

Regarding authentication of AACs, the SEC is reviewing current authentication protocols with a view to amending or clarifying further. The Guidelines to support the completion of AACs for the Tranche 1 subjects published in December 2024 refer to elements of how authentication may operate in practice. For example, references are made in the science specific guidelines that there are six envisaged stages to complete an AAC with scope at various stages for teachers to satisfy themselves as to the work being undertaken by the student, including the maintenance of an investigative log.

Given the very serious concern expressed by the teacher unions that inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence AI has the potential to undermine the reliability and integrity of particular assessment components, the SEC, in collaboration with the Department where appropriate, and in consultation with the unions, will lead a process to further clarify and communicate the respective responsibilities of principals, teachers and candidates with regard to authentication of AACs and, in particular, to set out clearly the professional protections and parameters that apply. Recognising that the normal level of protections would apply in a situation such as this, where teachers are carrying out activities on behalf of a public body, this process will incorporate a re-examination of current SEC guidance on the use of AI in assessment components in State Examinations.

3.2.4 SEC portal upgrade

The SEC is committed to enhancing the functioning of the portal used to upload or receive materials. Dedicated funding has been allocated by the Department in 2025 for this purpose. The redevelopment of the Schools' Portal is at an initial redevelopment stage involving a process of analysis to scope requirements so that the portal continues to be fit for purpose and can cope with significant additional traffic that will result from the introduction of AACs in 8 subjects from the 2026/2027 school year. The SEC is committed to ensuring it provides the best possible service to teachers and school authorities when uploading coursework. In this regard, the SEC will be taking into consideration the valuable feedback gleaned through the recent Schools' Portal survey which had responses from 420 schools, including feedback provided by the teacher unions from within its membership.

3.2.5 Coursework through Irish

To reinforce the value of AACs under SCR, and the importance of the Irish language, the Department in conjunction with the SEC has given consideration to the current scheme for the award of Irish Bonus Marks for completing a subject through Irish and it has been agreed that it will be extended to apply to AACs with a significant writing demand that have the capacity to be carried out through Irish. There are significant policy and operational matters to determine prior to providing details of how such arrangement will be applied in respect of the AACs associated with relevant subjects commencing with those in Tranche 1 (in respect of LC 2027). Relevant information and an outline of the parameters that will be applied in this regard will be communicated by the end of May 2025. These parameters will include restrictions on which subjects will benefit from such Irish Bonus Marks and also that only students who undertake the written examination in those subjects may benefit from the Irish Bonus Marks available for the AAC in that subject.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
9	Include consideration of appropriateness of 40% of available marks in LCE subjects to AACs in programme evaluation and early rapid reviews	DOEAY	Ongoing
10	Clarify school, teacher, principal and candidate responsibilities with regard to authentication of AACs	SEC	Q3 2025
11	Enhance SEC portal for online submission of assessment materials	SEC	Ongoing
12	Clarify policy position and parameters to apply to the allocation of Irish Bonus Marks for completing a subject through Irish in the context of AACs	DOEAY / SEC	May 2025

3.3   Subject choice

The Department has undertaken significant analysis on the uptake of subjects and programmes in the course of preliminary subject choice work.

The Department will conduct annual research using PPOD and SEC data to track uptake of all LC subjects over the next 5 years. Any emerging patterns or trends will be examined further and appropriate potential action identified. This analysis will commence with monitoring of uptake in relation to all Tranche 1 subjects, including in particular the three science subjects, and will be continued for subjects in subsequent tranches.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
13	Monitor trends in enrolment in new and revised subjects	DOEAY	Q4 2030 (commencing in Autumn 2025)

3.4   Early rapid reviews

The Department is committed to early rapid reviews of new and revised subjects, beginning with the current Tranche 1 specifications and continuing with all specifications in subsequent tranches following the completion of the first 2-year cycle in those subjects.

These reviews will include a time audit of each subject and a review of curriculum and assessment aspects to each specification, including the allocation of a minimum of 40% of available marks to AACs. The involvement of currently practising teachers, including teachers nominated by teachers' unions, in such time audits will be ensured. Following the completion of

each review, due consideration will be given to any appropriate amendments to be made to the specification or assessment arrangements.

Such reviews can be complementary to the evaluation discussed in section 6.10.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
14	Complete early rapid reviews for all Tranche 1 subjects	DOEAY/NCCA	Q2 2028
15	Complete early rapid reviews for all Tranche 2 subjects	DOEAY/NCCA	Q2 2029
16	Complete early rapid reviews for all Tranche 3 subjects	DOEAY/NCCA	Q2 2030
17	Complete early rapid reviews for all Tranche 4 subjects	DOEAY/NCCA	Q2 2031
18	Complete early rapid reviews for all Tranche 5 subjects	DOEAY/NCCA	Q2 2032

3.5   Continuity with Junior Cycle

The NCCA Council is currently considering the final report of the University of Limerick (UL) longitudinal study on the Framework for Junior Cycle to determine what updates to the Framework for Junior Cycle might be needed to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment. The redevelopment of Senior Cycle will feed into and inform such discussion and deliberation.

On 21 April 2025, the Minister for Education and Youth wrote to the NCCA noting that the conclusion of this research provides a significant opportunity to recognise the benefits gained from curricular reform, as well as to address challenges that remain so as to support continued improvement.

In her letter, the Minister highlighted a number of specific issues that she has asked the NCCA Council to bear in mind in its consideration of the report. In particular, the Minister emphasised the need for alignment between Junior Cycle and a redeveloped Senior Cycle, and the importance of giving holistic consideration to the post-primary experience, in support of student engagement, learning and experience. The Minister also emphasised that she wanted to ensure that Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) are experienced as intended in all cases, that the potential benefits of alignment with AACs is realised and that where cross-curricular working would enhance learning this is considered. The Minister also acknowledged that logistical considerations may arise in relation to both the CBAs and the ATs and that it was, therefore, essential that the move to steady state be informed and shaped by relevant findings emerging from the UL study. The Minister expressed her view that, where the findings of this important research indicate action is needed, she wanted to see that happen as quickly as possible, so that there is continuous improvement in the Junior Cycle experience.

The NCCA has been asked to send the Minister the final UL report following the NCCA Council's consideration of it in May 2025. It is anticipated that, on receipt of the report, the Department will ask the NCCA, as a matter of priority, to examine and promote curricular coherence through, for example, maximising opportunities for alignment, where appropriate, between Junior Cycle CBAs and the LC AACs when they are being designed.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
19	Develop proposals to foster alignment between Junior Cycle and a Redeveloped Senior Cycle through holistic consideration of the post-primary experience, in curriculum development.	NCCA	Ongoing

3.6 Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The LCVP Statement was updated to make the Link Modules available to all students with effect from September 2022. LCVP uptake has risen very significantly since then both in terms of participation generally and the number of results issued by the SEC in 2024 (when compared to earlier years). This increased level of uptake demonstrates the value of the Link Modules as perceived by students and schools and the Department will maintain the current LCVP supports available to schools, including as appropriate the maintenance of a co-ordinator post (i.e., school supports currently provided in respect of LCVP are unaffected by the curriculum redevelopment). The Department will also ensure that the value of the programme is maintained.

The LCVP Modules are currently being redeveloped as part of Tranche 2 and renamed draft Modules have been the subject of recently concluded public consultation.

The parties will work to promote the link modules and student uptake.

The Department will engage with DFHERIS to ensure that the Central Applications Office (CAO) points awarded for the current Link Modules are maintained.

The Department will monitor levels of Link Modules uptake and provide information to the Further and Higher Education sector about the redeveloped modules.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
20	Promote redeveloped LCVP link modules and student uptake	All	Ongoing
21	Monitor levels of Link Modules uptake	DOEAY	Ongoing
22	Provide information on redeveloped LCVP Modules to Further and Higher Education sector	DOEAY	Q4 2024

3.7   Transition Year

The revised Transition Year Programme Statement (TYPS) was approved in 2024, and schools have been using the 2024/25 school year to audit their current TY Programmes ahead of full implementation of the revised Programme Statement in the 2025/26 school year.

As noted in the Programme Statement, TY offers time, space and autonomy to create enjoyable and meaningful educational experiences that support students in Senior Cycle. It can be a bridge to opening up a broader range of possibilities and pathways. As project work and research begin to take on an increased role in other Senior Cycle programmes, TY offers a valuable opportunity for students to build on their Junior Cycle experiences and develop relevant competencies in these areas. The Department will ask the NCCA to Develop a Research Methods and Ethics module to be made available for schools for inclusion in their TY programmes.

Aligning with the parameters of the new Programme Statement, and in line with the goal of supporting increased awareness of the diverse pathways available to students within and beyond Senior Cycle, the NCCA has developed an Initial Vocational Education and Training (iVET) module for TY, which is available to schools for introduction in the 2025/26 school year.

Responding to a request from the then-Minister for Education, the Road Safety Authority has developed an updated module for TY, Road Safety Matters. This module has seen high levels of interest from schools in the first phase of its introduction, and it will become available to schools more widely in the 2025/26 school year.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
23	Develop a Research Methods and Ethics module for TY	NCCA	Q1 2026
24	Hold an event for TY coordinators and school leaders to share exemplars of TY modules and practices	DOEAY	October 2025
25	Introduce an iVET module for TY	DOEAY	September 2025
26	Expand availability of the Road Safety Matters TY module	RSA	September 2025

4 Professional learning and support

The provision of high-quality Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) is essential to successfully realising SCR.

The Department will maintain an ongoing commitment to, and funding of, appropriate professional learning through Oide. The current TPL model will be kept under review, and teacher and school leaders' feedback, including teacher union feedback, will help to shape the future of the TPL programme based on their identified needs, for example in respect of the use of AI in teaching and learning. There will be an emphasis on opportunities for professional collaboration.

The current plan for an initial 4-year TPL programme which begins in the year before the specifications are introduced in schools will be continued. This model of delivery will be kept under review and adapted as necessary.

The TPL programme plan for the 2025/26 school year will include a science in-person day in the first term of the 2025/26 school year with a focus on assessment. Oide will consult with and engage with the SEC in the preparation of the relevant PLE.

The SEC will release sample examination papers (including supporting or associated materials where relevant, e.g. sample audio files) in April and TPL will be provided immediately thereafter in the school year in advance of the specifications being implemented in schools.

Subject specifications, AAC guidelines, sample examination papers, and sample AAC briefs will be made available in the school year prior to the specifications going live in schools. In particular, AAC guidelines will be published by the NCCA in the preceding November, with sample examination papers published by the SEC in the April and sample briefs from Tranche 3 onwards to be published by the SEC in the May of the school year preceding the introduction of the specifications to schools.

Oide will provide an appropriate SCR professional learning programme to school leaders to support the areas identified by teachers' unions, namely planning, resources, and timetabling, as well as teaching, learning and assessment practices. This professional learning will be the subject of consultation with the teacher unions and management bodies and will build on the provision already in place through Oide.

4.1 Teacher professional learning – Framework context and specific Tranche 1, 2024/25 and 2025/26 provision

TPL Frameworks were developed for Tranche 1 subjects and programmes. These frameworks outline the suite of supports teachers will receive through their initial four-year engagement in professional learning provided by Oide. The frameworks are aligned with the vision and goals of a redeveloped Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2022).

The frameworks are developed in collaboration with the Inspectorate, the NCCA, the SEC, relevant sections of the DOEAY, and other stakeholders. They are grounded in the principles of providing high-quality, coherent, and sustained professional learning for teachers throughout the implementation of the new Senior Cycle specifications and programmes. Each framework outlines a range of professional learning experiences, such as full-day PLEs, collaborative

events, workshops, and webinars, facilitated for teachers and school leaders over a four-year period, commencing in Autumn 2024 for Tranche 1 subjects and programmes.

Teachers of subjects not included in the initial tranches will be supported through professional learning experiences at a level that is commensurate with Tranche 1 subjects, including subject-specific specialist training (for example, for software packages) if required.

The frameworks comprise both core and elective PLEs. There is a comprehensive design and review process for every element of each framework.

For each core professional learning event, a design review day is held with participation from the SEC, NCCA, NCSE, the Inspectorate, and teachers to ensure representation of teacher voice. Through design review days, framework development meetings, sample paper design sessions, and the development of elective supports, Oide will maintain continuous engagement and collaboration with stakeholders including the teacher unions to ensure the relevance and quality of professional learning for teachers and school leaders.

Whole-school programme support days are being provided alongside subject-specific professional learning experiences, with a view to enabling the key messages of Senior Cycle redevelopment to permeate the entire school community. This day provides an opportunity for school leaders and teachers to work collaboratively to plan for curriculum change and to engage in dialogue around school self-evaluation.

This integrated approach will support school leaders and teachers in fostering a cohesive, school-wide vision for learning that aligns with the evolving goals of Senior Cycle education.

In parallel, Oide will be providing a comprehensive range of professional learning experiences in leadership to support the implementation of SCR. These supports will be delivered through in-person, blended, and online formats, ensuring accessibility and flexibility for school leaders. Through this targeted support, Oide aims to empower school leaders to lead change confidently and strategically within their school communities.

5 Professional capacity

In regard to this section and section 6, where applicable, the measures directly related to teachers and their conditions of employment shall apply only to those teachers who become parties to this collective agreement. The measures outlined in this document have been informed by extensive engagement and negotiation between the Department and the ASTI and TUI.

5.1 Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 – local bargaining and the use of the 3%

In tandem with the commitments already set out in the [Public Service Agreement 2024-2026 (PSA)](#) regarding co-operating fully with the implementation of the SCR programme, it is agreed that the specific measures set out in this proposal to support the implementation of SCR satisfy in full the requirements of the local bargaining process. These measures will ultimately be agreed as part of the local bargaining process and are subject to approval by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

These measures **will comprise in totality** that teachers will:

- Co-operate fully with the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme including the enactment of new or revised specifications and associated assessment arrangements as required in line with timelines determined by the Minister.
- Implement AACs in line with the subject specifications including supporting the conduct, operation, implementation and completion of AACs in line with those subject specifications and subject specific AAC briefs and instructions. This includes full co-operation with arrangements for the oversight and authentication of the completion of coursework. This also includes preparing for AACs, such as preparatory work and room set up. It also includes the submission of AACs in formats and in line with processes determined by the SEC or others as appropriate. AAC preparatory work and the arrangements for the submission of AACs to the SEC should not erode class contact time.
- Co-operate with the expansion of Senior Cycle programme offerings in schools, including flexibility and revisions to timetabling to facilitate the introduction of Senior Cycle SPHE, enhanced utilisation of practical rooms and the expansion of TY provision in schools.
- Co-operate with school authorities in the application of timetabling models that have full regard to contractual obligations and associated collective agreements in relation to class contact time and that ensure students receive twenty-eight hours of tuition time based on the operation of timetables with minimum 40-minute class duration; including where this involves the realignment of currently operated timetables.
- Continue to co-operate with the operation of language oral components outside of tuition time, so as to protect student tuition time.

5.2 Workload

The teacher unions have raised strong concerns in relation to workload. A dedicated working group will be established comprising the Department, teacher unions, management bodies and other relevant agencies to identify the approach and mitigating measures needed to address the concerns expressed by teachers. The working group will be established in Q3 of 2025 and will

examine, in particular, the increased demands that various initiatives to be set out have on teacher (including principal teacher) workload and on school organisation and culture.

At its initial meeting in Q3 2025, Terms of Reference will be agreed between the parties that clearly set out:

- The scope of the Group
- Frequency of meetings
- Reporting structure

In addition, an analysis of student uptake of each subject across schools will be undertaken to identify trends in subjects and to examine associated school and class sizes. This analysis will also look at class size in all subjects (see section 5.4 on teacher supply and time allocation below).

Other possibilities including a reduction in the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) will be explored, initially in the context of plans to develop a DEIS plus programme, when the downward demographics begin to take effect at post-primary level.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
27	Establish Workload Working Group (WWG)	DOEAY	Q3 2025
28	Agree Workload Working Group's Terms of Reference	WWG	Q3 2025
29	Complete analysis of student uptake of LCE subjects	DOEAY	Ongoing
30	Explore possible opportunities for reduction in PTR as part of DEIS plus	DOEAY	Ongoing
31	Consider possible opportunities for enhanced allocation of deputy principal posts at post-primary as part of the development of a DEIS plus programme	DOEAY	Ongoing

5.3   Targeted (additional) teacher allocations

Enhancing student choice and access to varied subject and programme options is a shared objective.

The very significant expansion in **Transition Year** participation in recent years is very welcome and is primarily attributable to efforts at school level to either choose to offer the programme where it had not previously been offered or to expand the number of places available. This expansion has seen the number of schools offering the programme reach practically 100% of schools (acknowledging that in some particularly small schools' local demographics may mean that there are insufficient numbers in a given year to run a viable programme). There is, however, a broad range in participation levels as between individual schools.

In some instances, students may not be in a position to avail of a TY place due to constraints at a school level. The Department's analysis to date, including the survey responses received at the end of 2024 from all schools is focused on achieving a deeper understanding of the complexity involved and what measures are required to address those issues at school level. The measures necessary are not likely to be uniform in nature nor are they likely to be all amenable to implementation in the short term particularly where capital investment may be required. However, the Department is determined to work with schools incrementally to realise universal access.

Therefore, the Department will bring forward proposals in this regard in Autumn of 2025, which will include the provision of additional allocations to schools in certain, specified circumstances and the development of a scheme by which schools can apply for such additional allocations.

Enhancing student choice by way of **subject choice for Senior Cycle** is also a shared objective. Noting the successful introduction of three recently introduced subjects and in anticipation of the introduction of two further new subjects from school year 2025/26, the Department has already conducted an initial analysis of subject offerings across all schools based on PPOD data.

Accordingly, the Department will engage with the Post-Primary Implementation Group (see section 6.9 below) and other stakeholders in order to develop a scheme for the implementation of any additional teaching allocations in specific or targeted circumstances starting with the expansion of TY participation, subject to the availability of resources.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
32	Convene focus groups with school leaders, teachers, including teacher unions, and students to understand barriers to universal access to TY	DOEAY	Q3 2025
33	Bring forward proposals to realise universal access to TY	DOEAY	Q3 2025
34	Develop scheme for targeted additional allocations to support expanded participation in TY	DOEAY	Q3 2025 and ongoing

5.4   Teacher supply

5.4.1   Permanent contracts (Contracts of indefinite duration)

There are current arrangements through which teachers may obtain contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) or permanent contracts as set out in Circulars CL24/2015, CL59/2016 and CL49/2017. The teachers' unions have made a case to revise the arrangements in respect of the qualifying period for obtaining a Contract of Indefinite Duration or permanent contract whilst not superseding existing collective agreements.

The Minister, taking account of the case put forward by the unions and the views of the employers (i.e., the management bodies), has announced on 21 April 2025 that teachers taking up their first contract in a viable teaching post in September 2025, will become eligible for a

permanent contract in September 2026. This eligibility is contingent upon successful re-appointment following a competitive recruitment process. Such engagement with the teacher unions and the management bodies as may be necessary, will take place to implement the arrangements giving effect to the Minister's announcement of the 21 April 2025, with those arrangements to be published by the Department in the form of a circular letter. The Department recognises the importance of publishing these arrangements in a timely manner and in advance of the commencement of the 2025/26 school year.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
35	Commence engagement with the Education Partners to confirm the necessary arrangements for giving effect to the Minister's announcement of the 21 April. Arrangements be published by the Department in the form of a circular letter.	DOEAY	Q3 2025

5.4.2 Incremental credit

In regard to the application of incremental credit (for certain teaching experience accrued abroad), the Department will continue to consider the proposals made by the unions in the Teachers' Conciliation Council (TCC).

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
36	Department to continue to examine proposals made by the Unions in the TCC.	DOEAY	Ongoing

5.4.3 Postgraduate Masters in Education

While the Department does not currently propose reduction of the Postgraduate Masters in Education (PME) to one year as proposed by the teacher unions, it will, as part of a broader workforce development process, give further consideration to the appropriate configuration and structure of the PME (in particular its second year) and other entry routes into the profession.

5.5   Work-life balance – right to disconnect

Acknowledging the Workplace Relations Commission's Code of Practice, the Department agrees promptly to commence to work collaboratively with education partners to give practical expression to the right to disconnect and in this regard to publish a policy and guidelines for school leaders. Therefore, the Department commits to establishing a working group in Q4 2025 to consider the current legislation, any relevant directives, national and international best

practices and scope of the guidance to be provided. The outcomes, of the working group, including the draft policy and guidelines, will be submitted to the TCC.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
37	Establish Work-Life Balance Working Group (WLBWG)	DOEAY	Q4 2025
38	Agree WLBWG's Terms of Reference	WLBWG	Q4 2025
39	Submit WLBWG report/outcomes to TCC	TCC	Q2 2026

5.6   Croke Park hours (Whole-school hours)

It is acknowledged that the successful realisation of SCR requires significant engagement from teachers.

The Department acknowledges the joint proposal received from the two post-primary teacher unions on 16 April setting out a possible temporary interim measure to optimise the use of the quantum of hours other than those reserved for whole school activities.

Where a Union accepts the terms of this agreement there will be a rebalancing of the whole-school hours, by allocating 19 hours for whole-school commitments (e.g. school planning days, open night, etc) and 14 hours for teacher led activities to be carried out on a non-whole school, high trust basis. This interim arrangement will apply for an initial period of 3 years and will, following a review, be extendable for a further 2 years at the discretion of the Department. Where the rebalancing of whole school hours will not be applicable by virtue of non-acceptance by a Union of this agreement in regard to the teachers represented by that Union, the review before the TCC will continue and current configurations of the Croke Hours shall continue to apply to members of that union.

The interim configuration arrangements set out in this agreement do not pre-empt longer term configurations that may be agreed upon the conclusion of the review of Croke Park hours (CPH) currently underway under the auspices of the TCC.

The 14 hours of teacher-led activities can include, but not be limited to, time to directly support the implementation of SCR. These hours will be used on a non-whole school, high trust basis. The hours will be pro-rata for part-time teachers. This time will include collaborative activities and co-operation amongst teachers and will be used, amongst other things, to support:

- Participation in additional Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/ Teacher Professional Learning (TPL), including that related to SCR.
- Subject department planning and curriculum design
- Development of new learning resources
- Work related to embedding formative assessment practices

Without prejudice to the ongoing review of CPH (at the TCC), this interim measure involving the reconfiguration of CPH shall apply from the commencement of the 2025/26 school year.

This interim measure is non-prejudicial to the existing TCC review of the usage of Croke Park Hours and any resulting permanent structure which may be agreed through that review.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
40	Confirm and communicate detail of interim arrangement to all schools in respect of whom the relevant union(s) has approved this agreement	DOEAY	Q3 2025

6 System capacity and programme supports

In regard to this section and section 5, where applicable, the measures directly related to teachers and their conditions of employment shall apply only to those teachers who become parties to this collective agreement. The measures outlined in this document have been informed by extensive engagement and negotiation between the Department and the ASTI and TUI.

6.1 Class size and class contact hours

A number of the proposals submitted by the teachers' unions involve reducing class sizes and class contact. Their implementation would give rise to an increase in the number of teaching posts required across the system and significant additional costs.

For example, reducing the contact time in Junior Cycle by 40 minutes required the commitment of approximately 800 additional posts. A reduction in contact time as proposed by the unions would require very significant additional allocations, given the growth in the post-primary student population since then.

In order to further consider these proposals, the Department will conduct an analysis of student uptake of each subject across schools and available school timetable data to identify trends in class sizes and any particular trends indicating larger class sizes by optional subject in particular schools.

As part of on-going consideration of teacher supply issues, the Department will also examine these possibilities where downward demographic trends begin to evidence a relieving of teacher supply challenges and how available teachers could be utilised to maximise student subject choice.

Noting the existing challenges around teacher supply and the considerable cost implications of a reduction in the post-primary pupil-teacher ratio, the Department believes that any measures in this regard must be carefully considered and are unlikely to be achievable across all schools in the post-primary sector in the short-term

Seeking to identify potential supports for students at greatest risk of educational disadvantage attending non-DEIS schools will also form part of considerations regarding a related educational disadvantage plan to be developed.

In relation to proposals for additional time allocation to address various initiatives and taking into account the views of other stakeholders who have from time-to-time expressed concerns regarding "initiative overload", the Department will establish a working party comprised of representatives of the Department, relevant agencies, teachers' unions and the management bodies (see section 5.2 Workload above). This working group will be tasked with considering the concerns raised and identifying approaches to address same.

6.2 Posts of responsibility and staffing

Recognising the importance of supporting the implementation of SCR at a leadership level in schools, the Department agrees with the proposal for the provision of an additional post of

responsibility at Assistant Principal 1 or 2 (AP1 or AP2) level, informed by school enrolment numbers.

This leadership support role will be distinct from any Special Educational Needs (SEN) and ICT roles discussed below. This post will be implemented across all schools from the commencement of the 2026/27 school year and will include timetable alleviation at an appropriate level.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
41	Confirm details of additional post of responsibility	DOEAY	Q3 2025

6.3   Special educational needs

Significant progress continues to be made in regard to provision for students with special educational needs students including the expansion of the number of special classes in mainstream post-primary schools in particular. Also, the introduction of Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning programmes is particularly welcome including how those programmes will be certified. It is also recognised that the development of the requisite system capacity to make further progress represents an ongoing challenge. Ensuring schools receive the optimum supports to deliver these enhanced levels of provision is a priority for the Department

The Department recognises that post primary schools require significant time for coordination, planning, tracking, consultation, communication, and reporting regarding students with special educational needs.

As part of Budget 2025, additional ring-fenced hours will be provided to post-primary schools from the 2025/26 school year to support coordination of special education provision.

In addition to these ring-fenced coordination hours (see above) and in order to assist schools to continue and enhance their support of students with special educational needs, the Department considers the establishment of a dedicated Post of Responsibility in schools which offer L1/L2LPs and meet certain eligibility criteria is warranted. This post would have responsibility, inter alia, for L1 and L2 Programmes with effect from 1 September 2026 and planning for relevant student transitions subsequent to school completion.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
42	Define the parameters applicable to POR relating to L1/L2 programme implementation	DOEAY	Q3 2025

6.4 Digital facilities

The Department will engage further with teacher unions and other stakeholders to understand the proposal for a dedicated post to be established in each school for IT/ICT to assist with contract management, liaison with suppliers and maintenance contractors, oversight of IT provision capability, administration of support grant and general supervision of equipment and use, identification of CPD needs. Such further consideration could also include reflection on the experience in other jurisdictions where an IT Coordinator role also facilitates or recommends professional development, peer to peer learning and other responsibilities.

With regard to proposals for a dedicated IT/ICT administrative support role in schools, the Department believes that further consideration is necessary to define the most appropriate model through which this support could be provided.

With regard to IT facilities required for the implementation of SCR, ongoing discussions are taking place between the DOEAY and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform regarding the National Development Plan (NDP), including funding commitments to the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027.

6.5 Artificial intelligence

In Q3 2025, the Department will establish a task force to examine the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching, learning and assessment relevant to SCR.

The composition of the task force will be subject to further consideration, but will include representatives of the Department, teachers' unions, management bodies, Oide, the SEC and the NCCA. This task force will be empowered to make recommendations to the Post-Primary Teachers Implementation Group. Where such recommendations have industrial relations implications, they will be considered at the TCC.

At its initial meeting in Q3 2025, Terms of Reference will be agreed between the parties that clearly set out:

- The scope of the Group
- Frequency of meetings
- Reporting structure

The task force will focus on the appropriate and ethical use of AI in education, especially in relation to SCR (inclusive of pedagogy, assessment and administration).

The initial work of the task force, which will focus on SCR, will be conducted in accordance with a defined timeline.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
43	Establish task force to examine the appropriate use of AI in teaching, learning and assessment relevant to SCR	DOEAY	Q3 2025

6.6 Science laboratories

Ensuring that appropriate supports for the enactment of revised specifications are available is a shared objective. Work has commenced within the Department to identify potential acute needs as regards laboratory facilities.

The upgrade of laboratory facilities is a dedicated and specific works category within the Department's summer works scheme. The Department has recently announced the opening of applications for the summer works scheme (which now has a strong climate dimension) and this enables individual post-primary schools to prioritise the refurbishment of their science lab facilities as their project for delivery under this multi-annual scheme. The closing date for applications is 30 June 2025. The first tranche of projects to be approved under this multi-annual scheme are due to be notified to schools in Q4 2025. While there are many categories of works to be assessed and approved over the lifespan of this multi-annual scheme, the Department will be particularly conscious of the importance of the progression and approval of science lab facilities in the early tranches of this multi-annual scheme.

The above-mentioned work underway to identify potential acute needs as regards laboratory facilities will be progressed as a matter of urgency and could allow the schools most in need of improved facilities in this regard to be prioritised. Such funding could be used for retrofitting existing rooms or modular additions to schools.

6.7 Supports for introduction of new Tranche 1 subjects

All selected Phase One Schools will shortly receive a communication outlining the specific package of supports being provided to support the introduction of the two new Leaving certificate subjects.

The communication will detail that:

- A single supplier framework is being established to directly provide Phase One schools in the free education scheme with the technical resources (cameras, lenses, tripods, audio equipment, lighting, staging etc.) for Phase One schools offering Drama, Film, and Theatre Studies. This process will realise the Minister's commitment to equip schools with the equipment needed to fully support the ambitions of the new curricula.
- The Department is also contracting an Irish supplier to provide a streaming media service allowing Phase One schools access to prescribed material and resources to support the new LC Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification from August 2025.
- Phase One schools introducing LC CASD in September 2025 will receive a once-off establishment grant of €5,000 to establish the subject Department in their school.

As notified in the Information Booklet provided at the time of the Call for Applications, the Department is providing Phase One schools (DFTS & CASD) with a temporary additional allocation of 0.2 WTE teacher per school in the 2025/26 school year to allow for backfilling of a post. The allocation is not dependent on the size of a class group. This allocation is confirmed in Circulars 0006/2025, 0007/2025 and 0008/2025..

All Phase One schools in the free education scheme will be provided with an annual DFTS/CASD Implementation Support grant of €50 per student to support engagement with the new subject in the 2025/26 school year. There will be no application process. Instead, the data provided by schools in the October returns will be analysed to assess the appropriate grant. The grant will be paid directly to schools at the start of December 2025.

Extension of appropriate supports to schools in later phases will be considered further in 2026 by the Department, having regard to issues of equity.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
44	All Phase One Schools introducing DFTS receive film production, audio and film lighting equipment	SCRPMO	15/09/2025
45	All Phase One Schools introducing CASD receive once-off €5,000 Establishment Grant	SCRPMO	15/09/2025
46	All Phase One Schools receive €50 per student annual implementation support grant	SCRPMO	10/09/2025

6.8   Supports for introduction of revised subjects

Subject specific supports are to be provided annually to facilitate the enactment of, and participation in, the new subjects of DFTS and CASD as per section 6.7 above.

In addition to the Science Implementation Support Grant paid to schools in December 2024 and the ongoing annual grant paid per student undertaking Physics and Chemistry; the Department has considered the potential for further science subject specific supports.

The Physics and Chemistry Grant has remained at essentially the same level for many years. The grant was IR£10 in 2001 and by 2006 it was €12.70, rising to €13 in 2010, and has remained at this level ever since. The grant is paid per student and per subject in both Leaving Certificate years. The grant applies to Physics, Chemistry and the combined LC Physics and Chemistry (PhysChem) subjects. The grant is not currently paid for LC Biology or LC Agricultural Science.

The Department now proposes that (i) the scope of the grant be extended to include Biology and Agricultural Science in addition to the existing three qualifying subjects and (ii) that the amount of grant be increased to €25 per student per (qualifying) subject. The overall cost of this increased grant, based on 2024/25 enrolment figures, would be approximately €3m, representing an increase of just under €2.6m on the overall cost of the current grant.

In subsequent tranches, similar consideration can be given to the identification or provision of appropriate supports, subject to the availability of financial allocation, to those subjects being implemented on a redeveloped basis. Guidance as to appropriate supports, resources, equipment and consumables will be provided as needed.

Following the approval of the specifications for the 9 new and revised subjects in Tranche 1, specification documents were published in digital form on curriculumonline.ie. In the interest of ensuring that teachers are properly prepared and have the correct versions of relevant documents available to them, the Department will provide teachers with hard copies of relevant materials. For Tranche 1 subjects, these hard copies will be provided in advance of the commencement of teaching in schools. For subsequent tranches, they will be provided following the formal approval of subject specifications and prior to the commencement of TPL.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
47	Confirm revised science subject-specific grant arrangements	DOEAY	Q2 2025
48	Provide physical copies of Tranche 1 specifications to subject teachers (via their schools)	DOEAY	Q3 2025

6.9 Post-Primary Implementation Group

It is proposed to merge the current Junior Cycle Implementation Group into a new Post-Primary Implementation Group, which will comprise the Department and teachers' unions. Other key agencies/services will attend meetings to support the work of the group as needed. The group will be focussed on matters impacting teachers, including school leaders, relating to curriculum and assessment enactment at Junior and Senior Cycle and will deal with both JC and SCR implementation matters in a timely and responsive manner. The merged Group will be established by Q4 2025.

At its initial meeting in Q4 2025, Terms of Reference will be agreed between the parties that clearly set out:

- Chair and membership
- The scope of the Group's remit
- Frequency of meetings
- Reporting structure
- Development of an agreed work programme with target dates for specified actions

The current SCR Partners' Forum and the SCR Implementation Group (comprising the Department, NCCA, SEC and Oide) will continue.

Action #	Description	Owner	Completion Date
49	Reconfigure Junior Cycle Implementation Group and establish Post-primary Implementation Group	DOEAY	Q4 2025

6.10 Evaluation

External evaluation by inspectors complements the continuing efforts of teachers, schools and centres for education to review and improve their own work. The work of the inspectorate will provide an important opportunity for feedback to inform future decision-making and approaches for schools, the Department and key agencies.

The Inspectorate must fulfil its statutory and accountability functions and maximise support to schools during this important period of curricular reform. As such, while the Inspectorate will continue to carry out evaluative inspections during the months of May and December, it will also consider how best to plan for the most appropriate and beneficial engagements to support SCR and school improvement.

Appendix 1: List of meetings

From December 2024, the Department met with both unions to discuss SCR on 8 occasions to 8 April, the date of the Minister's letter confirming that the programme would proceed on schedule:

- 11 December 2024
- 15 January 2025
- 29 January 2025
- 12 February 2025
- 24 February 2025
- 10 March 2025
- 24 March 2025
- 8 April 2025

As committed to by the Minister in her letter, since 8 April officials have engaged with the unions to identify how schools can be supported in implementing SCR. This has included an intensified schedule of meetings as follows:

- 10 April 2025
- 15 April 2025
- 16 April 2025
- 17 April 2025
- 28 April 2025
- 6 May 2025

All meetings were attended by officials from the Department and representatives of the TUI and ASTI, with officials from the SEC and Oide joining selected meetings.

The Minister and officials also attended the respective Union Annual Convention\Congress on 22 and 23 April. In line with normal practice, the Minister spoke at both events and part of both speeches focused on SCR.

Appendix 2: Questions submitted by unions

Questions submitted by TUI

Oide Questions (TUI)

1. What resources will be made available for schools to successfully implement SCR?
2. The Senior Cycle Redevelopment involves LCA, LCVP and TY what does that mean for my school that offers all the programmes.
3. Is science at JC going to be redeveloped for the new SCR science subjects?
4. Do CBAs need to be looked at in the context of AACs especially in science?
5. Will there be any time alleviation given to teachers, who are already overworked and overburden, to help introduce SCR?
6. It takes an inordinate amount of time to get to grips with the new Physics specification, and I have not even started developing resources, or taught it to a class yet. What additional information and help will be made available this year and next year
7. My calls sizes are too big to use the IT provision in the school at the same time will there be any updating of IT equipment and improved access in our school.
8. We do not have enough Laboratory time for all the Leaving Certificate and Junior Science subjects we offer in our school. How will we deal with the issues about access?
9. What is the rationale for the 40% AAC? Subjects like maths do not readily lend themselves to this format.
10. Why are all subject specifications now in the same format? Surely some subjects lend themselves better to other forms of assessment than others.
11. How can we protect the academic integrity of the AAC with the advent of generative AI? It will make most project work utterly meaningless. There is an enormous difference between someone researching a topic and referencing it, to someone using AI to generate a whole answer.
12. How can we tell if a student used AI or not?
13. Will AACs become redundant in most subjects because of AI?
14. How Do Teachers and School managements deal with the varying availability of AI tools from free versions to expensive subscription versions?
15. Will training be provided to teachers on the use of AI?
16. Has the department done a SWOT analysis of AI if so, can we see the report?
17. Different AI tools can generate pictures, videos, podcasts, and written answers. What resources are available to prevent the complete collapse of AACs.
18. In history the current project is worth 20% and can be up to 1,500 words for higher level. If we are to continue with 1 AAC worth 40%, the potential project/essay etc. could require students to write up to 3,000 words on a topic. Is that fair for a 17-year-old?
19. Has anyone considered the workload implications for teachers? How can we be expected to familiarize ourselves with the new specifications, engage with new methodologies, create added resources, and implement a new course without time alleviation in our timetables? There are so many other new initiatives happening in schools already.
20. How can we be expected, and our students be expected, to be prepared for a course when we have no guidelines or examples of AACs or Assessments parameters.
21. How many training days will there be? My subject does not become live until 2028. Is this all the information I will receive until then?
22. Is the training only for the full school initially and my subject for one year.

23. What is the plan for ongoing training and dealing with issues as they arise in the initial role out of subject specifications?
24. Why is it going to be restricted by the Department to 1 AACs this does not suit the languages which have well established additional components of assessment that work well.
25. Do we have to book are own cluster days or is this done automatically?
26. Why is the AAC going to be marked at a common level? Surely this causes disadvantage and is of no educational benefit for students.
27. Where are the guidance documents? How can we prepare ourselves for our subject without them?
28. There are potentially huge issues with time management. If the AAC is worth 40%, surely, I should be dedicating a similar amount of class time to this form of assessment. However, if I do that, I will never complete the course. How much time should I give to the AAC?
29. I note the announcement of €12 million for science equipment. Our school's lab facilities are vastly inferior to the school down the road. How much of that funding are we entitled to?
30. Is the funding ongoing, or just a one off? If a one off, how will we keep the same standards for the next cohort of students?
31. Why are there no sample plans or subject plans for teachers for each specification?
32. Senior Cycle is a high stakes exam that will affect student's livelihoods, is it wise to introduce SCR without having the requisite information ready for teachers?
33. Some thoughts on SCL1LP and SCL2LPs. When will clarity be given about how the L1LP/L2LP programmes are to be assessed?
1. Will time be given to hold the assessment review meetings set out in the SC-L1-L2-Programme-Statement
2. When will further information on supports for the internal validation process be provided and what will these look like?
3. The assessment process set out for the L1 and L2 programmes in https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/066ec71f-e00c-4df7-b082-3e2f5ecb9357/SC-L1-L2-Programme-Statement-EN_09.24.pdf on page 18 - 20 states that the assessment is to be carried out by the school. by this I am sure they mean the teachers. if teachers are teaching LCE and L1 or L2 programmes in the classroom at the same time how will this work? *'Students will receive certification after an assessment and validation process, which is obtained when the SEC has confirmed that the assessment has been carried out satisfactorily by the school.'* Pg 20.

34. Is there time allocated for the TY Core Team to complete this level of a review and to plan for next year?
35. Do teachers in TY have time allocated for this? Is there an 'audit' checklist?
36. How much autonomy does a school have in TY, are there any key items that must be achieved?
37. To allow for TY core team meetings which are facilitated by senior management - When are these meeting meant to take place?
38. When do these audits, core team meetings take place?
39. What are the expectations for assessment? Is Assessment for Learning sufficient or should there be reporting of assessment in all subjects in a school report?

40. What is the advice for PE for schools on one-hour timetables? 60 mins v 80 mins v 120 mins?
41. Why does the new Senior Cycle SPHE guidelines do not include TY. When are we being advised on the Content for SPHE so that we can ensure the Personal Growth dimension for students?
42. Is one class per week based on 40min or 1 hr lessons?
43. We currently have 10 hours sampling/rotating block (5 subjects x 2 periods pw) - is this now to somehow shrink to 3-4 hours? And what replaces those hours?
44. Can the one hour per week in career related learning be done in blocks rather than one per week.
45. How often should the core team meet? What roles/responsibilities would it have?
46. Is one day a week work experience still permitted?
47. Could sample timetables be given so that we can then adopt them to our schools.
48. Question in relation to core team - would it be timetabled weekly?
49. Looking at the student dimension- what exactly does align it with the senior cycle framework mean? … looking for an example.
50. Will a template be provided for updating programme plans and if our existing plan covers what the template requires, will we have to update layout regardless?
51. Will the department be providing a standardised subject/module planning template with the appropriate headings so that teachers can update their plans to the new spec?
52. If you have hr long classes do you have to commit to 2hrs of pe a week or can you have a second E class rotating throughout the year
53. Can we get guidelines of what should be included in the TY portfolio as well as some sample portfolios?
54. Will students get official certificate for completing the TY programme? Would it be included on the NQF?
55. What can be done in the new programme to promote school attendance? Is a percentage of completing the TY programme going towards attendance (like the LCA programme)?
56. 2-4 weeks for community placements alone or for community & work experience placements?
57. Do the work placements have to be in a solid block or 1 day weekly?
58. Where does the time for these regular meetings come from? Goodwill only goes so far if you keep pulling from the same people!
59. How does the school facilitate the Core Team meetings? Does management need to provide cover to allow these meetings to happen?
60. We offer 16 LC subjects. I fail to see how students get to sample them all before choosing their subjects if it is 3-4 hours pw max.
61. What is the TY grant going to be per student?
62. Our students choose 5 option subjects for TY and each of these is 2 hours weekly. Do we need to completely change this? They can currently choose subjects that they did at JC or new subjects.
63. 80 mins of PE, does it have to be for EVERY TY student?
64. Many schools are on one-hour class periods, the 60-minute class will create a time-tabling problem.
65. Is there a set weekly time limit for civic and community engagement?
66. Will there be any increase in funding to assist rural and disadvantaged schools?

67. For people who are programme coordinators and coordinating other programmes and not just TY, how far will we be stretched with the time allocation?
68. Parent teacher meetings who will they fit into a schedule in TY?
69. We currently have 3.3hrs per week for Eng/Maths/Irish. When this is reduced to 2hrs I would have concerns for students who access EAL/AEN supports during the same time as Irish. Is there any guidance for teaching of special tuition for these students.
70. Can we not get a sample timetable that we all follow- stating core subject, sample subjects and work placements etc. After all the students are all going into LC after TY and they should have similar learning experiences during TY.
71. Question regarding Elective-sampling LC subjects and other areas of learning and development. TY is very much limited to what teachers have space on timetable... is that included in "depending on school context we do 3 rotations of 3 subjects. so, for example Technology has only 3 classes for around 10 weeks as teacher not available but gives all students a taste rather than they choosing it for full year.
72.

Department response to TUI questions

Answers to questions on Senior Cycle Redevelopment submitted by TUI

Noting that the questions submitted were those collated by the TUI from branches, it has been necessary in some instances to make assumptions as to the question asked or to consider the reply in a system-wide manner rather than reflective of a specific school context. If any questions have been misunderstood the Department would be happy to provide further clarity where necessary.

1. **What resources will be made available for schools to successfully implement SCR?**

New subjects in Tranche 1
Details on the package of supports that will be provided to schools participating in Phase 1 of the introduction of the two new Leaving Certificate subjects of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development can be found in the Information Booklets on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6f89e-phase-one-call-for-applications-2024/

These booklets have also issued directly to the successful schools.

Revised subjects in Tranche 1
Details on the Science Implementation Support Grant to support schools with the rollout of revised Senior Cycle science subjects can be found in the relevant press release and attached guidelines on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/95291-12m-funding-for-leaving-certificate-science-subject-implementation/

These guidelines have also issued directly to all post-primary schools in the free scheme.

The Department has not identified or received any formal request for specific additional resources or funding in relation to the introduction of the other revised subjects in Tranche 1 (Business, Ancient Greek, Arabic and Latin).

General
Oide is currently delivering a TPL programme at both Whole School and subject\programme level in respect of the Tranche 1 subjects and the Transition Year Programme Statement; Senior Cycle SPHE and Level 1\2 Learning Programmes. Guidelines in respect of the Additional Assessment Components for the Tranche 1 subjects were published in December last. The SEC has also set out the timelines to provide sample examination papers for each subject at each level in April with Oide committed to supporting their publication with TPL delivery in late April.

2. **The Senior Cycle Redevelopment involves LCA, LCVP and TY what does that mean for my school that offers all the programmes.**

SCR involves all Senior Cycle programmes: the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), Transition Year (TY) and Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes.

Changes affecting the LCVP, LCA and TY are set out on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-redevelopment/

3. **Is science at JC going to be redeveloped for the new SCR science subjects?**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (the NCCA) conduct an Early Insights Review of each newly introduced subject specification after a cohort of students have experienced the full specification, including the final examination. These reviews gather feedback from school management, teacher/educators and interested parties, in relation to the experience of the subject in question and associated assessment arrangements.

For Junior Cycle Science, this review was published in September 2020 and can be found on the NCCA website at https://ncca.ie/en/resources/report-on-the-early-enactment-review-of-phase-4-junior-cycle-subject-specifications/

There are currently no plans to make any further changes to the science specification.

4. **Do CBAs need to be looked at in the context of AACs especially in science?**

The implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle continues to be reviewed, in partnership with school leaders, teachers and other education partners.

As part of the process of review, the University of Limerick has been commissioned by the NCCA to conduct a longitudinal research study - Evaluating the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle in Irish post-primary schools.

This research began in late 2020 with interim reports published between October 2022 and December 2024. The interim reports to date indicate a good degree of consistency – they highlight some challenges with how CBAs are being experienced while also pointing to the increase in student-centred learning and a positive impact on teacher professional collaboration and dialogue brought through the CBA process.

It is anticipated that the final report will be published this year. The final report aims to reflect on the study in its entirety, drawing on relevant data and insights across the four years of the study.

This major study will inform any further developments at Junior Cycle.

5. **Will there be any time alleviation given to teachers, who are already overworked and overburden, to help introduce SCR?**

No need for any increase in non-class contact time has been identified at this time.

6. **It takes an inordinate amount of time to get to grips with the new Physics specification, and I have not even started developing resources, or taught it to a class yet. What additional information and help will be made available this year and next year**

The introduction of the revised specifications is accompanied by a strong package of support for teachers. Comprehensive teacher professional learning supports are being provided by Oide – this process is underway with positive reception and uptake from schools. Support includes dedicated supports aimed at school leaders, full day professional learning experiences for all staff in schools, subject specific full-day cluster workshops for teachers plus a wide range of elective events and classroom materials and resources. In addition, Guidelines in respect of the Additional Assessment Components for the Tranche 1 subjects were published in December last. The SEC has also set out the timelines to provide sample examination papers for each

subject at each level in April with Oide committed to supporting their publication with TPL delivery in late April.

7. **My calls sizes are too big to use the IT provision in the school at the same time will there be any updating of IT equipment and improved access in our school.**

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2027,is underpinned by an investment of some €200m included in the National Development Plan 2021-2030. This funding issued directly to schools as schools are best placed to identify the requirements of their own student cohort and to meet those requirements in the most appropriate way. Schools can use the ICT grant funding, for the upgrading of a school's network, Wi-Fi, cloud based tools, learning platforms, software and education applications, other equipment designed to support the teaching and learning in the school.

Decisions regarding the use and deployment of digital technology in schools is a matter for the Board of Management of each school in the context of their digital learning planning. Schools are advised to consult with members of the school community including parents when planning for the introduction of digital technologies including devices with cost and other implications been fully considered by the Boards of Managements before a decision is made.

8. **We do not have enough Laboratory time for all the Leaving Certificate and Junior Science subjects we offer in our school. How will we deal with the issues about access?**

Timetabling of subjects and scheduling of access to classrooms and subject-specific rooms is a matter for the management of individual schools and will depend on factors such as the length of class periods, which is determined locally at school level, and of the aspects of the subject specification to be covered which may or may not require access to subject-specific rooms as the case may be.

It is open to a school authority to make an application for additional accommodation through the 'Additional School Accommodation (ASA) scheme' for science laboratory provision. Information on the ASA scheme and application forms are available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/563cae-additional-accommodation-scheme/

9. **What is the rationale for the 40% AAC? Subjects like maths do not readily lend themselves to this format.**

Introducing the equivalent of AACs in Leaving Certificate subjects has been the direction of travel for some time and has been broadly welcomed. Both the review of Senior Cycle and stakeholders more generally have called for AACs to be extended to all subjects. Currently, the majority of Leaving Certificate subjects include some element of assessment outside of written exams, but this is not yet the case in many subjects taken by large numbers of students.

The TUI will be aware that a written statement of the rationale for setting the minimum weighting of AACs at 40% in each subject was provided to all education partners at the 8 January 2025 Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum meeting.

The decision to adopt a minimum weighting for AACs of 40% of the available marks in each subject responds to these calls, and was based on realising several related objectives:

- Broadening the assessment of competencies beyond those assessed in traditional written examinations;
- Better preparing students for life after school, whether that is in higher education, further education and training or the world of work, noting that traditional examination settings do not reflect these post-school settings;
- Reducing the emphasis on the examination period in summer of sixth year; and
- Diversifying the opportunities for students to demonstrate as broad a range of their learning and abilities as possible.

The proportion of marks allocated to AACs must be meaningful to be valued by students, parents and teachers, and to effect real change in culture and the student experience, as well as being capable of influencing their overall mark in their chosen subjects.

For these reasons, the minimum weighting assigned to AACs has been set at 40% for each subject. The 40% weighting reflects the significance of the AACs and their integration into teaching and learning, and can thereby support changes to classroom practices and the design of assessment for quality learning experiences for students.

The document "Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects" 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 in Tranche 3, including Mathematics. There is currently a consultation underway by the NCCA on the Background Paper and Brief for Mathematics where views can be provided on relevant matters including assessment in the subject. The SDG concerned with Mathematics is in place and working towards the development of specifications within the defined policy parameters.

10. Why are all subject specifications now in the same format? Surely some subjects lend themselves better to other forms of assessment than others.

This question appears to address two separate issues: (i) the format of subject specifications and (ii) the form of assessment in a given subject.

In relation to (i) 'The technical form of curriculum specifications for subjects and modules in a redeveloped senior cycle" can be found on the NCCA website and together with the associated research, the approach to the format of specifications is set out. The approach provides for greater clarity in regard to Learning Outcomes in response partly to requests from teachers for this.

On (ii) the document "Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects", which has been provided to Subject Development Groups (SDGs) clearly notes on page 2 that it is for SDGs to consider the most appropriate assessment for each subject in preparing the draft specification, while Table 1 provides a varied and non-exhaustive list of possible AAC types.

Whilst there is a policy direction in place to have an AAC in each subject with a minimum weighting of 40%; there is considerable scope thereafter for subject by subject approaches to be taken.

11. How can we protect the academic integrity of the AAC with the advent of generative AI? It will make most project work utterly meaningless. There is an enormous

difference between someone researching a topic and referencing it, to someone using AI to generate a whole answer.

Page 20 of the Information Note which issued to schools in December 2024 addresses concerns in relation to the use of generative AI by students in the context of external assessment. The Information Note is available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-redevelopment/#information-notes

The SEC is currently in the process of commissioning research into the use of Generative AI in the context of teacher based and external central assessment in the Senior Cycle of education in the Irish State, having regard to the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme.

This research will consider both the unique opportunities and challenges associated with generative AI in the context of assessment for certification. In particular, it will explore how the use of generative AI, and possible approaches to allowing or restricting it, impact on assessment integrity. It will also examine how generative AI might support improved assessment processes.

12. How can we tell if a student used AI or not?

See response to Q11.

Regular, comprehensive engagement with each student's work on their Additional Assessment Component enables teachers to confidently and legitimately authenticate any work being submitted for assessment and ensure that any instances of plagiarism (including the misuse of AI tools) will be combated.

13. Will AACs become redundant in most subjects because of AI?

See response to Q11.

It should be noted in particular that the equivalent of AACs currently take a variety of forms and this variety will continue to be a feature of subject assessment as specifications are redeveloped.

14. How Do Teachers and School managements deal with the varying availability of AI tools from free versions to expensive subscription versions?

Teachers and school leaders are encouraged to engage with Oide-TiE and the resources available here: https://oide.ie/digital-technology/home/technology-in-education/

Oide has launched a short course, "AI for Schools," to help teachers and school leaders understand AI, its ethical use, and its implications in schools. This course supports the goals of the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027' and aims to support schools in recognising the strengths and limitations of AI and address the ethical considerations and risks.

15. Will training be provided to teachers on the use of AI?

Oide has launched a short course, "AI for Schools," to help teachers and school leaders understand AI, its ethical use, and its implications in schools. This course supports the goals of the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027' and aims to support schools in recognising the strengths and limitations of AI and address the ethical considerations and risks.

16. Has the department done a SWOT analysis of AI if so, can we see the report?

A strategic action for the Department of Education is to support our school communities in the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment particularly within the context of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence.

Ireland's National AI Strategy, AI – Here for Good, was launched in July 2021 and sets out the means by which Ireland can be an international leader in the use of artificial intelligence to benefit our economy and society.

The Department is committed to ensuring that education policy design, implementation and evaluation is supported by reliable data, is outcomes focused and informed by international best practice. Currently, information for schools on AI in education can be found on the OIDE Technology in Education (OIDE TiE) website on their dedicated AI hub. This includes resources developed through participation by OIDE-TiE in an EU project, AI4T, the EU Ethical Guidelines for Using AI in Teaching & Learning, and the UNESCO Guidance for generative AI in education and research. Research, EU and national regulatory changes, and insights from Coimisiún na Meán will continue to guide the Department's efforts to support schools and teachers in navigating the challenges and opportunities AI brings to education.

17. Different AI tools can generate pictures, videos, podcasts, and written answers. What resources are available to prevent the complete collapse of AACs.

See response to Q11.

18. In history the current project is worth 20% and can be up to 1,500 words for higher level. If we are to continue with 1 AAC worth 40%, the potential project/essay etc. could require students to write up to 3,000 words on a topic. Is that fair for a 17-year-old?

The introduction of the new History specification is scheduled as part of Tranche 3 subjects to be introduced to the curriculum for all schools in 2027. The development group for Leaving Certificate History was convened on September 30th, 2024, and will progress the development of a new specification, including the assessments, guided by the brief and the findings of the consultation on the Background paper and subsequent consultations on the draft specification. The nature of the History AAC has not yet been determined.

Public consultations on the Background paper and Brief that will inform the development of the specification is currently open until the 28 February 2025. We invite you to get involved and have your say on the Background Paper and Brief through this link:
https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=sFcb2jZiUaBpt7a8TpbEct_3ZoFzq5MnS
TyL2ixqahUNVZQTk9NQVlNTTlRM1BPSzVEMzZYTTNPQS4u&route=shorturl

19. Has anyone considered the workload implications for teachers? How can we be expected to familiarize ourselves with the new specifications, engage with new methodologies, create added resources, and implement a new course without time alleviation in our timetables? There are so many other new initiatives happening in schools already.

Senior Cycle Redevelopment is informed by extensive reviews and consultation processes, and is being introduced in partnership with all our education partners. Teachers have indicated that

additional resources, especially continuing professional development, were seen as crucial components of any changes to senior cycle.

The introduction of the revised specifications is accompanied by a strong package of support for teachers. Comprehensive teacher professional learning supports are being provided by Oide – this process is underway with positive reception and uptake from schools. Support includes dedicated supports aimed at school leaders, full day professional learning experiences for all staff in schools, subject specific full-day cluster workshops for teachers plus a wide range of elective events and classroom materials and resources.

The development of new subject specifications is also informed by extensive consultation and the expertise of subject development group members, including teachers, who determine the content of each subject specification to be taught within the available allocation of hours per subject.

The development of new and revised specifications groups subjects is in annual tranches, allowing for a measured and planned roll-out of redevelopment. A schedule setting out five tranches was published over a year ago and spans the period up to 2031 – it will be 2031 before students receive results where all of their results are based on new or revised specifications. This measured roll out provides teachers with adequate lead-in time to prepare for changes to the specifications of their subjects.

20. **How can we be expected, and our students be expected, to be prepared for a course when we have no guidelines or examples of AACs or Assessments parameters.**

Each AAC in new and revised subjects will be subject specific and designed in tandem with the learning outcomes. The AACs are designed as an integrated part of the teaching and learning of the subject; as a process that facilitates and supports good teaching and learning practices and enables students to fulfil the objectives of the subject specification rather than simply a product to be submitted to the SEC for marking.

The Guidelines to support the completion of AACs are now available on curriculumonline.ie . These Guidelines were developed by the NCCA in close co-operation with the SEC and also involved engagement with teacher focus groups. The Guidelines will also inform teacher professional learning being delivered by the teacher support service, Oide.

The publication of the Guidelines (for AACs) delivers on a commitment to provide assessment materials to teachers much earlier in the implementation of revised subject specifications (curricula) than has been the case previously. The SEC has doubled the number of sample examination papers it normally provides when a subject is introduced or revised with four papers being provided for each subject – two at each level – meaning 4 per subject. The sample papers will be available in April 2025, in the school year prior to the commencement of the teaching of the new specifications. This is a full 18 months earlier than was normally the case previously when specifications changed. It is also more than two full (calendar) years before a student will sit an exam in the subjects – and several months before any student begins 5th year in one of the new or revised subjects. The sample AAC brief will issue in all subjects at the beginning of 5th year – September 2025. This will be followed by the issue of the live brief in each subject 4 months later - in January 2026.

21. How many training days will there be? My subject does not become live until 2028. Is this all the information I will receive until then?

Oide are providing a comprehensive suite of professional learning events to support senior cycle redevelopment. These include dedicated supports aimed at school leaders, full day professional learning experiences for all staff in schools, subject specific full-day cluster workshops for teachers, dedicated workshops aimed at TY coordinators and teachers of Level 1/Level2 Learning programmes at senior cycle, plus a wide range of elective events and classroom materials and resources.

22. Is the training only for the full school initially and my subject for one year.

Oide has committed to a 4+ programme of Teacher Professional Learning under Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

23. What is the plan for ongoing training and dealing with issues as they arise in the initial role out of subject specifications?

The introduction of the new specifications is being supported by a comprehensive 4+ year teacher professional learning (TPL) programme for the subjects provided by Oide. The 4+ year TPL programme is designed to provide the necessary professional learning and supports to teachers both ahead of the introduction of the subjects and on an ongoing basis as students and teachers experience the new specifications and assessment arrangements first-hand in classroom.

Following introduction of new specifications, the NCCA will conduct Early Enactment Reviews that will gather feedback and explore topics such as how the specification is being enacted and how it could be improved, the student experience of learning and assessment and how teachers are working with the specification.

24. Why is it going to be restricted by the Department to 1 AACs this does not suit the languages which have well established additional components of assessment that work well.

The document "Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects", which has been provided to Subject Development Groups (SDGs) clearly notes on page 2 that it is for SDGs to consider the most appropriate assessment for each subject in preparing the draft specification, while Table 1 provides a varied and non-exhaustive list of possible AAC types including oral assessment.

Page 1 of the same document explicitly states that exceptions to the general approach that all subjects will have one additional assessment component can be made where a subject specific rationale is identified by the relevant SDG and subsequently considered appropriate when viewed against wider programme level considerations. It can also be noted, for example, that in respect of Arabic in Tranche 1 both an oral and aural have been provided for in the published specifications.

25. Do we have to book are own cluster days or is this done automatically?

Oide is responsible for the roll-out of teacher professional learning in respect of Senior Cycle Redevelopment. Oide contact schools in relation to booking cluster days. This query should be addressed to the school's senior leadership team in the first instance.

26. Why is the AAC going to be marked at a common level? Surely this causes disadvantage and is of no educational benefit for students.

As set out in the guidelines to support AACs in each of the Tranche 1 subjects, AACs for 8 of the 9 subjects will not be marked at a common level. AACs in these 8 subjects will be based on a common brief and will be assessed at the level at which the students sit the final written examination. As set out in the guidelines to support the AACs in Arabic, the AACs in this subject will be assessed at a common level. The subject specifications and AAC guidelines can be accessed on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/

This is in line with existing practice in many existing Leaving Certificate subject specifications which currently incorporate assessment outside of traditional written examinations.

27. Where are the guidance documents? How can we prepare ourselves for our subject without them?

The Guidelines to support the completion of AACs are now available having been published in early December 2024 . These Guidelines were developed by the NCCA in close co-operation with the SEC and also involved engagement with teacher focus groups. The Guidelines will also inform teacher professional learning being delivered by the teacher support service, Oide. The Guidelines, as well as subject specifications themselves, are available on curriculumonline.ie.

28. There are potentially huge issues with time management. If the AAC is worth 40%, surely, I should be dedicating a similar amount of class time to this form of assessment. However, if I do that, I will never complete the course. How much time should I give to the AAC?

As set out in the guidelines to support AACs in each of the Tranche 1 subjects, AACs are intended to be integrated into the regular teaching and learning of the classroom in each subject, and are not intended to be presented as discrete blocks of work or time separate from regular teaching and learning. The subject specifications and AAC guidelines can be accessed on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/

29. I note the announcement of €12 million for science equipment. Our school's lab facilities are vastly inferior to the school down the road. How much of that funding are we entitled to?

Details on the Science Implementation Support Grant to support schools with the rollout of revised Senior Cycle science subjects can be found in the relevant press release and attached guidelines on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/95291-12m-funding-for-leaving-certificate-science-subject-implementation/. The querist's school was advised at the time the grant was announced as to how much that individual school was to receive and which has now been paid to that school. Grants payable to schools ranged from €13,000 to €24,200 depending on their enrolment numbers and DEIS status.

These guidelines have also issued directly to all post-primary schools in the free scheme.

30. Is the funding ongoing, or just a one off? If a one off, how will we keep the same standards for the next cohort of students?

As set out in the guidelines sent to schools and published on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/95291-12m-funding-for-leaving-certificate-science-subject-implementation/ the Science Implementation Support Grant is intended to support post-primary schools in the rollout of revised Leaving Certificate science subjects in the 2025/26 school year.

The Department continues to examine how schools can be supported in the introduction of the new curricula. This includes considering any resource and facilities in subsequent school years.

31. Why are there no sample plans or subject plans for teachers for each specification?

The introduction of the new specifications is being supported by a comprehensive 4+ year teacher professional learning (TPL) programme for the subjects provided by Oide. The 4+ year TPL programme is designed to provide the necessary professional learning and supports to teachers both ahead of the introduction of the subjects and on an ongoing basis as students and teachers experience the new specifications and assessment arrangements first-hand in classroom. Teachers will be supported to develop their schemes of work as part of their professional learning.

Please also refer to the NCCA published paper which examined relevant research and practice to help decide what format NCCA should use when designing curriculum specifications for senior cycle. This paper provided the research basis for the creation of a template to be used by development groups as they review and (re)develop senior cycle subjects and modules. Development groups provided feedback during the development process to help refine the template. The paper is available here: https://ncca.ie/en/resources/technical-form-curriculum-specifications-for-subjects-and-modules-in-a-redeveloped-senior-cycle/

32. Senior Cycle is a high stakes exam that will affect student's livelihoods, is it wise to introduce SCR without having the requisite information ready for teachers?

The specifications in each subject in Tranche 1 in relation to Leaving Certificate established subjects were published at the start of the current school year; a year ahead of their introduction for fifth years commencing in the 2025/26 school year. The subject specifications are set out in line with the revised technical form for specifications and provide greater clarity on each learning outcome in response to calls for this from teachers. In each subject relating to assessment, each AAC in new and revised subjects is in respect of tranche 1, and will be in regard to subsequent tranches, subject specific and designed in tandem with the learning outcomes. The AACs are designed as an integrated part of the teaching and learning of the subject; as a process that facilitates and supports good teaching and learning practices and enables students to fulfil the objectives of the subject specification rather than simply a product to be submitted to the SEC for marking.

The Guidelines to support the completion of AACs are now available and were published in December 2024. These Guidelines were developed by the NCCA in close co-operation with the SEC and also involved engagement with teacher focus groups. The Guidelines will also inform teacher professional learning being delivered by the teacher support service, Oide.

The publication of the Guidelines (for AACs) delivers on a commitment to provide assessment materials to teachers much earlier in the implementation of revised subject specifications

(curricula) than has been the case previously. The SEC has doubled the number of sample examination papers it normally provides when a subject is introduced or revised with four papers being provided for each subject – two at each level – meaning 4 per subject. The sample papers will be available in April 2025, in the school year prior to the commencement of the teaching of the new specifications. This is a full 18 months earlier than was normally the case previously when specifications changed. It is also more than two full (calendar) years before a student will sit an exam in the subjects – and several months before any student begins 5th year in one of the new or revised subjects. The sample AAC brief will issue in all subjects at the beginning of 5th year – September 2025. This will be followed by the issue of the live brief in each subject 4 months later - in January 2026.

33. Some thoughts on SCL1LP and SCL2LPs. When will clarity be given about how the L1LP/L2LP programmes are to be assessed?

Assessment in the Level 1 and Level 2 senior cycle learning programmes is a dynamic form of assessment and is presented in a way that is personal to the student. The evidence of learning for the Level 1 and Level 2 programmes at Senior Cycle will be gathered in a portfolio, which will be presented for assessment based on Assessment Criteria to be developed in consultation between teachers and the NCCA. The learning recognised for certification will be at Level 1 and/or Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Each module completed by the student will be certificated by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The Department has convened a Level 1 and Level 2 Working Group to discuss practical implementation of learning programmes, while NCCA continues to work closely with a selected 13 schools offering Level 1 and Level 2.

Assessment at school level will be subject to internal validation which will enable teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments of student work against assessment criteria. The Assessment Criteria for each curriculum area/module will be developed by the NCCA and the SEC in consultation with teachers and presented in Guidelines to support the assessment of Senior Cycle Level 1/Level 2 Learning Programmes. Students may demonstrate learning in school, classroom or wider school community. Providing parents/guardians and students with opportunities to give feedback on learning outcomes achieved within their home or in the wider community with their friends and family is also valuable as learning is not limited to the classroom.

School assessment will then be subject to validation by the SEC to ensure the quality and integrity of the assessment processes for certification purposes and that candidates have been assessed in a fair and consistent manner.

33.1 Will time be given to hold the assessment review meetings set out in the SC-L1-L2-Programme-Statement
The precise nature of modalities involved in the assessment arrangements relating to the L1\L2 LPs is under consideration.

33.2 When will further information on supports for the internal validation process be provided and what will these look like?
The Assessment Criteria for each curriculum area/module will be developed by the NCCA and the SEC in consultation with teachers. Guidelines to support the assessment of Senior Cycle Level 1/Level 2 Learning Programmes will be available in Q4 2025.

33.3 The assessment process set out for the L1 and L2 programmes in https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/066ec71f-e00c-4df7-b082-3e2f5ecb9357/SC-L1-L2-Programme-Statement-EN_09.24.pdf on page 18 - 20 states that the assessment is to be carried out by the school. by this I am sure they mean the teachers. if teachers are teaching LCE and L1 or L2 programmes in the classroom at the same time how will this work? 'Students will receive certification after an assessment and validation process, which is obtained when the SEC has confirmed that the assessment has been carried out satisfactorily by the school.' Pg 20.

Assessment is being provided through retention of evidence of learning throughout L1/L2 two year programme.

34. Is there time allocated for the TY Core Team to complete this level of a review and to plan for next year?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

It is not anticipated that this audit will require significant additional time beyond the time typically needed each year for the preparation of the following year's Transition Year programme.

As set out on page 13 of the sixth Senior Cycle Redevelopment Schools Information Note (available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-redevelopment/#information-notes over the 2024/25 school year, all schools will have the opportunity to audit their current Transition Year programme and revise it where necessary in line with the revised Transition Year Programme Statement.

The Department's Inspectorate is supporting and providing advice to schools in this regard during the 2024/25 school year with Inspectorate engagements being reflective of this.

As set out on page 21 of the December Information Note (available on gov.ie at the same link), Oide and the NCCA are also supporting schools in this process through professional learning and resources to assist in the evaluation and development of their programmes.

Page 28 of the same information note provides details on the suite of resources developed by the NCCA to support the implementation of the revised TY Programme Statement including an audit tool to assist schools in reflecting on and renewing their TY curriculum. The first set of resources to be published together form an audit tool.

The resources, supplemented by exemplars, were designed by a team of TY coordinators and are available at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/supports-for-the-ty-programme-statement/reflection-and-renewal-toolbox/

35. Do teachers in TY have time allocated for this? Is there an 'audit' checklist?

An audit tool is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/supports-for-the-ty-programme-statement/reflection-and-renewal-toolbox/

See also Q34

36. How much autonomy does a school have in TY, are there any key items that must be achieved?

Schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme within the parameters of the TY Programme Statement, which is available at https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/5849acbf-0326-487a-beec-3db6b5878470/TY-Programme-Statement-ENG-INT.pdf

NCCA has developed a suite of resources to support the implementation of the revised TY Programme Statement, available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/supports-for-the-ty-programme-statement/reflection-and-renewal-toolbox/

The first set of resources published together form an audit tool. They are designed to assist schools with reflecting on and renewing their TY curriculum, through the lens of the Student Dimensions.

37. To allow for TY core team meetings which are facilitated by senior management - When are these meeting meant to take place?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

38. When do these audits, core team meetings take place?

During 2024/25 schools have an opportunity to audit their current Transition Year programme and ensure it aligns with the Programme Statement from 2025 onward.

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

Oide and the NCCA will support schools in this process through professional learning and resources to assist in the evaluation and development of their programmes. Schools are advised to plan for an integrated approach that includes a focus on teaching, student portfolios, and continuous programme review, ensuring their TY programme remains progressive and innovative.

The Department's Inspectorate will also support and provide advice to schools as they audit their programme during the 2024/25 school year with Inspectorate engagements being reflective of this.

39. What are the expectations for assessment? Is Assessment for Learning sufficient or should there be reporting of assessment in all subjects in a school report?

Details on assessment and reporting in Transition Year are provided on pages 20-22 and 23-25, respectively, of the Transition Year Programme Statement. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

In line with the approach to Transition Year more generally, schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme, including aspects relating to assessment and reporting, within the parameters of this TY Programme Statement.

40. What is the advice for PE for schools on one-hour timetables? 60 mins v 80 mins v 120 mins?

The Transition Year Programme Statement states on p18 that the time allocated to PE in Transition Year should be aligned with the Senior Cycle PE Framework. The Transition Year Programme Statement is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/physical-education-framework/

The Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework recommends on p16 that a double period per week is made available as the minimum requirement for teaching senior cycle physical education. The SCPE Framework is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/physical-education-framework/

In recognition that the length of class periods is determined locally by individual schools, neither the TYPS nor the SCPE Framework specify this timing in minutes.

41. Why does the new Senior Cycle SPHE guidelines do not include TY. When are we being advised on the Content for SPHE so that we can ensure the Personal Growth dimension for students?

Please refer to page 3 of the Information Note on Senior Cycle SPHE specification published in September 2024; https://ncca.ie/media/qtlnsgoq/information-note_sc-sphe.pdf

It states that 'Because Transition Year (TY), unlike other programmes, is a school-developed and flexible programme, the NCCA does not develop specifications for TY. However, the NCCA is developing a range of supports and guidance to assist schools as they develop their own modules to meet the needs of their students. In the case of SPHE, NCCA will provide a new TY section on the NCCA SPHE Toolkit with lots of guidance and resources. In addition, three 10-hour SPHE micro-modules specifically for TY are currently under development. These can used or adapted by schools in planning for teaching and learning in TY SPHE.'

Please refer to Curriculum Online to access the toolkit: https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/sphe/sphe-toolkit-deafe0b9379b1ba416af2bfdacf51549/

The micro-modules are available at; https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/sphe/sphe-toolkit-deafe0b9379b1ba416af2bfdacf51549/resources-for-learning-and-teaching-sphe-2024/

42. Is one class per week based on 40min or 1 hr lessons?

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level.

43. We currently have 10 hours sampling/rotating block (5 subjects x 2 periods pw) - is this now to somehow shrink to 3-4 hours? And what replaces those hours?

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level. Where modules are designed to support sampling of senior cycle subjects and other areas of learning and development, the combined time allocation for these components is the equivalent of three to four hours per week, depending on school context. Please see page 18 of the Transition Year Programme Statement; https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/5849acbf-0326-487a-beec-3db6b5878470/TY-Programme-Statement-ENG-INT.pdf

44. Can the one hour per week in career related learning be done in blocks rather than one per week.

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level. Please see page 19 of the Transition Year Programme statement which states that career guidance should be 'One class per week or classes timed to target key career-related learning or events during the year': https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/5849acbf-0326-487a-beec-3db6b5878470/TY-Programme-Statement-ENG-INT.pdf

45. How often should the core team meet? What roles/responsibilities would it have?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

The TY Core Team will generally include the TY Coordinator, TY Year Head where the role exists, a guidance counsellor and a number of teachers who wish to be more actively involved with the coordination and development of the TY programme.

The duties attached to individual roles is a matter for school authorities.

46. Is one day a week work experience still permitted?

The Transition Year Programme Statement states on p19 that a time allocation amounting to the equivalent of two to four weeks of the TY programme is suggested for an appropriate balance of work and community placements. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

The organisation of work and community placements as contiguous blocks or individual days during the school year is decided at school level.

47. Could sample timetables be given so that we can then adopt them to our schools.

Schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme within the parameters of the TY Programme Statement, which is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools and will depend on factors such as the length of class periods, which is determined at locally at school level, and the nature of the individual TY programme in each school.

48. Question in relation to core team - would it be timetabled weekly?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

49. Looking at the student dimension- what exactly does align it with the senior cycle framework mean? ... looking for an example.

p18 of the Transition Year Programme Statement states that the time allocated to Physical Education in Transition Year should be aligned with the time allocation specified in the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework.

The Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework recommends on p16 that a double period per week is made available as the minimum requirement for teaching senior cycle physical education. The SCPE Framework is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/physical-education-framework/

50. Will a template be provided for updating programme plans and if our existing plan covers what the template requires, will we have to update layout regardless?

NCCA has developed a suite of resources to support the implementation of the revised TY Programme Statement, available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/supports-for-the-ty-programme-statement/reflection-and-renewal-toolbox/

The first set of resources published together form an audit tool. They are designed to assist schools with reflecting on and renewing their TY curriculum, through the lens of the Student Dimensions.

51. Will the department be providing a standardised subject/module planning template with the appropriate headings so that teachers can update their plans to the new spec?

See response to Q50.

52. If you have hr long classes do you have to commit to 2hrs of pe a week or can you have a second E class rotating throughout the year

The time allocation for PE should be aligned to the Senior Cycle PE Framework which is available here: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/bc195f63-5ba0-4053-92f0-2796fefa23c5/SCPE_Framework_en.pdf

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level.

53. Can we get guidelines of what should be included in the TY portfolio as well as some sample portfolios?

Oide are providing a comprehensive suite of professional learning events to support senior cycle redevelopment, which includes dedicated workshops aimed at TY coordinators. The Department's Inspectorate will support and advise schools as they audit their Transition Year provision, to ensure it is designed within the parameters of the Programme Statement. An audit tool is available on curriculumonline.ie https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/supports-for-the-ty-programme-statement/reflection-and-renewal-toolbox/

54. Will students get official certificate for completing the TY programme? Would it be included on the NQF?

An effective TY programme, which will be unique to each school, is one where every aspect of the curriculum serves to develop the student in harmony with the Student Dimensions. It is not a qualification under the National Framework of Qualifications. Please refer to page 25 of the Transition Year Programme Statement for information on school reporting: https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/5849acbf-0326-487a-beec-3db6b5878470/TY-Programme-Statement-ENG-INT.pdf

55. What can be done in the new programme to promote school attendance? Is a percentage of completing the TY programme going towards attendance (like the LCA programme)?

Details on assessment and reporting in Transition Year are provided on pages 20-22 and 23-25, respectively, of the Transition Year Programme Statement. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

In line with the approach to Transition Year more generally, schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme, including aspects relating to assessment and reporting, within the parameters of this TY Programme Statement.

56. 2-4 weeks for community placements alone or for community & work experience placements?

The Transition Year Programme Statement states on p19 that a time allocation amounting to the equivalent of two to four weeks of the TY programme is suggested for an appropriate balance of work and community placements. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

57. Do the work placements have to be in a solid block or 1 day weekly?

See response to Q46.

58. Where does the time for these regular meetings come from? Goodwill only goes so far if you keep pulling from the same people!

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

59. How does the school facilitate the Core Team meetings? Does management need to provide cover to allow these meetings to happen?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

60. We offer 16 LC subjects. I fail to see how students get to sample them all before choosing their subjects if it is 3-4 hours pw max.

The Transition Year Programme Statement sets out on p18 that the equivalent of three to four hours per week should be allocated to modules that support the sampling of senior cycle subjects and other areas of learning and development. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

The TYPS does not require that all students should sample all subjects available in a school, and organisation of this time is a matter for individual schools depending on school context, as noted in the TYPS.

61. What is the TY grant going to be per student?

As set out in Financial Guidelines 22 and 23 of 2024, as of the 2024/25 school year, the Transition Year Programme Grant for non-fee paying voluntary secondary schools and community and comprehensive schools has been increased to €100 per student. These

Guidelines are available on the Financial Shared Services Unit's website at
https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2024/03/22-24-Financial-Guideline-Grants-VS-2024_2025-updated-Oct24.pdf and https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2024/03/23-24-Financial-Guideline-CC-Grants-2024-2025-incl-Irish_rev.pdf respectively.

Under the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme, the Department is committed to ensuring that in the future, every student in every school who wishes to participate in the programme will have the opportunity to do so. Officials are currently examining how schools can be supported in order to facilitate this.

62. Our students choose 5 option subjects for TY and each of these is 2 hours weekly. Do we need to completely change this? They can currently choose subjects that they did at JC or new subjects.

Schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme within the parameters of the TY Programme Statement. Where modules are designed to support sampling of senior cycle subjects and other areas of learning and development, the combined time allocation for these components is the equivalent of three to four hours per week, depending on school context.

The Department's Inspectorate will support and advise schools as they audit their Transition Year provision, to ensure it is designed within the parameters of the Programme Statement.

63. 80 mins of PE, does it have to be for EVERY TY student?

The Transition Year Programme Statement states on p18 that the time allocated to PE in Transition Year should be aligned with the Senior Cycle PE Framework. The Transition Year Programme Statement is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/physical-education-framework/

The Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework recommends on p16 that a double period per week is made available as the minimum requirement for teaching senior cycle physical education. The SCPE Framework is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/physical-education-framework/

In recognition that the length of class periods is determined locally by individual schools, neither the TYPS nor the SCPE Framework specify this timing in minutes.

The SCPE Framework also gives, on p10, details on ensuring that SCPE is inclusive of all students.

64. Many schools are on one-hour class periods, the 60-minute class will create a time-tabling problem.

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level.

65. Is there a set weekly time limit for civic and community engagement?

The Transition Year Programme Statement states on p19 that a time allocation amounting to the equivalent of two to four weeks of the TY programme is suggested for an appropriate balance of work and community placements. Community placements will take place as part of Civic and

Community Engagement, along with other components. The TYPS can be found on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

Timetabling of work and/or community placements is a matter for individual schools having regard to school context and the need to maintain an appropriate balance.

66. Will there be any increase in funding to assist rural and disadvantaged schools?

As set out in Financial Guidelines 22 and 23 of 2024, as of the 2024/25 school year, the Transition Year Programme Grant for non-fee paying voluntary secondary schools and community and comprehensive schools has been increased to €100 per student. These Guidelines are available on the Financial Shared Services Unit's website at https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2024/03/22-24-Financial-Guideline-Grants-VS-2024_2025-updated-Oct24.pdf and https://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2024/03/23-24-Financial-Guideline-CC-Grants-2024-2025-incl-Irish_rev.pdfrespectively.

Under the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme, the Department is committed to ensuring that in the future, every student in every school who wishes to participate in the programme will have the opportunity to do so. Officials are currently examining how schools can be supported in order to facilitate this.

67. For people who are programme coordinators and coordinating other programmes and not just TY, how far will we be stretched with the time allocation?

The scheduling and facilitation of staff meetings is a matter for the management and subject departments of individual schools.

The allocation of responsibilities and the duties attached to individual roles is a matter for school authorities.

68. Parent teacher meetings who will they fit into a schedule in TY?

Parent-teacher meetings are considered part of day-to-day running of a school and therefore are the responsibility of school leadership and/or Board of Management.

69. We currently have 3.3hrs per week for Eng/Maths/Irish. When this is reduced to 2hrs I would have concerns for students who access EAL/AEN supports during the same time as Irish. Is there any guidance for teaching of special tuition for these students.

The recent Inspectorate report "Additional Language Needs – Whole-school and Classroom Approaches for Inclusive Language Learning: Findings from Primary and Post-primary school inspections of English as an Additional Language" found a need for improved whole-school structures to support provision for EAL, and to embed provision for EAL within the Continuum of Support framework. To enhance EAL learning outcomes, it stresses the importance of appropriate assessment approaches and effective teaching approaches. EAL support is much more whole-school and should not be confined to Irish lesson time.

Mainstream and subject teachers in TY should use a greater variety of teaching approaches to reinforce key subject specific language and teachers in support roles should plan interventions directly linked to the curriculum and aligned with the young person's language targets. The report is available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/985fa-department-of-

education-inspectorate-publishes-findings-from-school-inspections-of-english-as-an-additional-language/

SET Guidelines and supporting documentation to aid schools in supporting Children/Young people with Special Education Needs are available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/985fa-department-of-education-inspectorate-publishes-findings-from-school-inspections-of-english-as-an-additional-language/

Here, schools can access a series of documents to aid them in supporting children and young people with special education needs in their mainstream classes including TY.

The revised Guidelines, underpinning circular 0064/2024, replace those issued in 2017. They have been developed by the Inspectorate, The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in conjunction with the Department. The updated Guidelines are provided to aid schools to support young people in mainstream classes with Special Educational Needs.

The Indicators of Effective Practice are provided for schools to help the school identify areas of current effective practice, build on these effective practices and prioritise areas for development.

In early 2025, the DE will provide:

- Examples of Student Support files and Student Support plans are provided, which illustrate how the Problem-Solving Process, outlined in Section 2 of the Indicators of Effective Practice for Schools, was used to identify strengths, interests and needs of the young people.
- A set of templates to support schools which they may find useful in supporting young people with Special Education Needs.

A series of supports will be made available to assist schools in the implementation of effective practice in the following key areas:

- Introduction to The Guidelines
- The Continuum of Support Framework
- Key actions in the provision of special education teaching support
- The Student Support File and The Student Support Plan

70. Can we not get a sample timetable that we all follow- stating core subject, sample subjects and work placements etc. After all the students are all going into LC after TY and they should have similar learning experiences during TY.

Schools have autonomy and flexibility to design their TY programme within the parameters of the TY Programme Statement, which is available on curriculumonline.ie at https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/transition-year/

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools and will depend on factors such as the length of class periods, which is determined at locally at school level, and the nature of the individual TY programme in each school.

71. Question regarding Elective-sampling LC subjects and other areas of learning and development. TY is very much limited to what teachers have space on timetable…

is that included in "depending on school context we do 3 rotations of 3 subjects. so, for example Technology has only 3 classes for around 10 weeks as teacher not available but gives all students a taste rather than they choosing it for full year.

Timetabling is a matter for the management of individual schools. The organisation of components into semesters, blocks or across the entire year is decided at school level. Where modules are designed to support sampling of senior cycle subjects and other areas of learning and development, the combined time allocation for these components is the equivalent of three to four hours per week, depending on school context.

Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office
19 February 2025

Questions for Department of Education

Resources

(1)   Tranche 1 starts at the beginning of the 2025/26 school year, and subjects are: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Arabic, Latin, Ancient Greek, Business, Climate Action and Sustainable Development (Phase 1 schools), and Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (Phase 1 schools).

Can you set out for <u>each</u> subject the committed funding and resources to support the introduction of <u>each</u> new subject specification and when this funding and support will become available?

(2)   The Minister for Education announced in early December 2024 in a Press Release "€12m funding for Leaving Certificate Science subject implementation" It further states that "It is expected that schools will prioritise the purchase of consumables and related equipment needs. The funding may be used to support the implementation of the new senior cycle sciences or more generally to support the broader science programme which may include, for example, Agricultural Science, Transition Year Science or Junior Cycle Science."

Can you confirm a commitment to recurrence of this funding on an annual basis for schools?

(3)   How were the bands for the quantum of funding devised?

(4)   Are the Department aware that there are schools with student numbers well in excess of 900 and as such feel discriminated against?

(5)   Teachers are conscious that in many schools, there is inadequate laboratory facilities available or a requirement to provide new laboratory facilities to undertake implementation of the new science subjects' specifications.

Can you share any audit study data regarding these matters, that has been undertaken by the Department of Education or any other party, to properly prepare for the introduction of these new subject specifications?

(6)   Further to question 5, what funding is being made available, if any, to schools that need to
   (a) upgrade existing science laboratory facilities?
   (b) provide new science laboratory facilities?

(7)   Further to question 6, if such funding is being made available, how do schools access it and will it be feasible to have such new or upgraded facilities to be in place by September 2025?

(8)   The training plan for teachers of the Sciences spans four years, but the new syllabus rolls out next September, meaning two sets of Leaving Certificate students will complete the programme before teachers are fully trained. This is concerning for anyone involved in the programme's rollout.

Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(9)   Does the Department of Education intend to provide funding for the employment of Laboratory Technicians and other support staff as subjects get rolled out into the future?

Training/CPD
(10)   In 2023, ASTI Annual Convention and TUI Congress adopted the following Motion:

That the ASTI/TUI demand, that for all future Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi.

It can be seen that the parties named within the motion have thus far failed in large measure to live up to the sensible requirements set out in this motion.

How long in advance of implementation of a new syllabus/specification do the Department of Education regard as acceptable for the provision of comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi?

(11)   It is clear that commencement of the implementation of new syllabus/specifications will take place whereby teachers will not have received any CPD with respect to teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes. Does the Department of Education consider this to be a professional approach to such implementation?

(12)   A similar experience to the much-criticised JCT Training is recurring. The quality and duration of training need to be improved. The facilitators need to be able /prepared to answer all questions to give certainty to teachers, students and parents. They are, through no fault of their own on an individual level, simply ill-prepared. Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(13)   At a meeting of the Leaving Certificate Redevelopment Forum of 18th September 2024, the question of the rigidity of approach regarding the 40% minimum for Additional Assessment Components in newly redeveloped subjects was raised. A senior Department of Education Official undertook to provide a written statement of rationale in that regard.
   (a) Given the extraordinary length of time in drafting the statement and the obvious inability of anyone present at the meeting to tender anything of substance at the meeting, was the rationale in existence in written form anywhere, prior to the 18th September?
   (b) If it was, why has it not been possible to share it in the long intervening period since?
   (c) When will it be shared?
   (d) Has it/ will it be formulated since 18th September and/or could it be considered a retrofit if/when it is ever made known?

(14)   ASTI is strongly of the view that, as the professionals in the field, (Subject Development Groups should decide the percentage allocated to an AAC.

Can the Department of Education set out a rationale which clarifies why other arrangements are best practice in this context?

(15)   It is the view of the ASTI, shared by a large body of opinion within the scientific community in Ireland, that the allocation of 40% of marks to the AAC is inappropriate for science subjects and should be lowered to 20%. ASTI is aware that the Department of Education has received extensive material in that regard from the IUA and the ISTA to name just two. Does the Department accord any significance to this and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(16)   It has belatedly emerged that Additional Assessment Components will be assessed at common level – one marking scheme irrespective of whether the student is a Higher or Ordinary level candidate. Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(17)   Do the Department of Education have accurate data on the availability of wi-fi in schools and can they share same?

(18)   Does the department have an intention to take action to address the situation where schools have poor access or unreliable wi-fi?

(19)   The Department of Education Press release of early December 2024 stated as follows:

Teachers and their representatives have been involved in all the Senior Cycle redevelopment work to date – they have contributed to the development of the new specifications and the revised assessment arrangements.

ASTI and others have repeatedly highlighted that this is not the lived experience of ASTI representatives in the Subject Development Groups.

A variety of mechanisms have been used to ensure the contribution of teachers is limited or sidelined.

Examples are as follows:

- In August 2024, ASTI nominees to the NCCA Council proposed seven ASTI members of separate subject Development groups to act as Chairperson of their group. While nobody in ASTI expected all such nominations to be successful, nobody also expected any of them to be appointed. This proved to be a correct foregone conclusion.
- A further example is that guidelines documents issued in December 2024 for Science subjects were not finalised in collaboration with Subject development Groups who last met in May 2024. For instance, it is suggested in the final document that teachers supervise the laboratory practical work with a maximum of eight students at any one time. Nobody knows whose idea this is!
- Somewhat more egregious, many stakeholders make submissions to the NCCA to inform the process of writing of new subject specifications by subject development groups. Subject Development Groups have been denied access to these submissions, weakening the process substantially.

Is the Department of Education not concerned that teacher union and other stakeholders are raising major concerns regarding the process of curricular development by NCCA and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(20)   The NCCA does not sufficiently reflect the voice of the professional practitioner, the teacher. The Subject Development Groups are inexplicably large in some instances with up to 16 members, while other groups have 12. There should be a uniform approach to all SDG constitutions that reflects stakeholder interests in a proportionate way. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(21)   The apparent insistence on one AAC in all subjects is deeply concerning, especially in the context of Engineering and Construction Studies. What is even harder to comprehend is that it is the *practical* and not the *project* that is deemed the unwanted assessment method, despite the potential of the inequity of the project in the context of generative AI and financial considerations. A new route using a document entitled *Appendix 1: Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects* seems to have been created with the objective of ensuring only one AAC will be permitted. This further undermines the SDG and discredits the fairness and

transparency of the entire process. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(22)   Subject specifications are being developed hastily, without sufficient involvement of teachers—the very experts who will be delivering this content. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

(23)   Are the Department concerned at the safety implications in that the guidance for sciences provide for a teacher to simultaneously teach 16 students in a class while also supervising 8 students who are carrying out their research investigations?

(24)   Are the Department of Education aware of any risk assessment that has been trialled regarding the above?

(25)   There are no comprehensive guidelines available to teachers on the use of AI in assessments save for a general acknowledgement that students will be permitted to use generative AI tools when completing their AACs and a requirement that students will need to reference the use of AI tools. Do the Department of Education consider this to be adequate guidance and safeguarding against the possibility of cheating and undermining the validity of the assessment procedure?

Teachers Workload and Responsibility

(26)   Teachers will be having extra duties and time-consuming work practices imposed on them in the implementation of the new subjects, this is especially true in terms of the storage, compilation, and uploading of material for SEC examination purposes.

Do the Department intend to produce any proposals regarding the additional time needed for teachers to sufficiently support students regarding the Additional Assessment Components?

(27)   The emergence of generative AI and the insufficient guidelines on its use and misuse mean it may be practically impossible for teachers to fully authenticate the work of each student. Do the Department of Education have any concerns in that regard and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(28)   Digital submission of material, that has already been introduced in some subjects, has proved unwieldy and time consuming in many schools. Do the Department of Education have any concerns in that regard and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(29)   Advanced mechanisms are available to detect if work was undertaken outside of school time or class time for example. Are the Department of Education willing to commit to investment in such technology to support authentication and verification of authenticity of Additional Assessment Components?

(30)   There needs to be a unified approach and an allocation of suitable software across the education system. The burden of responsibility must rest with the student and not the teacher or school in terms of project submission.

Do the Department of Education see a role for Students to sign-off and take responsibility for their submission of their project to the state Examinations Commission?

(31)   An extra payment to facilitate project work is provided to all subject teachers of Construction Studies for example. Have arrangements been put in place to initiate a similar payment to teachers of subjects who heretofore have received no such payment as their subject has not involved practical examinations or project work?

(32)   The provision of technicians for all practical subjects including Construction Studies, Engineering, Science, Art, Home Economics, and IT is critical.   Can the Department of Education set-out its plans, if any, to provide schools with support

in this regard to accompany the roll out of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme?

(33)   Teacher wellbeing is an important issue considering the retention and recruitment crisis and other matters. Initiative overload and ever demanding work practices, coupled with a lack of facilities, resources and especially time is creating an unhealthy workplace environment in many schools across the system. ASTI Survey data indicates 52% currently satisfied with their job and 33% dissatisfied, a marked decline of 67% in 2012 (According to a recent Red C survey)

What initiative(s) if any have the Department of Education in mind to address this matter in the context of the implementation of the redeveloped senior cycle?

(34)   As can be observed from the CBAs now in Junior Cycle there will be an extra burden on students. There is pressure to cover enough content hastily to be able to carry out an educationally justified project. Do the Department of Education have any concerns on the implications for student stress arising from the number and workload attaching to completion of AACs by students and if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(35)   ASTI is unclear on the position regarding legal protections or supports provided for teachers (or principals) who may have suspicions about the authenticity of the work and are unwilling to sign-off on it, perhaps leaving them open to possible costly litigation. Can the Department of Education set out the position in that regard and will the Department of Education provide an indemnity in that respect?

EQUITY:

(36)   ASTI believes that the award 40% for the AAC will create inequality in our Senior Cycle, widening the social divide. Benefit will accrue to those with access to well-equipped school laboratories, computer facilities, laboratory technicians etc and advanced generative AI tools. ASTI believes that no group of candidates should enjoy unfair advantage over others arising from the nature of the test or the manner of its implementation.

Does the Department of Education have any concerns in this regard and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

(37)   There is clearly a lack of space and time being given to consider all matters. It is being rushed or "accelerated" without reason. ASTI believes that this rush is affecting the work of the Department of Education, NCCA, SEC, Oide and the Teaching profession. It is also causing concern for Students and Parents. The rational conclusion is to allow more time for all to get this right.

Given the concerns raised and implicit in all the foregoing questions, will the Minister and the department of Education postpone the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme to allow the concerns be addressed?

Department response to ASTI questions

Answers to questions on Senior Cycle Redevelopment submitted by ASTI

1. Tranche 1 starts at the beginning of the 2025/26 school year, and subjects are: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Arabic, Latin, Ancient Greek, Business, Climate Action and Sustainable Development (Phase 1 schools), and Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (Phase 1 schools).

   Can you set out for each subject the committed funding and resources to support the introduction of each new subject specification and when this funding and support will become available?

New subjects in Tranche 1

Details on the package of supports that will be provided to schools participating in Phase 1 of the introduction of the two new Leaving Certificate subjects of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development can be found in the Information Booklets on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6f89e-phase-one-call-for-applications-2024/

These booklets have also issued directly to the successful schools.

Revised subjects in Tranche 1

Details on the Science Implementation Support Grant to support schools with the rollout of revised Senior Cycle science subjects can be found in the relevant press release and attached guidelines on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/95291-12m-funding-for-leaving-certificate-science-subject-implementation/

These guidelines have also issued directly to all post-primary schools in the free scheme.

The Department has not identified or received any formal request for specific additional resources or funding in relation to the introduction of the other revised subjects in Tranche 1 (Business, Ancient Greek, Arabic and Latin).

General

Oide is currently delivering a TPL programme at both Whole School and subject\programme level in respect of the Tranche 1 subjects and the Transition Year Programme Statement; Senior Cycle SPHE and Level 1\2 Learning Programmes. Guidelines in respect of the Additional Assessment Components for the Tranche 1 subjects were published in December last. The SEC has also set out the timelines to provide sample examination papers for each subject at each level in early April with Oide committed to supporting their publication with TPL delivery in late April.

2. The Minister for Education announced in early December 2024 in a Press Release "€12m funding for Leaving Certificate Science subject implementation" It further states that "It is expected that schools will prioritise the purchase of consumables and related equipment needs. The funding may be used to support the implementation of the new senior cycle sciences or more generally to support the broader science programme which may include, for example, Agricultural Science, Transition Year Science or Junior Cycle Science."

   Can you confirm a commitment to recurrence of this funding on an annual basis for school

As set out in the guidelines sent to schools and published on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/95291-12m-funding-for-leaving-certificate-science-subject-implementation/ the Science Implementation Support Grant is intended to support post-primary schools in the rollout of revised Leaving Certificate science subjects in the 2025/26 school year.

The Department continues to examine how schools can be supported in the introduction of the new specifications. This includes considering any resource and facilities in subsequent school years.

3. How were the bands for the quantum of funding devised?

The enrolment bands used range in size from schools with 1-300 pupils in the lowest band to schools with over 900 pupils in the highest band, and are based on the enrolment bands used for the allocation of Deputy Principal posts as set out on page 3 of Circulars 0002/2023, 0003/2023 and 0004/2023 which are available on gov.ie at:

https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/84e36-staffing-arrangements-in-voluntary-secondary-schools-for-the-202324-school-year/

https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f35af-staffing-arrangements-in-community-and-comprehensive-schools-for-the-202324-school-year/

https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/9ae10-staffing-arrangements-in-education-and-training-boards-for-the-202324-school-year/

The bands set out in these circulars were streamlined into a smaller number of bands to minimise the number of edge cases (i.e. schools that might be just below a higher threshold\band).

4. Are the Department aware that there are schools with student numbers well in excess of 900 and as such feel discriminated against?

No management body, school or student has approached the Department in relation to this.

The Department receives extensive and detailed data on school enrolments via the annual returns, and this data has informed the Science Implementation Support Grant. Enrolment data for the 2024/25 school year is available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/post-primary-schools/ By using the latest PPOD data (i.e. for the current school year) this ensured that schools were correctly categorised within the defined enrolment bands in the current year.

Of the 115 schools with an enrolment of 900 or more students in 2024/2025, 101 schools have an enrolment between 900 and 1200 students, while just 14 schools have an enrolment of more than 1200 students.

5. Teachers are conscious that in many schools, there is inadequate laboratory facilities available or a requirement to provide new laboratory facilities to undertake implementation of the new science subjects' specifications.

Can you share any audit study data regarding these matters, that has been undertaken by the Department of Education or any other party, to properly prepare for the introduction of these new subject specifications?

The Department will continue to support the provision of science laboratories, as required, through the school building programme. This typically operates as part of school building projects for new school buildings or as part of extension projects catering for demographic

growth. The Summer Works Scheme, which operates on a multi-annual basis, is the standard mechanism for the upgrade/refurbishment of facilities in existing schools including school laboratories. It is envisaged that an announcement on the application process for the next multi-annual Summer Works Scheme will be made in early 2025. Further information will issue directly to schools in due course and will also be published on gov.ie.

It is also open to a school authority to make an application for additional accommodation through the 'Additional School Accommodation (ASA) scheme' for science laboratory provision. Information on the ASA scheme and application forms are available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/563cae-additional-accommodation-scheme/

The Department's furniture and equipment (F&E) section also processes requests for replacement of broken and obsolete F&E for science labs. Information on the F&E section is available on gov.ie at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5e1da-furniture-equipment/

6. **Further to question 5, what funding is being made available, if any, to schools that need to**

   (a)   **upgrade existing science laboratory facilities?**

   (b)   **provide new science laboratory facilities?**

See response to Q5.

7. **Further to question 6, if such funding is being made available, how do schools access it and will it be feasible to have such new or upgraded facilities to be in place by September 2025?**

See response to Q5.

8. **The training plan for teachers of the Sciences spans four years, but the new syllabus rolls out next September, meaning two sets of Leaving Certificate students will complete the programme before teachers are fully trained. This is concerning for anyone involved in the programme's rollout.**

   Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

Oide's training plan for teachers of the science subjects spans 4+ years. Oide will provide initial intensive professional learning opportunities for teachers of the science subjects one full year in advance of the implementation of the new science specifications in schools. Oide is engaging with all of the teachers of the SC science subjects in the current school year, with the new specification set to be implemented in schools in the 2025/2026 school year. Oide will continue to engage intensively with all of these teachers over the duration of the initial two years of implementation of the new specifications in schools (i.e., in the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 school years).

Furthermore, Oide will continue to provide an intensive programme of professional learning in the school year following the initial full cycle of the implementation of the new specifications in schools (i.e., in the school year 2027/2028). In summary, Oide will provide ongoing support for teachers throughout the first full implementation of the new specifications in schools.

Oide will review its professional learning offerings to schools/teachers at that juncture and will continue in subsequent school years to provide relevant supports and resources for teachers of the new science specifications, hence the '+' in the 4+ years of the roll-out of supports.

9. **Does the Department of Education intend to provide funding for the employment of Laboratory Technicians and other support staff as subjects get rolled out into the future?**

The Department does not fund laboratory technician posts in post-primary schools.

10. **In 2023, ASTI Annual Convention and TUI Congress adopted the following Motion:**

That the ASTI/TUI demand, that for all future Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi.

It can be seen that the parties named within the motion have thus far failed in large measure to live up to the sensible requirements set out in this motion. How long in advance of implementation of a new syllabus/specification do the Department of Education regard as acceptable for the provision of comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi?

The format of the specifications was informed by extensive research and deliberations with stakeholders.

"The technical form of curriculum specifications for subjects and modules in a redeveloped senior cycle" can be found on the NCCA website. The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report which sets out a clear purpose and vision for a redeveloped senior cycle and provides a roadmap to the creation of a Framework for Senior Cycle, is also available on the NCCA website. Specifications for each revised Tranche One subject, as well as Guidelines to support the Additional Assessment Component, are now available on curriculumonline.ie.

The SEC has doubled the number of sample examination papers it normally provides when a subject is introduced or revised with four papers being provided for each subject – two at each level – meaning 4 per subject. The sample papers will be available in April 2025, in the school year prior to the commencement of the teaching of the new specifications. This is a full 18 months earlier than was normally the case previously when specifications changed. It is also more than two full (calendar) years before a student will sit an exam in the subjects – and several months before any student begins 5th year in one of the new or revised subjects. The sample AAC brief will issue in all subjects at the beginning of 5th year – September 2025. This will be followed by the issue of the live brief in each subject 4 months later - in January 2026. This timeline is published in a number of Senior Cycle Redevelopment Information Notes, which issue periodically to all post-primary schools. The information notes are available on gov.ie/seniorcycle.

11. **It is clear that commencement of the implementation of new syllabus/specifications will take place whereby teachers will not have received any CPD with respect to teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes. Does the Department of Education consider this to be a professional approach to such implementation?**

Guidelines to support the Additional Assessment Component in all Tranche One subjects are now available on curriculumonline.ie. The SEC has doubled the number of sample examination papers it normally provides when a subject is introduced or revised with four papers being provided for each subject – two at each level – meaning 4 per subject. The sample papers will be available in April 2025, in the school year prior to the commencement of the teaching of the new specifications. This is a full 18 months earlier than was normally the case previously when specifications changed. It is also more than two full (calendar) years before a student will sit an exam in the subjects – and several months before any student begins 5th year in one of the new or revised subjects.

The sample AAC brief will issue in all subjects at the beginning of 5th year – September 2025. This will be followed by the issue of the live brief in each subject 4 months later - in January 2026. Attendance and engagement with training offered by Oide has been strong.

As outlined at the January meeting of the SCR Partner's Forum, there have been 306 whole-school professional learning experiences, with 14,554 attendees. 2836 have attended the Science Cluster Day, 1868 have attended the Business Cluster Day. In respect of the new subjects, there has been strong attendance across the online meet and greets (111 for DFTS, 73 CASD), webinars (98 DFTS, 56 CASD) and face-to-face professional learning experiences (99 DFTS, 145 CASD)

12. **A similar experience to the much-criticised JCT Training is recurring. The quality and duration of training need to be improved. The facilitators need to be able /prepared to answer all questions to give certainty to teachers, students and parents. They are, through no fault of their own on an individual level, simply ill- prepared. Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?**

Oide works closely with the Department, NCCA and SEC (please see p25 of the December Information Note to Schools at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-redevelopment/#information-notes). As the implementation period progresses, Oide staff are provided with upskilling events and relevant materials ahead of Oide professional learning offerings for teachers.

A phased approach is being taken to Senior Cycle Redevelopment, including the development of new and revised specifications. The introduction of new and revised specifications will be achieved in annual tranches and it will be 2029 before all students experience revised specifications in all Leaving Certificate subjects.

Oide staff will provide material in a timely manner in line with the agreed schedule for the finalisation of the specifications and other developments across the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme.

This material will be made available well in advance of the implementation of each tranche in schools giving schools and teachers adequate preparation time for their implementation in

classrooms. The Guidelines to support the completion of AACs are now available on curriculumonline.ie . These Guidelines were developed by the NCCA in close co-operation with the SEC and also involved engagement with teacher focus groups, and Oide met with NCCA in November 2024, on a subject by subject basis, to work through these guidelines.. The Guidelines will also inform teacher professional learning being delivered by the teacher support service, Oide.

13. **At a meeting of the Leaving Certificate Redevelopment Forum of 18th September 2024, the question of the rigidity of approach regarding the 40% minimum for Additional Assessment Components in newly redeveloped subjects was raised. A senior Department of Education Official undertook to provide a written statement of rationale in that regard.**

(a)   Given the extraordinary length of time in drafting the statement and the obvious inability of anyone present at the meeting to tender anything of substance at the meeting, was the rationale in existence in written form anywhere, prior to the 18th September?

(b)   If it was, why has it not been possible to share it in the long intervening period since?

(c)   When will it be shared?

(d)   Has it/ will it be formulated since 18th September and/or could it be considered a retrofit if/when it is ever made known?

At the SCR Partners' Forum in September 2024, the ASTI will be aware that the Department explained that a policy decision had been taken that a significant and valuable percentage of marks needed to be allocated to the AAC in order to give students adequate opportunity to demonstrate their skills. It was also noted that there are currently subjects with additional components to which greater than 40% of marks are allocated.

The 40% weighting reflects the significance of the AACs and their integration into teaching and learning, and can thereby support changes to classroom practices and the design of assessment for quality learning experiences for students.

At the same meeting the NCCA explained that the minimum 40% parameters are set out in the Assessment Parameters for the relevant tranche which is included, as an appendix, to the brief for each of the subjects within that tranche. The brief (and its appendix) are included in the Background Papers. Where higher weighting is recommended by the SDG a case is made on the rationale for it to be higher. This is set out in the parameter's documents given to each SDG and the NCCA confirmed that they will re-emphasise this to all T2 and T3 SDGs. In one case in T1 (Drama Film and Theatre Studies) a reasonable argument was made for 50% of marks to be allocated to the AAC and the rationale was accepted. Similarly the weightings applicable in Arabic recognise the inclusion of both an oral and aural for that subject.

The tendering of a document for the September Forum meeting had not been requested in advance of the meeting. As noted in your question, the Department official concerned undertook to provide a written statement of rationale. The ASTI will be aware that this new paper requested at the meeting was provided to all education partners at the 8 January 2025 Partners' Forum meeting. In addition, the document "Overarching parameters for the design of

assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects" 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 in Tranche 3, including Mathematics.

14. **ASTI is strongly of the view that, as the professionals in the field, (Subject Development Groups should decide the percentage allocated to an AAC.**

   Can the Department of Education set out a rationale which clarifies why other arrangements are best practice in this context?

See response to Q13 above setting out the rationale for the weighting.

In addition, it should be noted that a development group can propose a weighting other than 40% where they are of the view that this higher weighting is warranted for the AAC in question.

The Assessment Parameters document for Tranche 3 states the following:

"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."

15. **It is the view of the ASTI, shared by a large body of opinion within the scientific community in Ireland, that the allocation of 40% of marks to the AAC is inappropriate for science subjects and should be lowered to 20%. ASTI is aware that the Department of Education has received extensive material in that regard from the IUA and the ISTA to name just two. Does the Department accord any significance to this and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?**

Please refer to the December 2024 Information Note for information on how the approach being taken to Senior Cycle Redevelopment builds on learning drawn from implementing previous reforms and introducing new subjects, and from listening to our education partners, which leverages their experience; https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/314227/587710fb-5210-4447-85ce-22ded48bc819.pdf

The approach to the programme for Senior Redevelopment has, from its outset, been about collaboration, about engaging with stakeholders and partners in education, and about recognising and amplifying the student voice. The implementation structures allow for important feedback and oversight from a diverse network of stakeholders and representative bodies, including representatives of teachers, parents, and students, among other relevant professional bodies.

Through the SDGs, the Irish Science Teachers' Association (ISTA) and Irish Universities Association (IUA) have been directly involved in all stages of the development process over a number of years. Its nominees, who are science teachers, are members in full of all three SDGs established by the NCCA to oversee the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. The Minister welcomed ISTA's work in preparing its comprehensive report for the SDGs developing the sciences as part of Tranche One, and thanked them for their continued interest and engagement with the process.

Please refer to question 13 above regarding the rationale for 40%.

16. It has belatedly emerged that Additional Assessment Components will be assessed at common level – one marking scheme irrespective of whether the student is a Higher or Ordinary level candidate. Does the Department of Education have concerns regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?

The specific nature of additional assessment components for Tranche 1 subjects will be determined each year by the SEC in accordance with the specification and the assessment arrangements which apply.

Generally, for subjects in which the AAC is a piece of coursework, students will respond to a common brief with arrangements made by the SEC to issue marks at Higher or Ordinary level as appropriate depending on the level at which the student goes on to sit the written examination. All AACs will be externally assessed by the SEC.

Noting the difference here between a common brief and a common level brief, it may be of benefit to consider practice in existing subjects such as Construction Studies, Art, and Agricultural Science which have common briefs. The clear benefit of a common brief is that students do not have to nominate their final level at the time of the completion of their coursework.

The SEC uses a range of approaches to appropriately reward achievement in the responses to common briefs which includes different weightings for the work completed at Higher and Ordinary level.

17. Do the Department of Education have accurate data on the availability of wi-fi in schools and can they share same?

The Schools Broadband programme operated by the Department at an annual cost of some €15m, provides high speed broadband connectivity to all primary and post-primary schools. The service to post-primary schools enables speeds of at least 200 Mbps up to 1 Gbps, and includes content filtering at levels determined by the schools themselves.

A schools broadband helpdesk is also provided, managed by OIDE-TiE on behalf of the Department, through which schools can access first line tech support on their broadband connectivity.

Broadband connectivity is provided to the school, and schools will then determine how they wish to network this throughout the school, either fixed, or wireless. Schools can use their ICT grant funding for this purpose, as well as their general capitation.

Decisions regarding the use and deployment of digital technology in schools is a matter for the Board of Management of each school in the context of their digital learning planning. Schools are advised to consult with members of the school community including parents when planning for the introduction of digital technologies including devices with cost and other implications been fully considered by the Boards of Managements before a decision is made.

As such, the Department does not gather the data referred to.

18. Does the department have an intention to take action to address the situation where schools have poor access or unreliable wi-fi?

To date under the Digital Strategy for schools to 2027, €100m has issued out of a committed €200m under the NDP in ICT grant funding. This funding enabled schools to invest in appropriate digital infrastructure to enable the embedding of the use of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment.

Additionally, a further funding of €50m secured as part of Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan under the NextGenerationEU Recovery and Resilience Facility issued to all recognised schools in the free education scheme to support learners at risk of educational disadvantage through the digital divide in late 2021.

The Department also operates the Schools Broadband Programme at an annual cost in excess of €15m, providing free high speed broadband to recognised schools, and a dedicated schools broadband helpdesk. This service includes content filtering and firewall security to schools on the network.

All Primary, post-primary and Special schools have high speed connectivity, with all now on speeds of 100Mbp/s plus up to 1Gbp/s. additionally all Education Centres are also provided with high speed connectivity through the post-primary programme.

As set out at Q17 above, broadband connectivity is provided to the school, and schools will then determine how they wish to network this throughout the school, either fixed, or wireless.

19. The Department of Education Press release of early December 2024 stated as follows:

Teachers and their representatives have been involved in all the Senior Cycle redevelopment work to date – they have contributed to the development of the new specifications and the revised assessment arrangements.

ASTI and others have repeatedly highlighted that this is not the lived experience of ASTI representatives in the Subject Development Groups.

A variety of mechanisms have been used to ensure the contribution of teachers is limited or sidelined.

Examples are as follows:

- **In August 2024, ASTI nominees to the NCCA Council proposed seven ASTI members of separate subject Development groups to act as Chairperson of their group. While nobody in ASTI expected all such nominations to be successful, nobody also expected any of them to be appointed. This proved to be a correct foregone conclusion.**
- **A further example is that guidelines documents issued in December 2024 for Science subjects were not finalised in collaboration with Subject development Groups who last met in May 2024. For instance, it is suggested in the final document that teachers supervise the laboratory practical work with a maximum of eight students at any one time. Nobody knows whose idea this is!**

- **Somewhat more egregious, many stakeholders make submissions to the NCCA to inform the process of writing of new subject specifications by subject development groups. Subject Development Groups have been denied access to these submissions, weakening the process substantially.**

Is the Department of Education not concerned that teacher union and other stakeholders are raising major concerns regarding the process of curricular development by NCCA and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

Please refer to the December 2024 Information Note for information on how the approach being taken to Senior Cycle Redevelopment builds on learning drawn from implementing previous reforms and introducing new subjects, and from listening to our education partners, which leverages their experience:
https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/314227/587710fb-5210-4447-85ce-22ded48bc819.pdf

The approach to the programme for Senior Cycle Redevelopment has, from its outset, been about collaboration, about engaging with stakeholders and partners in education, and about recognising and amplifying the student voice. The implementation structures allow for important feedback and oversight from a diverse network of stakeholders and representative bodies, including representatives of teachers, parents, and students, among other relevant professional bodies.

Appointment of chairs of development groups
The NCCA Council Terms of Reference state:

> *"The Executive identifies the chair of each Development Group prior to its first meeting. Suitability of chairpersons is based on a number of factors, including subject expertise, public profile, standing in the curriculum area in question and experience of a range of aspects of education. In addition, persons invited to act as chairpersons are identified as having significant chairing experience and indicate their availability for liaison with the relevant Education Officer in preparing for and facilitating the work of the Development Group. (page 9) Those interested in being considered for the chairperson are asked to complete an Expression of Interest form in which they set out their experience and expertise in relation to criteria above. A small group comprising senior NCCA Executive members and a Council Deputy Chairperson, use the information presented in this form to appoint a chairperson for each development group. "*

AAC guidelines
The long-standing practice in NCCA is that, upon approval of a specification, the Executive develops the assessment guidelines in collaboration with the SEC. The spec's details on assessment agreed by the relevant development group, along with the discussions that took place within that development group, inform the assessment guidelines.

In the case of the Tranche 1 guidelines, NCCA made key changes to the development process:

- NCCA met with teachers to review drafts of the guidelines and we used their feedback to finalise the documents.
- NCCA involved relevant Oide and SEC personnel in these review meetings with teachers.

Consultation feedback

The approach taken by the NCCA to the provision of consultation feedback to SDGs is in line with long-standing past practice within the NCCA, where written submissions, as well as the information from all the other modes of consultation, were analysed. Following this, the outcomes were presented thematically to the Development Groups. This has proven to be an efficient way to facilitate the subject development work: for example, contentious issues that required detailed consideration were identified rapidly for the SDG members; elements of the specifications that required changes were highlighted and suggestions from the consultation brought forward for consideration; and the SDGs were enabled to conduct detailed line-by-line scrutiny of the specifications, based on the collated findings from the consultations.

The NCCA is committed to reviewing processes to support specification development as part of its regular workflow. Three particular actions are being progressed at present as part of this and will be discussed by the NCCA Council.

20. **The NCCA does not sufficiently reflect the voice of the professional practitioner, the teacher. The Subject Development Groups are inexplicably large in some instances with up to 16 members, while other groups have 12. There should be a uniform approach to all SDG constitutions that reflects stakeholder interests in a proportionate way. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?**

In the main and notwithstanding sectoral differences, the composition of NCCA development groups reflects the range of education partners whose nominees make up the Council. In the case of post-primary development groups, each of the two teacher unions has two representatives. In addition, where a Teacher Subject Association exists, that association has a representative. Other nominating organisations can and often do nominate a teacher to represent them. Currently, 50-70% of the members of the NCCA post-primary development groups are teachers.

There are other important ways in which teachers' voices shape the curriculum and assessment work of Development Groups. These include:

- research - a Background Paper plays a key role in the early stage of a Development Group's work. This paper sets out the current context, relevant developments internationally and, very importantly, perspectives from teachers, students and school leaders. These perspectives play a central role in identifying the key issues for consideration in the development of the specification. The schools involved in this work are selected from Expressions of Interest received by NCCA, and taken together, reflect the national profile of schools.
- consultation - NCCA consultations on draft specifications usually involve multiple formats, including online surveys; focus groups with teachers, with students and with school leaders; written submissions; and consultative seminars. As with the work on the Background Papers, the schools involved in the focus group work are selected from Expressions of Interest received by NCCA, and taken together, reflect the national profile of schools. Teachers are also the main attendees at consultative seminars, for example, the seminar on the three draft science specifications in Spring 2024.

21. **The apparent insistence on one AAC in all subjects is deeply concerning, especially in the context of Engineering and Construction Studies. What is even harder to comprehend is that it is the *practical* and not the *project* that is deemed the unwanted assessment method, despite the potential of the inequity of the project in the context of generative AI and financial considerations. A new route using a document entitled *Appendix 1: Overarching parameters for the design of assessment arrangements in the development of specifications for all Tranche 3 subjects* seems to have been created with the objective of ensuring only one AAC will be permitted. This further undermines the SDG and discredits the fairness and transparency of the entire process. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?**

The development of specifications, including assessment methods, for all subjects is the responsibility of subject development groups (SDGs). The document referred to sets out the general parameters and processes to guide the work of the SDGs as they consider the most appropriate assessment for each subject.

Page 1 of the document referred to explicitly states that exceptions to the general approach that all subjects will have one additional assessment component can be made:

"Typically, there should be two assessment components: One written examination and one other assessment component. However, there may be exceptions to this that are justified even after extensive consideration of the overall assessment load on students."

Following consideration of the case made by the Construction Studies Development Group (as received by the Department through the NCCA on 13 December), the Department agreed that two AACs rather than one are appropriate to this subject. The Construction Studies Development Group's work has subsequently continued on this basis. No request for similar consideration has been made by the Engineering Development Group.

Page 2 of the same document explicitly states that it is for subject development groups to consider the most appropriate assessment for each subject in preparing the draft specification, while Table 1 provides a non-exhaustive list of possible AAC types, which explicitly includes practical investigations.

22. **Subject specifications are being developed hastily, without sufficient involvement of teachers—the very experts who will be delivering this content. Is the Department of Education concerned regarding this matter and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concern?**

See response to Q20.

23. **Are the Department concerned at the safety implications in that the guidance for sciences provide for a teacher to simultaneously teach 16 students in a class while also supervising 8 students who are carrying out their research investigations?**

As with all science practical work, teachers, as professionals, carry out their own risk assessments and use the outcomes of these to make decisions about what is safe and feasible when their students are carrying out practical investigations.

24. Are the Department of Education aware of any risk assessment that has been trialled regarding the above?

See response to Q23.

25. There are no comprehensive guidelines available to teachers on the use of AI in assessments save for a general acknowledgement that students will be permitted to use generative AI tools when completing their AACs and a requirement that students will need to reference the use of AI tools. Do the Department of Education consider this to be adequate guidance and safeguarding against the possibility of cheating and undermining the validity of the assessment procedure?

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) has an overarching responsibility to ensure the integrity, fairness and equity of the system of second level examinations in Ireland.

School authorities, teachers and candidates are of course aware that work in digital booklets (and indeed all other formats) must be the candidate's individual work, verified by the candidate, the class teacher and the school management representative. The arrangements for the acceptance and authentication of coursework for the state examinations are outlined in Circulars S69/04, S68/08 and S76/22 and in the individual subject specific circulars which issue annually from the SEC. Since the advent of AI software (such as, for example, ChatGPT), the SEC has been asked by school authorities for guidance on the permitted use or otherwise of this technology in the completion of coursework.

Since the 2023 examinations, the SEC has updated its general and subject specific documentation to include an instruction in relation to material generated by AI software. All instructions for 2024 contain specific information on the permitted use, or otherwise, of AI software. he instructions make clear that any material generated by AI software will be treated in the same way as any other material that the candidate has not generated themselves. Including it without quoting it as the work of AI software will be considered plagiarism, which can result in the forfeit of all marks for the coursework component. Where any material generated by AI software is included in a coursework submission and is properly quoted or referenced, no credit will be awarded for any of that material itself. Credit can only be awarded for the effective use of this material in the support or development of the candidate's own work. This is the established practice that already applies to the inclusion of quoted material, (whether that be text, images, or other forms of material,) created by human authors.

Subject specific coursework documents issued by the SEC now contain the following text, or a variation of it:

> "Any secondary materials (e.g. books, journals, web sites etc.) that is used must be acknowledged. Also, all research sources used such as: publications including books, professional journals and government reports; online sources and other types of media; any material generated using artificial intelligence (AI) software or applications; and material from specialist organisations and relevant individuals must be referenced and acknowledged. To include such material without properly referencing the source will be considered plagiarism."

The governing circulars referred to above are available on the SEC's website together with subject specific information which is published at it is issues to schools.

Breach of Regulations

In the interest of being fair to all candidates, the SEC must be satisfied that marks awarded have been gained fairly and will investigate any suggestion, suspicion or allegation of cheating or other impropriety in relation to the examinations. This is essential in order to uphold the integrity of the Irish State examinations system and to underpin equity and fairness within the system in order to enable all candidates to display their achievements on an equal footing.

The SEC has procedures in place to investigate and deal with cases of possible non-compliance with the examination regulations in relation all examination components including coursework. The copying from, or reproduction of, material from such sources may be considered plagiarism. Any case of suspected copying, plagiarism (which includes the use of AI software), improper assistance, or procurement of work prepared by another party will be thoroughly investigated. These actions are breaches of examination rules and attract the penalties described in the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools. The penalties include: loss of the marks for the coursework, loss of the subject, loss of the entire examination in all subjects, or being debarred from the Certificate Examinations in subsequent years. There may also be serious consequences for any persons who provides candidates with inappropriate assistance, as this is an offence under the Education Act 1998.

Appendix 4 of the recently published AAC Guidelines includes referencing material generated by AI software and about plagiarism and penalties for submitting inauthentic work. "

26. **Teachers will be having extra duties and time-consuming work practices imposed on them in the implementation of the new subjects, this is especially true in terms of the storage, compilation, and uploading of material for SEC examination purposes.**

    Do the Department intend to produce any proposals regarding the additional time needed for teachers to sufficiently support students regarding the Additional Assessment Components?

Of 40 curricular subjects at Leaving Certificate Established level now, 28 already have additional components of assessment. The SEC is not aware of such difficulties experienced by teachers, including those in subjects in which coursework has been recently introduced or in subjects in which coursework is now in digital format. However, see details in response to Q28 below of a process of review.

27. **The emergence of generative AI and the insufficient guidelines on its use and misuse mean it may be practically impossible for teachers to fully authenticate the work of each student. Do the Department of Education have any concerns in that regard and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?**

See response to Q25.

The management of coursework by the class teacher involves intervention by the teacher, as appropriate, to ensure that each candidate is responsible for their own individual work.

In some subjects all of the work on the coursework must be carried out in class under direct teacher supervision. In some subjects, research, some "writing up", etc, can be done outside of the classroom, provided that the teacher can maintain the appropriate level of monitoring and oversight of progress.

The class teacher is required to confirm that they have monitored the Practical Coursework on a regular basis and that the Practical Coursework submitted by candidates are their own individual work. The School Principal/School Management is also required to authenticate the work.

Within the authentication arrangements, as outlined in the governing circulars, there is a very clear process for reporting suspicions that work submitted by candidates is not their own authentic, unaided work. The process requires input from not only the teacher but the principal. On foot of this process, the SEC investigates cases of malpractice leading to the withholding of results each year.

28. **Digital submission of material, that has already been introduced in some subjects, has proved unwieldy and time consuming in many schools. Do the Department of Education have any concerns in that regard and what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?**

As advised at the Partners' Forum the SEC has commenced a review of a range of issues related to coursework including

- arrangements for completion, authentication and submission
- a review of the Schools Portal, its utility and fitness for purpose in the longer term.
- the governance of the process including SEC instructions and circulars.

An initial survey has been conducted by the SEC to evaluate user experiences of the SEC Schools Portal. Some 420 responses were received from schools which is well over half of all post primary schools. While more in-depth analysis of the responses is required, initial feedback is positive in relation to timelines, and the ease of use of the portal when submitting digital coursework.

In completing the survey, school personnel also had an opportunity to provide feedback in terms of informing any future development of the Schools Portal. Schools engaged positively in this aspect of the survey and all suggestions will be taken under consideration to ensure this facility is of optimal benefit to schools going forward and that their engagement with the Portal is a positive experience.

29. **Advanced mechanisms are available to detect if work was undertaken outside of school time or class time for example. Are the Department of Education willing to commit to investment in such technology to support authentication and verification of authenticity of Additional Assessment Components?**

See response to Q25.

The management of coursework by the class teacher involves intervention by the teacher, as appropriate, to ensure that each candidate is responsible for their own individual work. In some subjects all of the work on the coursework must be carried out in class under direct teacher supervision.

In some subjects research, some "writing up", etc, can be done outside of the classroom, provided that the teacher can maintain the appropriate level of monitoring and oversight of progress.

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30. **There needs to be a unified approach and an allocation of suitable software across the education system. The burden of responsibility must rest with the student and not the teacher or school in terms of project submission.**

    Do the Department of Education see a role for Students to sign-off and take responsibility for their submission of their project to the state Examinations Commission?

Candidates have an absolute responsibility to ensure the work they submit for assessment is completed in full compliance with all regulations governing same as set out in SEC circulars S638/08, S69/04 and S76/22 which states that the work presented must be the candidate's own unaided work completed under the supervision of the class teacher and presented in the required format and correct naming convention for onward transmission for assessment.

Candidates must:

- Complete the work with integrity
- submit completed coursework to their teacher in the correct format
- certify that they have submitted coursework for assessment in accordance with the rules and regulations. In presenting their work to the school for submission, candidates are declaring that the material submitted is their own unaided work.

31. **An extra payment to facilitate project work is provided to all subject teachers of Construction Studies for example. Have arrangements been put in place to initiate a similar payment to teachers of subjects who heretofore have received no such payment as their subject has not involved practical examinations or project work?**

The SEC pays teachers in a very limited range of subjects with specific types of practical work which requires the teacher to carry out preparatory work in advance of an examination. For example, teachers of Leaving certificate Constructions Studies and Engineering can claim per candidate fees for preparatory activities in relation to the day practical. This does not apply generally in relation to project or coursework.

32. **The provision of technicians for all practical subjects including Construction Studies, Engineering, Science, Art, Home Economics, and IT is critical. Can the Department of Education set-out its plans, if any, to provide schools with support in this regard to accompany the roll out of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme?**

The Department does not fund technician posts in post-primary schools

33. **Teacher wellbeing is an important issue considering the retention and recruitment crisis and other matters. Initiative overload and ever demanding work practices, coupled with a lack of facilities, resources and especially time is creating an unhealthy workplace environment in many schools across the system. ASTI Survey data indicates 52% currently satisfied with their job and 33% dissatisfied, a marked decline of 67% in 2012 (According to a recent Red C survey)**

What initiative(s) if any have the Department of Education in mind to address this matter in the context of the implementation of the redeveloped senior cycle?

Senior Cycle Redevelopment is informed by extensive reviews and consultation processes, and is being introduced in partnership with all our education partners.

Teachers have indicated that additional resources, especially teacher professional learning or continuing professional development, were seen as crucial components of any changes to senior cycle. The importance of ensuring that adequate support is provided to teachers and schools in implementing the new specifications is a shared objective.

The introduction of the revised specifications is accompanied by a strong package of support for teachers. Comprehensive teacher professional learning supports are being provided by Oide – this process is underway with positive reception and uptake from schools. Support includes dedicated supports aimed at school leaders, full day professional learning experiences for all staff in schools, subject specific full-day cluster workshops for teachers plus a wide range of elective events and classroom materials and resources.

The development of new subject specifications is also informed by extensive consultation and the expertise of subject development group members, including teachers, who determine the content of each subject specification to be taught within the available allocation of hours per subject.

The wellbeing of school communities is a priority for the Department. Following the Office of Government Procurement tendering process, Spectrum.Life was awarded the new Employee Assistance Service (EAS) contract from 26 July 2024. The service is available to all school staff and is known as 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile'. The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace. For further information, please refer to circular 0033/2022. Additional information on wellbeing supports can be accessed at: https://www.gov.ie/en/service/23acf5-employee-assistance-service/

34. **As can be observed from the CBAs now in Junior Cycle there will be an extra burden on students. There is pressure to cover enough content hastily to be able to carry out an educationally justified project. Do the Department of Education have any concerns on the implications for student stress arising from the number and workload attaching to completion of AACs by students and if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?**

28 of the current 40 curricular Leaving Certificate Established subjects have at least a second component that we now understand as an AAC under Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

The State Examinations Commission is actively considering the scheduling of AACs through the lens of the candidates, schools and the SEC with issues of spreading the assessment load, fairness and equity to the forefront in our deliberations. The ASTI will be aware of this work from a previous presentation made by the SEC to the SCR Partners Forum.

The addition of AACs in all subjects has been called for by students. The Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) has consistently advocated for their introduction in various public for a and at the SCR Partners' Forum, including on the basis that they will reduce student stress.

35. **ASTI is unclear on the position regarding legal protections or supports provided for teachers (or principals) who may have suspicions about the authenticity of the work and are unwilling to sign-off on it, perhaps leaving them open to possible costly litigation. Can the Department of Education set out the position in that regard and will the Department of Education provide an indemnity in that respect?**

Please refer to page 20 of the December 2024 Information Note for SEC guidance on authentication of coursework and AACs; https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/314227/587710fb-5210-4447-85ce-22ded48bc819.pdf

The SEC is currently undertaking work in regard to the necessary processes required to support the implementation of AACs and any matters arising can be considered as the SCR work programme progresses.

36. **ASTI believes that the award 40% for the AAC will create inequality in our Senior Cycle, widening the social divide. Benefit will accrue to those with access to well-equipped school laboratories, computer facilities, laboratory technicians etc and advanced generative AI tools. ASTI believes that no group of candidates should enjoy unfair advantage over others arising from the nature of the test or the manner of its implementation.**

    Does the Department of Education have any concerns in this regard and, if so, what action will it take, if any, to address such concerns?

The Department is committed to adopting evidence informed approaches to addressing educational inequalities and has a number of initiatives in place to ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all education policy includes a focus on educational outcomes and analysis of educational statistics. See: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/055810-education-statistics/

The redevelopment of Senior Cycle is guided by the vision of a Senior Cycle that delivers "equity and excellence for all". The importance of ensuring equity of access and opportunity, and adequate support to teachers and schools in implementing the new specifications is a shared objective.

As part of Budget 2025, some €30 million of additional funding is being provided for the continuation of important curricular development and reforms and related teacher education. This is particularly in relation to the ongoing delivery of Senior Cycle Redevelopment and the Primary Curriculum Framework along with a range of other planned enhancements in how education is taught and learned in our schools.

The Department is actively examining how schools can be best supported in the roll-out of the redevelopment programme, including the introduction of new subject specifications. This will include considering any resource and facilities' needs ahead of the introduction of revised specifications.

37. **There is clearly a lack of space and time being given to consider all matters. It is being rushed or "accelerated" without reason. ASTI believes that this rush is affecting the work of the Department of Education, NCCA, SEC, Oide and the Teaching profession. It is also causing concern for Students and Parents. The rational conclusion is to allow more time for all to get this right.**

    Given the concerns raised and implicit in all the foregoing questions, will the Minister and the department of Education postpone the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme to allow the concerns be addressed?

It is inaccurate to characterise the redevelopment of subject specifications as "rushed". Seeking a delay to the implementation of Senior Cycle Redevelopment is not in the best interest of students, as it introduces uncertainty for them, as to when the revised subjects and changed assessment processes will be introduced.

The current specifications require renewal. For example, the current science curricula are over 20 years old.

A phased approach is being taken to how the new and revised specifications will be introduced. In fact, it is planned to be done in annual tranches, starting in the next school year and running until 2029. It will be 2031 before all students undertaking the Leaving Certificate that year will do so based on the new and revised specifications.

Reform of Senior Cycle, and specifically the Leaving Certificate, has been in contemplation for considerable time. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment began work on its Advisory Report on Senior Cycle in 2016; it will be fifteen years later, in 2031, before all students will experience the benefits.

Time and space for implementation have been, and are being, provided. The first phase or tranche of subjects had their specifications published in September last year. Already, over 20,000 teachers in total have received professional learning delivered by Oide. In line with the previously announced timelines - teachers and schools were given the timetable in May – guidelines for teachers on the AACs have been provided and sample examination papers will be available later this academic year in April. This is much earlier than was previous the case.

It can also be noted that at the time of the March 2022 announcement of Senior Cycle redevelopment, certain schools to have been referred to as Network Schools were due to commence teaching the Tranche 1 specifications from the start of the current school year (i.e. August\September 2024). The acceleration of the benefits of SCR to more students was balanced by a revised commencement of the teaching of those specifications also.

Attendance and engagement with training offered by Oide has been strong. As outlined at the January meeting of the SCR Partner's Forum, there have been 306 whole-school professional learning experiences, with 14,554 attendees. 2836 have attended the Science Cluster Day, 868 have attended the Business Cluster Day. In respect of the new subjects, there has been strong

attendance across the online meet and greets (111 for DFTS, 73 CASD), webinars (98 DFTS, 56 CASD) and face-to-face professional learning experiences (99 DFTS, 145 CASD).

Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office
19 February 2025

Appendix 3: Unions' submissions

TUI submission

Senior Cycle Redevelopment Delivery Needs

Teachers' Union of Ireland

Summary:

1. Local Bargaining - 3%
2. Teacher Workload & System Capacity
3. Equity - Curricular Concessions for subject and programme offer
4. Posts of Responsibility & Staffing to support school management, teachers and service to students
5. Professional Development & Training
6. Student Support - reduction in Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) at Senior Cycle
7. Provision for disadvantaged students in Non-DEIS Schools
8. Multi-Year Capital Programme for Facilities
9. A Task force on Digitalisation/AI
10. Consideration of educational appropriateness of marks allocation to AACs
11. Teacher Supply (recruitment and retention)
12. Work-Life Balance - Right to Disconnect
13. Governance & Oversight - Senior Cycle Implementation Group
14. Working Conditions & Inspections
15. Croke Park Hours for Senior Cycle Work
16. Legal & Policy Protections - Indemnity

1

1. **Local Bargaining - use of 3%**

Payment of the local bargaining - 3% - for implementation of Senior Cycle redevelopment (TY, LCA, LCVP, SCR, SPHE).

2. **Teacher Workload & System Capacity**

Teachers are already overloaded. The current initiative overload/workload is unsustainable and is the cause of serious and growing disaffection and burn-out. Therefore, the issue of capacity must be addressed. Teachers need time if they are to have any realistic prospect of successfully implementing the proposed Senior Cycle changes and initiatives.

This can be achieved through a suite of measures, including

o   Specific commitments to moving towards smaller class sizes and less contact time to allow teachers to engage fully with the bespoke nature of the proposed changes. In order for the successful introduction of SCR, particularly in the context of inclusive classrooms, teachers will need time to adapt and implement the new specifications. Without this alleviation huge logistical challenges will present themselves on a daily basis, particularly when the AACs are being completed. For example, at a very mundane but important level, for teachers of science subjects, the practical realities of setting up experiments, then supervising their completion, while teaching the rest of the class, and then disassembling the experiments and getting ready for the next class, is hugely problematic

o   Dedicated, targeted additionality in terms of time allocation in respect of other/associated initiatives due for implementation - including Cineáltas, revised child protection guidelines and behaviour codes, wellbeing protocols – will need to be resourced by way of. As matters stand, there seems to be an assumption that because these initiatives/changes are mandated, they can and will be implemented within existing resources. That assumption is mistaken. A working party comprising representatives of the Department, relevant agencies and the unions, tasked with identifying the specific resourcing required, is needed. This must be established by Q2 of 2025.

o   Over the medium term, a reduction in teachers' class contact time to 20 hours contact time is required, on a phased basis.

3. Equity - Curricular Concessions for subject and programme offer

Additional Curricular Concessions are needed to facilitate the introduction by schools of new Senior Cycle subjects. To ensure equity, the subject and programme options available in schools, particularly small schools, or standalone schools, must be broadened. At present due to the current allocation restrictions, this is often not possible in such schools.

Such curricular concessions are also needed to enable all schools to offer Transition Year to all students.. We need to remove restrictions that limit numbers in TY and thereby prolong inequity.

4. Posts of Responsibility & Staffing to support school management, teachers and service to students.

There is an urgent needs to address three specific needs of schools, as follows

- o With effect from 1st September 2026, a dedicated Post in each school for Senior Cycle Administration/AAC Administration. These posts would be ring-fenced, outside of and in addition to the schedule of AP1 and AP2 posts to which a school is entitled – and modelled (in terms of post level and hours alleviation with restoration to a school's teacher allocation) on the existing Programme Co-ordinator post (i.e. linked to the number of students in Senior Cycle).

- o A dedicated Post in each school for a SEN Coordinator with responsibility, inter alia, for L1 and L2 Programmes. The purpose would be to embed inclusion and special education support. Similar to a Programme Coordinator the post would initially be for schools that offer L1 and L2 but would incrementally be made available to other schools to support inclusion and equity for SEN and AEN students.

- o A dedicated Post in each school for IT/ICT to assist with contract management, liaison with suppliers and maintenance contractors, oversight of IT provision capability, administration of support grant and general supervision of equipment and use, identification of CPD needs. This would be an administrative (not a technical) role, which would alleviate the workload of the senior management team and support all other staff in their IT use.

5. Professional Development & Training

- Guaranteed Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in 2025 for teachers of tranche 1 subjects.

- One-day CPD release for all LC science subject teachers in September 2025, with a focus on sample examination papers and sample AACs - the CPD to be delivered (in whole or in part) by SEC presenters with adequate time at the CPD for addressing teachers' questions.

- This process and model of delivery to apply for each subject in each successive tranche with release of the Sample Papers for those subjects in advance of the CPD.

- All relevant documentation for future tranches to be delivered in the academic year before implementation of the subject.

- Appropriate training support for Principals and Deputy Principals in terms of SCR planning, timetabling, and optimal utilisation of available resources.

- Relevant, meaningful, and effective CPD that focuses on the well-being both of students and teachers (as the workforce tasked with delivering the redeveloped senior cycle).

6. Student Support - reduction in Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) at Senior Cycle

- Alignment with best international standards in respect of PTR is required -the reduction/improvement in the pupil teacher ratio to be applied gradually on an annual basis over the next number of years to alleviate excessive teacher workload, support effective inclusion strategies and facilitate teachers to support students in relation to AACs.

- Priority in this respect to be given to DEIS schools in the first instance due to the risk of increased inequalities associated with lack of cultural capital/resources and the absence of the additional supports commonly available to students from more privileged backgrounds.

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7. Provision for disadvantaged students in Non-DEIS Schools

o Support mechanisms for disadvantaged students outside designated DEIS schools, for example, access to homework clubs, IT equipment (after school) These supports would be provided by way of voluntary paid work for teachers, modelled on the Teaching Hours Extension Scheme.

8. Multi-Year Capital Programme for Facilities

o Annual, additional capital funding to improve laboratory infrastructure – commencing with Science Laboratories, involving a commitment to a minimum five-year annual capital funding programme, provided for through Budget. An audit of existing Lab facilities to be conducted so that the schools most in need of improved facilities will benefit first from this capital funding programme. Such funding could be used for retrofitting existing rooms or modular additions to schools.

o A similar audit of current IT facilities and annual, additional, capital funding to improve the IT infrastructure in schools. In this regard also, the schools most in need of improved facilities to be prioritised.

o An audit of existing facilities required for all elements of Senior Cyle Redevelopment in terms of sports facilities, practical classrooms, and subsequent investments to support equity for SC specifications. An annual additional allocation for consumables and other recurring resources e.g. software upgrades.

These measures are required for consistency and equality of delivery. In their absence, the gap between the advantaged, and disadvantaged will grow and that would be unacceptable.

9. A Task force on Digitalisation/AI

o There is an urgent need for a forum for focussed discussion on the appropriate use of AI. The current stay on approving the use of AI in assessments is prudent and does not imply a long-term prohibition.

o A Task Force will comprise representatives of the Department, TUI, ASTI and the management bodies and be established by Q3 of 2025. It could be constituted as a Sub-Committee of the TCC, to give it clarity in terms of mandate and reporting structure, but able to make direct recommendations

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that can create change when and as needed in the rapidly evolving AI space. Such recommendations to be subject to formal consultation and agreement with the teacher unions.

o This Task Force to recommend use of AI in ACCs only as and when detailed guidelines on its appropriate use have been agreed.

10. Consideration of educational appropriateness of marks allocation to AACs

o Recognition that the educational appropriateness of the 40% minimum marks allocation for AACs will be kept under review. For example, where more than 40% is currently allocated, that provision will continue save where there are compelling educational reasons for a change.

o A review of AACs in the (tranche 1) science subjects will take place a part of which can be the submission, if appropriate, of a business case to adapt or change the AAC (noting that this is provided for in regard to subjects in Tranche 2).

o Recognition that 40% for AACs may not be suitable for all subjects and a more bespoke model could be applied. For example, Mathematics at higher level may not be a suitable for an AAC. A business case can be made for an exemption for the 40% if no suitable AAC can be developed.

11. Teacher Supply (recruitment and retention)

o Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CID) on First Anniversary of initial appointment - i.e. on second contract. This would not conflict with the Fixed Term Act, is cost neutral and would constitute a stabilising move to retain teachers and enhance prospects of successful implementation of the SC programme. As is currently the case, schools could still offer permanent contracts ab initio (as set out in CL 59/2016) but, given that they don't, the award of a CID at the beginning of year 2 would (a) allow schools to probate teachers in year 1, (b) leave the Droichead induction process intact, (c) reduce the temptation to churn, (d) generate teacher loyalty to the school and the system etc.

o Incremental Recognition; to attract experienced Irish teachers back into the education system and address staff shortages, incremental credit should be granted for relevant teaching experience gained abroad. Currently, many returning secondary school teachers must start at the lowest point on the salary scale, creating a financial barrier to their return. This policy is at variance with the incremental credit provisions for the primary sector, where such

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service is recognised. Given the urgent need for qualified teachers to implement Senior Cycle Redevelopment (SCR), this inequality must be addressed to ensure a well-equipped teaching workforce.

o Reduction in the duration of the PME programme. The current teacher supply crisis requires an immediate action by way of a reduction in the length of the Professional Master in Education (PME) from two years to one—a change that would increase the supply of qualified teachers while also lowering financial barriers for aspiring teachers. Many schools already rely on PME Students to stay open and PME students themselves report little added value in the second year. Reducing the PME to one year would immediately qualify approximately 1,400 additional teachers, significantly easing the pressure on schools. This reform would not only fast-track much-needed teachers into classrooms but also reduce the financial and accessibility barriers for those from diverse backgrounds seeking to enter the profession.

12. Work-Life Balance - Right to Disconnect

o A teachers' right to disconnect policy to be developed and implemented in all schools with effect from September 2026. This policy will formally protect against out-of-hours work pressure, is essential in the digital age and the introduction of AACs. This will reassure teachers that there is genuine concern for their welfare and will aim, in so far as possible, to protect their personal time.

13. Governance & Oversight - Senior Cycle Implementation Group

o Establishment of a Senior Cycle Implementation Group, á la the JC Implementation Group - even a merger of the two; a forum where ongoing issues can be considered and solutions sought. This would help to reassure teachers, the key practitioners, that their views are taken into account.

o Early and rapid analysis of any changes in students' selection of subjects - for example, the numbers opting for science subjects need to be assessed on a yearly basis and any drop off in students taking STEM subjects to be dealt with immediately.

o A review of the three SC Science subjects specifications in terms of a time audit.

o A review of the AACs in Science subjects – e.g. in terms of the appropriateness of the proportion of marks allocated to the AAC.

- Review of Junior Cycle Science by NCCA with a view to updating the subject content and CBAs to take into account the new Senior Cycle science specifications and their AACs.

- Commitment to review each other Junior Cycle Subject as the related/relevant new Senior Cycle specification/subject is commenced.

- Research to be undertaken into LCVP in respect of what students use it for, which students need it for points, or progression etc? The purpose will be to ensure that students who choose to do the programme/module will not be disadvantaged.

- Delay in the introduction of tranche 2 subjects.

- Urgent attention to be given to the implications of the new Senior Cycle subjects with AACs for the additional marks awarded for completing a subject through Irish If bonus marks are not applied to coursework elements (i.e. AAC-related elements), it will have a severe impact on students in Gaelcholáistí and Gaelscoileanna. The additional effort required to complete coursework in Irish must be recognised to ensure fairness and maintain the viability of Irish-medium education.

14. Working Conditions & Inspections

- No evaluative inspections in December or May. Inspections would be confined to an advisory model during these months. Principals and teachers felt supported by the Inspectorate during COVID, and this model should be used again in respect of SCR. This acknowledges intensive workload periods for teachers and principals. It prevents disruption of critical student work and support work by teachers and recognises the significantly amplified assessment calendars.

15. Croke Park Hours for Senior Cycle Work

- Increase (from the current 10) in the number of Croke Park hours to be done on a non-whole school basis and their dedication to SC preparation and reflection on a non-whole school, high trust basis – Taking account of this measure, the balance of the 33 Croke Park hours would continue to sustain the annual parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings fully out of school/tuition time, the open night, and planning day at the start of the year. It is noted that there is already a Croke Park Hours review process at the TCC.

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16. Legal & Policy Protections - Indemnity

- o Indemnity for Teachers & Principals on AAC Sign-Off - Legal protection in relation to accountability in the AAC authentication process.

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Minister's response to TUI

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Mr. David Waters,
President,
Teachers Union of Ireland **(TUI)**
president@tui.ie

08th April, 2025

Re: Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Call by Teacher Unions to pause the programme

Dear David,

I am writing to you today as a formal response to your Union's call for a pause to the planned implementation of certain of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Tranche 1 new and revised subject specifications in the next school year; and the consequential further delay to subsequent Tranches.

I want to acknowledge receipt of your submission of 24 March also. Your submission has been useful to the consideration of further implementation supports appropriate to the realisation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme.

I wish to thank you also for your sustained engagement with my Department over recent months. Specifically, I want to thank you for the time and commitment with which you and colleagues engaged with the Department during the seven meetings to date since you first called for a pause to the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme. Those meetings which have taken place since mid-December have included attendance from Oide and SEC officials on specific themes identified by you as important.

In addition, your attendance at, and contribution to, the SCR Partners Forum during this same period has also allowed the perspectives of your membership to be heard. Additionally, the round of questions submitted by yourselves and responded to by the Department (in consultation with colleagues from the NCCA, SEC and Oide) will no doubt have been useful to your membership.

You will recall that my officials had previously sought clarification from you as to what was encompassed by your rcall for a pause to the implementation of the SCR Programme and what any pause to Tranche 1 would mean for the following Tranches. The clarification provided by yourselves has been helpful in assessing the impact on students in particular should a pause be given effect.

You will also recall that the Department sought to understand from you how the duration of any pause would or could be used to address the principal areas of concern that you have outlined. I note that some of the points raised in your submission go far beyond the introduction of Tranche 1 of the SCR programme or indeed Senior Cycle programmes more generally both in their scope and the timeframes associated with enacting them.

The consideration of your request for a pause has been carefully considered. The consideration and ultimate decision in this matter has been guided by the best interests of students not just next year but also in subsequent years. I am conscious that Transition Year students and many third year students will have already selected their Leaving Certificate subjects for next year and that a change now would bring uncertainty to those students.

As you know, Senior Cycle Reform was commenced in 2016 and there has been substantial consultation since that time. In March 2022, the then Minister for Education announced an ambitious programme of work for a reimagined Senior Cycle where the student is at the centre of their Senior Cycle experience. As you know, Minister Foley made significant revisions to that initial announcement in February 2023 (in regard to the scheduling of Paper 1 examinations in Irish and English at the end of fifth year from June 2024) and September 2023 (when the introduction of Teacher Based Assessment was deferred and the current implementation approach was confirmed). Both of those revisions to the 2022 plans were strongly informed by, and in response to, engagement with both post-primary teacher unions.

The current implementation approach including its timelines as set out in September 2023 had the following critical elements:

- A continuation of an entirely external model of assessment administered by the State Examinations Commission in relation to the Leaving Certificate;

- A deferral of the introduction of new and revised specifications in the nine Tranche 1 subjects for fifth years from September 2024 in Network Schools only, which were to be assessed by way of teacher based assessment; and,

- In recognition of the deferral of the introduction of the nine new and revised specifications in Tranche 1 in Network Schools that further revised specifications based on an externally assessed model would be introduced nationally from this coming school year for incoming fifth years.

The Programme for Government 2025 – *Securing Ireland's Future* – re-affirms this Government's commitment to continuing the programme of reform of Senior Cycle to ensure that students benefit from up-to-date curricula, more diverse skills and competencies development and assessments, and reduced stress levels. As I stated shortly after my appointment as Minister, it is essential that we equip students to fully succeed in a rapidly changing and diverse world.

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Accordingly, since March 2022 and more particularly since September 2023, the ambitious programme of work towards a reimagined Senior Cycle of education has been progressing. The programme of work has been continuing according to the revised published timelines and key elements of progress to date include:

- The publication of revised specifications in the Tranche 1 subjects last September (2024) for introduction for fifth years this coming September (2025);

- Guidelines on the completion of Additional Assessment Components (AACs) in the Tranche 1 subjects were published in December last (2024);

- Four sample examination papers (two Higher level, two Ordinary level) in each of the Tranche 1 subjects will be published by the SEC in the coming days. This includes 72 papers, when Irish language versions are accounted for.

- A sample brief for AACs in each of the Tranche 1 subjects will be available to schools in September 2025. Guidelines for the completion of AACs for each subject were published last December. These guidelines were developed in close cooperation with the SEC and teacher focus groups.

- Oide will provide a series of professional learning webinars for teachers of Tranche 1 subjects, following publication of the SEC's sample examination papers. This will take place over a two-week period, from 28 April to 9 May.

- Oide has also committed to further TPL in Autumn 2025 following the publication of the sample AAC briefs;

- Oide has already delivered professional learning directly relevant to Senior Cycle Redevelopment to well over 26,000 school leaders and teachers this school year on whole school days; with further strong attendance at subject specific days. Those numbers are climbing steadily week on week and will continue in the years ahead as each tranche and element of the programme is implemented;

- Students are already benefitting from changes introduced in September 2022 providing access to the LCVP Link Modules without meeting the criteria or requirements set out in Circular Letter 0040/2013. The number of students now enrolled in the modules across fifth and sixth year in the current school year is touching 50,000 representing a very significant expansion on the approximately 13,000 students annually who received results in the LCVP modules across the 2019 to 2021 period;

- Last December the Department announced €12m in funding for a Science Implementation Support Grant to support schools with the rollout of the revised science subjects from the next school year.

- The State Examinations Commission (the SEC) has agreed to externally validate attainment in the Senior Cycle Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes providing students including providing certification in this regard;

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- A new Programme Statement for Transition Year (TY) has also been published for implementation by all schools from the 2025/26 school year

- In January 2025, the NCCA, in collaboration with ETBI and SOLAS, published the initial vocational education and training (iVET) module. This is a flexible module that gives students the opportunity to engage in interactive programmes and off-site learning through collaboration with industry and Further Education and Training (FET) providers during their Transition Year.

- The application process to select Phase One Schools to offer the two new subjects (Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development) concluded in April 2024, and the schools involved have been preparing to introduce the subjects since then;

- The Phase One schools will receive an additional teaching allocation of four hours for 2025/26 and eight hours in 2026/27 and this has been confirmed in the Allocations process for the coming year;

- The advancement of procurement arrangements to supply equipment to schools to support the introduction of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies;

The approach to Senior Cycle Redevelopment is about collaboration and engagement with our partners in education to deliver for students. I want to acknowledge that the progress and delivery to date has been a real collaborative effort.

Additional resources have been provided to the NCCA, the SEC and Oide to allow them the capacity to deliver. The membership of the NCCA's Subject Development Groups have been expanded to include Oide specifically recognising the centrality of preparing teachers for the introduction of revised curricula – this early involvement of Oide ensures the planning and preparation of teacher professional learning commences as early as possible in the subject development cycle but critically ensures professional learning benefits from having insights into the development process.

There is real momentum in the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme across all of its different areas and I look forward to continued progress being made in its delivery for the benefit of all students including the approximately 73,000 students we expect to see commence fifth year this coming September. The numbers entering Senior Cycle are likely to be above 70,000 for a number of years to come so each year we delay delivering the benefits of a redeveloped Senior Cycle impacts over 70,000 more students.

Whilst the momentum in the programme is clear, I do acknowledge that you have articulated concerns in relation to the roll-out. In considering some of the concerns raised I have also had regard to whether those issues could be addressed in a year if that was to be the duration of a pause. In that regard I want to reference two particular areas:

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i. The revision of specifications so as to reduce or vary the weighting of the AACs: To re-open the published Tranche 1 specifications and indeed the Tranche 2 draft specifications at this juncture would require a body of work which would result not in a pause of one year but more likely a 2-3 year delay to introducing new subject specifications; and,

ii. The challenges presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI): There are steps being taken including the consideration of enhancement of the existing authentication processes for coursework and the integration of the preparation and completion of AACs across the teaching and learning experienced by students to mitigate the challenges arising. Ensuring these challenges are identified, managed and mitigated is a shared concern.

Conclusion

The role teachers play in the delivery of Senior Cycle and indeed teaching and learning across all of the programmes in our schools is very much valued by me as Minister for Education and is central to everything we do. It is through our schools including their teachers that we deliver for our students. Having carefully considered the concerns expressed by each Union I have reflected on those concerns and sought to balance them with the other and equally valid interests of students in particular.

Accordingly, and after careful consideration, in the interests of students commencing fifth year this coming September and in subsequent years, I do not believe the delivery timeframes announced in September 2023 should be further revised at this point.

However, I acknowledge the proposals in your recent written submissions as to how the programme of Senior Cycle Redevelopment can be supported. Therefore, in regard to those submissions I have instructed my officials to immediately engage with you on an intensive basis to identify how schools, teachers and students can be further supported in delivering the shared objective of realising a Senior Cycle experience for all students based on delivering equity and excellence for all.

As I said at the Croke Park Senior Cycle Redevelopment Conference for School Leaders in February, my intention is very clearly to work with our teachers to make sure that any of their concerns can be considered while remaining committed to rolling out the planned changes. This can be done in line with the current timelines for Tranche 1 for the benefit of students.

I look forward to seeing you later this week and again at your upcoming Annual Conferences. I am committed to working with you and all the partners in education.

With best regards,

Helen McEntee

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Helen McEntee, T.D.
Minister for Education.

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ASTI submission
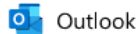
Potential decision by the Minister for Education to postpone the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme for one year.

From Kieran Christie
Date Mon 24 Mar 2025 18:14
To Tattan, Dalton   ; Kenny, Neville

CAUTION: This email originated from an external source. Do not click links or open attachments unless the sender is known.

Dear Dalton,

Please find below a list of matters for discussion in the context of a decision by the Minister for Education to postpone the implementation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme for one year.

Revision of inappropriate specifications and assessment arrangements in specific subjects;

Realistic timelines for development of subject specifications that provide that for all Leaving Certificate syllabi (specifications), the Department of Education, the NCCA and SEC publish the full range of syllabus documentation concurrently and not less than 12 months prior to implementation of the syllabus. The syllabus documentation to include: a detailed syllabus which embeds depth of treatment and comprehensive teacher guidelines into the syllabus, sample examination papers, sample marking schemes, rationale and research-based evidence that underpin the changes to/for introduction of syllabi;

Appropriate access for Subject Development Groups to data collected within consultation processes;

Appropriate depth of treatment to be included in all subject specifications;

Enhanced training provision to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared for implementation of revised Subject specifications;

Indemnity for teachers for not signing off on work that is regarded as suspect;

Improved pupil-teacher ratios;

Identification and quantifying of multi-annual funding for subjects;

Proper resource provision for the introduction of each subject including upgraded IT facilities;

Targeted measures to tackle the provision of equitable access to facilities and resources;

An audit and upgrade of laboratory and workshops facilities in Second-level schools;

Appropriate teacher time audits and allocation to implement the new subject specifications;

Appropriate protocols regarding the authentication of student Additional Assessment Components;

Appropriate protocols regarding the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence;

Best regards,

Kieran Christie
General Secretary

Minister's response to ASTI

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Mr. Donal Cremin,
President
Assocation of Secondary Teachers in Ireland **(ASTI)**
president@asti.ie

08th April, 2025

Re: Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Call by Teacher Unions to pause the programme

Dear Donal,

I am writing to you today as a formal response to your Union's call for a pause to the planned implementation of certain of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Tranche 1 new and revised subject specifications in the next school year; and the consequential further delay to subsequent Tranches.

I want to acknowledge receipt of your submission of 24 March also. Your submission has been useful to the consideration of further implementation supports appropriate to the realisation of the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme.

I wish to thank you also for your sustained engagement with my Department over recent months. Specifically, I want to thank you for the time and commitment with which you and colleagues engaged with the Department during the seven meetings to date since you first called for a pause to the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme. Those meetings which have taken place since mid-December have included attendance from Oide and SEC officials on specific themes identified by you as important.

In addition, your attendance at, and contribution to, the SCR Partners Forum during this same period has also allowed the perspectives of your membership to be heard. Additionally, the round of questions submitted by yourselves and responded to by the Department (in consultation with colleagues from the NCCA, SEC and Oide) will no doubt have been useful to your membership.

You will recall that my officials had previously sought clarification from you as to what was encompassed by your rcall for a pause to the implementation of the SCR Programme and what any pause to Tranche 1 would mean for the following Tranches. The clarification provided by yourselves has been helpful in assessing the impact on students in particular should a pause be given effect.

You will also recall that the Department sought to understand from you how the duration of any pause would or could be used to address the principal areas of concern that you have outlined. I note that some of the points raised in your submission go far beyond the introduction of Tranche 1 of the SCR programme or indeed Senior Cycle programmes more generally both in their scope and the timeframes associated with enacting them.

The consideration of your request for a pause has been carefully considered. The consideration and ultimate decision in this matter has been guided by the best interests of students not just next year but also in subsequent years. I am conscious that Transition Year students and many third year students will have already selected their Leaving Certificate subjects for next year and that a change now would bring uncertainty to those students.

As you know, Senior Cycle Reform was commenced in 2016 and there has been substantial consultation since that time. In March 2022, the then Minister for Education announced an ambitious programme of work for a reimagined Senior Cycle where the student is at the centre of their Senior Cycle experience. As you know, Minister Foley made significant revisions to that initial announcement in February 2023 (in regard to the scheduling of Paper 1 examinations in Irish and English at the end of fifth year from June 2024) and September 2023 (when the introduction of Teacher Based Assessment was deferred and the current implementation approach was confirmed). Both of those revisions to the 2022 plans were strongly informed by, and in response to, engagement with both post-primary teacher unions.

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The Programme for Government 2025 – *Securing Ireland's Future* – re-affirms this Government's commitment to continuing the programme of reform of Senior Cycle to ensure that students benefit from up-to-date curricula, more diverse skills and competencies development and assessments, and reduced stress levels. As I stated shortly after my appointment as Minister, it is essential that we equip students to fully succeed in a rapidly changing and diverse world.

Accordingly, since March 2022 and more particularly since September 2023, the ambitious programme of work towards a reimagined Senior Cycle of education has been progressing. The programme of work has been continuing according to the revised published timelines and key elements of progress to date include:

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- Last December the Department announced €12m in funding for a Science Implementation Support Grant to support schools with the rollout of the revised science subjects from the next school year.

- The State Examinations Commission (the SEC) has agreed to externally validate attainment in the Senior Cycle Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes providing students including providing certification in this regard;

- A new Programme Statement for Transition Year (TY) has also been published for implementation by all schools from the 2025/26 school year

- In January 2025, the NCCA, in collaboration with ETBI and SOLAS, published the initial vocational education and training (iVET) module. This is a flexible module that gives students the opportunity to engage in interactive programmes

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and off-site learning through collaboration with industry and Further Education and Training (FET) providers during their Transition Year.

- The application process to select Phase One Schools to offer the two new subjects (Drama, Film and Theatre Studies and Climate Action and Sustainable Development) concluded in April 2024, and the schools involved have been preparing to introduce the subjects since then;

- The Phase One schools will receive an additional teaching allocation of four hours for 2025/26 and eight hours in 2026/27 and this has been confirmed in the Allocations process for the coming year;

- The advancement of procurement arrangements to supply equipment to schools to support the introduction of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies;

The approach to Senior Cycle Redevelopment is about collaboration and engagement with our partners in education to deliver for students. I want to acknowledge that the progress and delivery to date has been a real collaborative effort.

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i.   The revision of specifications so as to reduce or vary the weighting of the AACs: To re-open the published Tranche 1 specifications and indeed the Tranche 2 draft specifications at this juncture would require a body of work which would result not in a pause of one year but more likely a 2-3 year delay to introducing new subject specifications; and,

ii.   The challenges presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI): There are steps being taken including the consideration of enhancement of the existing authentication processes for coursework and the integration of the preparation and completion of AACs across the teaching and learning experienced by students to mitigate the challenges arising. Ensuring these challenges are identified, managed and mitigated is a shared concern.

Conclusion

The role teachers play in the delivery of Senior Cycle and indeed teaching and learning across all of the programmes in our schools is very much valued by me as Minister for Education and is central to everything we do. It is through our schools including their teachers that we deliver for our students. Having carefully considered the concerns expressed by each Union I have reflected on those concerns and sought to balance them with the other and equally valid interests of students in particular.

Accordingly, and after careful consideration, in the interests of students commencing fifth year this coming September and in subsequent years, I do not believe the delivery timeframes announced in September 2023 should be further revised at this point.

However, I acknowledge the proposals in your recent written submissions as to how the programme of Senior Cycle Redevelopment can be supported. Therefore, in regard to those submissions I have instructed my officials to immediately engage with you on an intensive basis to identify how schools, teachers and students can be further supported in delivering the shared objective of realising a Senior Cycle experience for all students based on delivering equity and excellence for all.

As I said at the Croke Park Senior Cycle Redevelopment Conference for School Leaders in February, my intention is very clearly to work with our teachers to make sure that any of their concerns can be considered while remaining committed to rolling out the planned changes. This can be done in line with the current timelines for Tranche 1 for the benefit of students.

I look forward to seeing you later this week and again at your upcoming Annual Conferences. I am committed to working with you and all the partners in education.

With best regards,

Helen McEntee

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Helen McEntee, T.D.
Minister for Education.

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Appendix 4: Tranche 1 professional learning events 2025/26

Note that while the 2025/2026 design process is underway, titles and/or content outlined below is subject to change.

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
Core	**Programme Support** - Whole School Day	**Title: Programmes Support – Planning for Senior Cycle Redevelopment 2025/2026** This full-day Professional Learning Experience (PLE) is designed for whole school staffs, supporting school leaders and teachers in planning for Senior Cycle redevelopment. The workshop will provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on and explore the purpose of Senior Cycle education and their role in guiding students through curriculum change. A key focus will be on promoting student agency, integrating key competencies into teaching practice, and effectively managing AACs. We will do this by looking specifically at project-based learning as an effective teaching, learning and assessment practice that will support the learning in new specifications and engagement with AACs. We will draw on teacher experience of project-based learning at present and explore opportunities to develop a whole school approach to AACs in relation to various aspects such as research, referencing etc. We will also investigate the role of the teacher in the process and how teachers can support their students through the process.
Core	**Leadership**	**Title: TBC (Curriculum Planning and Timetabling for Senior Cycle Redevelopment)** Feedback from recent webinars and face-to-face Professional Learning Experiences indicates a clear demand from school leaders for targeted support in curriculum planning and the effective deployment of teaching resources through strategic timetable management. In response, it is anticipated that these areas will form the core focus of Oide Leadership's face-to-face Professional Learning Experience for Term 1 of the 2025–2026 academic year.
Elective	**Leadership**	**Title: The Forbairt Programme; School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Step by Step Programme; Leadership School Support** Supports are available to school leaders should they wish to enlist sustained support from Oide Leadership. **The Forbairt Programme** is a year-long professional development initiative designed to build leadership capacity among principals, deputy principals, and assistant principals. It employs an action-learning approach combining leadership-focused CPD and practical school improvement projects, fostering sustainable leadership through collaboration, reflection, dialogue, and professional trust. Additionally, **the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Step by Step Programme** provides structured guidance in using data-informed processes to identify, plan, and implement school improvement priorities, facilitating effective and

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
		sustained Senior Cycle Redevelopment (SCR). Tailored contextualised **school support** further enables school-specific interventions, building internal leadership capacity essential for successful curriculum enactment.
Core	**Business** PLE 2	**Title: Exploring the AAC and Brief** This face-to-face Professional Learning Experience day is the second in a planned series scheduled during school closure days. It is specifically designed to support SC Business teachers as they prepare to implement the new SC Business specification from September 2025. This PLE will explore key themes and messages emerging from the new specification, with a particular focus on the unifying strand and how students can meaningfully engage with the real world of business. It will also support the development of a shared understanding of the AAC guidelines. As part of the session, teachers will examine the sample brief issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in September, using a structured framework to support collaborative planning and deepen their engagement with the specification.
Elective	**Business** Webinar 2 & 3	**Title: TBC** The online webinars will reinforce the key messages and themes from the Senior Cycle Business PLE day 2 and will be accompanied with relevant support materials containing resources and further readings for business teachers who will be introducing the new SC business specification from September 2025
Elective	**Business -** Collaborative 1 & 2	**Title: TBC** These elective collaborative events will build on the critical dialogue and collaborative inquiry that underpinned Senior Cycle Business PLE day 2 and will promote a sustainable model of teacher-lead continuous professional development for SC Business teachers.
Core	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** – Interactive webinar 3	**Title: Exploring the Specified Areas of Learning in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies (TBC)** This webinar will support participants in exploring the Specified Areas of Learning within the Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification. It will examine how these areas can inform the creative and critical response processes and highlight the role of established practitioners in fostering students' critical and creative engagement. Participants will consider practical strategies for integrating the Specified Areas of Learning into teaching in meaningful and accessible ways.
Core	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** –	**Title: Connecting the learning in DFTS (TBC)** Throughout this two-day professional learning event, participants will experience Drama, Film and Theatre Studies as a practical, arts-based subject. Building on previous PLEs, participants will engage in

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
	Face-to-Face PLE 3 2 Days	planning for integrated learning across the three strands of the subject specification. They will explore selected works of established drama/theatre practitioners in the Specified Areas of Learning to inform their own creative practice for a group task and will examine theatrical techniques and conventions used to elicit audience responses. Participants will deepen their understanding and potential of the DFTS portfolio as an opportunity for students to showcase achievements, set goals, develop learning strategies and as a means of activating student voice.
Elective	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** – Collaborative 3	**Title: Collaborative 3** The collaborative will be facilitated in January and February by members of the Drama, Film and Theatre Studies team and provided opportunities for participants to connect, collaborate, and build a support network. It will allow for consolidation of learning from the two-day, face-to-face PLE event. The event is organised on a regional basis to support local connections.
Core	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** – PLE 4 (2 Days)	**Title of PLE: TBC** This PLE will continue to experience Drama, Film and Theatre Studies as a practical, arts-based subject in this webinar and will be informed by participant feedback. The PLE will support participants in exploring the Specified Areas of Learning within the specification, examining how these areas can inform the creative process. It will also highlight the role of established practitioners in fostering students' critical and creative engagement. Participants will consider practical strategies for meaningfully and accessibly integrating the Specified Areas of Learning into their teaching.
Core	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** – Webinar 4	**Title of PLE: TBC** This PLE (to be held in Spring 2026) will continue to experience Drama, Film and Theatre Studies as a practical, arts-based subject in this webinar, and will be informed by participant feedback. It will support participants in exploring the Specified Areas of Learning within the specification, examining how these areas can inform the creative process. It will also highlight the role of established practitioners in fostering students' critical and creative engagement. Participants will consider practical strategies for meaningfully and accessibly integrating the Specified Areas of Learning into their teaching.
Elective	**Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** – Collaborative 4	**Title: Collaborative 4** The collaborative will be facilitated in April/May 2026 by members of the Drama, Film and Theatre Studies team and will provide opportunities for participants to connect, collaborate, and build a support network. It will also allow for consolidation of learning from the

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
		two-day, face-to-face PLE event. The event will be organised on a regional basis to support local connections.
Core	**Science - Biology, Physics and Chemistry** – PLE Day 1 & 2	**Title: Unifying Strand and Introduction to the Biology / Chemistry / Physics Specification** This day is for teachers who missed PLE Day 1 and 2 due to career break, maternity leave, Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), attended JC cluster day in 2024/25 in another subject (e.g. Maths) etc. This PLE will incorporate PLE Day 1 and 2 into one day as an introduction to the unifying strand and the Biology / Chemistry / Physics specification. Teachers will engage with the Unifying Strand and recognise its importance when teaching the contextual strands. The day will build on the promotion of a common approach across SC Science subjects.
Core	**Science - Biology, Physics and Chemistry** – PLE Day 3	**Title: Development of Inquiry-Based Learning in Senior Cycle Biology / Chemistry / Physics** The rationale of this PLE is to introduce and deepen teachers' understanding of inquiry-based learning in the new specification and give teachers experience of practical approaches to teaching, learning and assessment which support the aims of the new specifications. Also, give teachers the opportunity to collaboratively engage in different approaches to investigations and continue to plan to engage in the new specifications with their students.
Elective	**Science - Biology, Physics and Chemistry** – Webinar 1 & 2	**Title: Webinars 1 & 2** The webinar will be designed to build on the full day PLE with Biology / Chemistry / Physics teachers and incorporate ways to build the competencies, unifying strand and teaching and learning in the Senior Cycle science classroom. These online webinars will reinforce the key messages and themes from the Senior Cycle Biology / Chemistry / Physics PLE days and will be accompanied with relevant support materials containing resources.
Elective	**Science - Biology, Physics and Chemistry** – Collaborative 2 & 3	**Title: Collaboratives 2 & 3** These subject specific (Biology / Chemistry / Physics) elective collaborative events will build on the collaborative inquiry and development of the scientific method that underpinned Senior Cycle Biology, Chemistry and Physics PLE day 3 and will promote a sustainable model of teacher-led continuous professional development for SC Science teachers.
Core	**Science - Biology, Physics and Chemistry** –	**Title: Supporting Research and Inquiry Skills Development through the use of Digital Technologies**

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
	Supporting research and Inquiry skills development	This 2-hour online subject specific (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) PLE will be designed around digital technologies to support teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in AI and digital portfolios. Students are advised to keep an investigative log for the AAC, and this can be shared with the teacher and used as part of the authentication process. This PLE will develop the skills for sharing digital portfolios and ways they can be used in the classroom to enhance student learning and aid in the authentication process for the AACs.
Core	**Climate Action and Sustainable Development** – PLE 3 2 Days	**Title: TBC** The purpose of PLE 3 is to revisit the suite of supports and key learning from PLE 2, while further assisting teachers in engaging with the *Climate Action and Sustainable Development* subject specification within their schools. A key focus of this two-day event is to support teachers in fostering a classroom culture of inquiry and investigation. Note - This event will mark the first PLE in which teachers are actively engaged in teaching the specification, and the Oide team will remain cognisant of this throughout the design process.
Core	**Climate Action and Sustainable Development** –Webinar 3	**Title: TBC** This webinar will reinforce the key messages and themes from PLE 3 and will be accompanied by relevant support materials, including resources and further readings. The session will focus on a specific area within the subject specification, offering teachers guidance on engaging with the non-linear approach across all strands. A theme will be selected based on the emerging needs of teachers as they continue to engage with the specification.
Elective	**Climate Action and Sustainable Development** – Collaborative 3	**Title: TBC** Collaborative 3 will build on the critical dialogue and collaborative inquiry established during PLE 3 for *Climate Action and Sustainable Development*, fostering a sustainable model of teacher-led continuous professional development for teachers. The focus of this collaborative event is to facilitate discussions around effective approaches for supporting teachers in enacting the *Climate Action and Sustainable Development* subject specification within their classrooms. Additionally, it aims to strengthen professional connections that will further enhance both the learning and teaching of the specification. PLE content will be specific and responsive, tailored and planned to address the identified needs of teachers at that time.
Core	**Climate Action and Sustainable**	**Title: TBC**

Type of PLE	Area	Rationale/ Objective
	Development – PLE 4 2 Days	PLE 4 will revisit the supports and key learnings from PLE Day 3, while continuing to foster teacher collaboration in the engagement with and enactment of the specification. This session will further support teachers in cultivating a research and investigation culture in their classrooms, focusing on developing key skills such as research proficiency, critical thinking, analytical and evaluative abilities, creativity, ethical awareness, and effective communication. Additionally, the seminar will explore the role of the teacher in facilitating research and investigation. PLE content will be specific and responsive, tailored and planned to address the identified needs of teachers at that time.
Core	**Climate Action and Sustainable Development** –Webinar 4	**Title: TBC** This PLE event will be a live and interactive webinar, which may include a guest speaker, followed by a live Q&A session and a breakout room activity. The PLE content will be specific and responsive, carefully tailored to meet the identified needs of teachers at that time.
Elective	**Climate Action and Sustainable Development** – Collaborative 5	**Title: TBC** This event will build on all previous collaborative events, reviewing feedback to inform the final event of the 2025-2026 academic year. The event will be tailored to address the identified needs of teachers at that time. As with previous sessions, it will be participant-led, interactive, and provide an excellent opportunity for teachers from Phase 1 schools to connect, share insights and collaborate.

Appendix 5: List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AAC	Additional Assessment Components
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AP1/AP2	Assistant Principal 1/Assistant Principal 2
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
CAO	Central Applications Office
CASD	CASD
CBA	Classroom-Based Assessment
CID	Contract of Indefinite Duration
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPH	Croke Park Hours
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DFTS	Drama, Film and Theatre Studies
DOEAY	Department of Education and Youth
EAS	Employee Assistance Service
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
F&E	Furniture and Equipment (DOEAY)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
iVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
JC	Junior Cycle
L1/L2LPs	Level 1/Level 2 Learning Programmes
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied

Abbreviation	Definition
LCE	Leaving Certificate Established
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OIDE	Support Service for Teachers and School Leaders
PE	Physical Education
PLE	Professional Learning Experience
PME	Postgraduate Masters in Education
POR	Post of Responsibility
PPOD	Post-Primary Online Database
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
S&S	Supervision and Substitution
SCR	Senior Cycle Redevelopment
SCRIG	Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Group
SCRPMO	Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SET	Special Education Teachers
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
SPHE	Social Personal and Health Education
TCC	Teachers' Conciliation Council
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning

Abbreviation	Definition
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
TY	Transition Year
UL	University of Limerick
WLBWG	Work Life Balance Working Group
WWG	Workload Working Group