

Consultation Report on the draft specification for Junior Cycle History

For discussion

May 2017

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1. Introduction

A draft specification for Junior Cycle History was approved for consultation by Council at its meeting on 23 March 2017. The aim of the consultation process was to hear the views of a wide range of key stakeholders, interested individuals and organisations on the draft specification.

The draft specification sets out the proposed rationale, aim, strands, learning outcomes and assessment components for the subject. It also situates the subject within the wider junior cycle developments with specific links to the key skills framework and progression between primary and senior cycle education. The consultation was designed to gather feedback on the extent to which these sections were successful in capturing the purposes of History at junior cycle and to hear different perspectives on the specification as a whole.

The consultation process consisted of different elements:

* an online questionnaire
* submissions from a variety of organisations and interested groups
* some focus group sessions

Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire was open for consultation from Monday 27th March to Friday 25th May 2017. A total of 142 respondents completed the online questionnaire with 90.14% of respondents identifying themselves as post-primary history teachers. A small number of responses were completed through the medium of Irish. The other online respondents were second-level students (2.82%); parents/ guardians (2.11%); post-primary principals/ deputy principals (1.41%); third level lecturer/ researcher and primary teacher (0.7%). 2.11% of respondents classified themselves as ‘other’. Where respondents were invited to identify their roles, the terms ‘Curator of Medieval History/ Archaeologist/ Historian’ and ‘Education Assistant’ were recorded. 23.48% of respondents indicated that they had also responded to the online questionnaire on the Background Paper and Brief for Junior Cycle History, with 76.52% indicating that they had not done so.

Written Submissions

Written submissions were received from several representative bodies, branches of the teacher professional network, individual teachers and other interested individuals. Full details are included in Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

In addition, a focus group was arranged on 4th April 2017 and in attendance were history teachers and representatives from various organisations and other individuals. Full details are included in Appendix 2 at the end of this draft.

Representation was invited from all third level history departments, including from Queen’s University and the University of Ulster, and from history methodology teachers working with PME student teachers. Invitations were also extended to a range of organisations and agencies in the broad history education world, including heritage bodies and trusts. Several attendees sent short written submissions following the event to offer further reflections and suggestions. There was an additional focus group session arranged with PME 1 and 2 History teachers in University College Dublin on 3 May 2017. The Dublin and Waterford branches of the History Teachers’ Association of Ireland held local branch meetings and submitted reports from these meetings, including as an appendix a range of short expressions of opinion from individual teachers.

The Consultation Report

The report that follows aims to reflect the wide-ranging opinions and views expressed during the consultation process. Selected quotations from online respondents are used, where appropriate, to clarify the views being expressed. Observations made at the focus group are summarised also where appropriate.

2. Feedback from the consultation

The consultation process on the draft specification generated contrasting views. The increased focus on the nature of history as a discipline is welcomed, with strong endorsement of the view that junior cycle history should equip students with the conceptual understanding and historical skills necessary to interrogate the past, rather than uncritically acquire a body of knowledge. There is support for the notion that this specification will engage students in an authentic manner by allowing teachers increased autonomy to select historical context that is relevant to their students’ needs and interests and will progress their historical knowledge and understanding. The enhanced opportunity to exercise choice in selecting historical content in terms of personalities, issues and events is welcomed by many respondents. There is also broad welcome for the opportunities for active learning that the specification offers by lessening the emphasis on covering content, allowing for an experience that will be more student-led and less driven by the need to cover a vast course. Many comments indicate an enthusiasm about facilitating learning experiences for students that will allow engagement with sources of evidence and new, innovative methodologies. A third level historian commented: ‘Ithought your emphasis on ‘the forces that drive change’ was an excellent starting point:  in other words, to put the focus on ways of thinking about and understanding historical change, rather than specific events or processes’.

However, some concern was expressed that while teacher autonomy has merit, teachers may lack direction and firm guidance in relation to topics to be covered. The detailed submission from the HTAI includes the following statement:

The focus on learning outcomes, which by their nature are intended to be rich and flexible, is questioned by those who argue that history should be prescribed as a canon of content that includes a core of material that should be taught to every student. For those who hold this view, the draft lacks sufficient specificity to allow teachers to devise an appropriate course and the balance is excessively towards teacher autonomy to the extent that there is too much vagueness. A strongly held view was expressed by some that the number of learning outcomes is excessive when compared to other specifications that have been developed or are in the consultation phase.

2.1  Rationale and Aim of Junior Cycle History

There was broad agreement that the stated Rationale and Aim of the draft specification was appropriate. In relation to the Aim, 92.06% of online respondents agreed that the new specification should enable students to develop a sense of historical consciousness; 80.16% agreed that students should be encouraged to value their cultural inheritance and 88.98% agreed that students’ capacity to think critically should be developed.

One online respondent commented:

I strongly believe that these are important, however, currently, I believe the [current Junior Certificate] course is so broad as to not allow students to develop in these areas. I am concerned that changes to the curriculum will still not provide adequate time for students to do this.

Some respondents favoured more explicit references to historical knowledge, with one asking:

Why is there no explicit mention of historical knowledge? Without acquiring some level of historical knowledge, the three aims above cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

Another respondent questioned the reference to valuing cultural inheritance:

What if you have a very ethically diverse class? How, then, can you teach them all to value their cultural inheritance? This aim seems to assume that all students will be Irish.

An observation from the focus group was that the concept of citizenship could be linked with the concept of historical consciousness through an exploration of how historical consciousness informs students’ present social/ moral consciousness and their sense of citizenship. Similarly, it was suggested that the rationale might mention how an historical consciousness also informs how we imagine the world might be a better place in the future

A submission from the DES inspectorate advises that: ‘The specification would benefit from a further strengthening of references to the key skill of ‘being literate’, and to the concept of historical literacy’.

In general, it was considered that the Rationale and Aim as outlined in the draft specification were appropriate.

2.2 Course structure

The layout of the draft specification for History aligns with other subject specifications across junior cycle. The draft specification divides the course into strands and elements. Strands describe how the subject is organised, outlining briefly the context of the learning for students in each section of the course. Elements focus on the goals of the learning process, that is, the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and values. The response to the course structure is mostly favourable, with some concerns raised.

There is broad agreement that the designation of three strands, with one conceptual strand (The Nature of History) intended to inform the teaching of two contextual strands (the History of Ireland and The History of Europe and the Wider World) over three years is appropriate. It is noted that the focus on Ireland, and separately on Europe and the Wider World, is similar to the current syllabus. A number of respondents to the consultation, both online and in forums, thought that more explicit references to students linking events across strands should be included. It was also observed that a clear historical narrative was not evident in the course structure and that there was no clear indication of timelines or start and end dates.

In terms of the online consultation, respondents indicated as follows their levels of agreement with three statements relating to the course structure section of the specification:

* The Overview section provides a clear description of the specification (39.62%; neutral-35.02%)
* The Strands clearly encapsulate the important learning relevant to junior cycle students (38.89%; neutral- 30.56%)
* The Elements make relevant connections between the learning in the strands (34.58%; neutral- 37.38%)

The number of respondents who selected ‘neutral’ here indicates a lack of clarity in this section, which needs to be addressed.

One respondent supported the notion of the ‘big picture’

only if the historical eras can be explicitly stated, i.e. from Mesolithic Times in Ireland to the late twentieth century. Much too vague as it stands at present.

The designation of the third strand as ‘Thinking Historically’ is subject to some criticism. There is a view that the strand is more associated with the principles underpinning Strand One and that some of the associated learning outcomes do not fit naturally to this element.

Some questions have also been raised in relation to the element ‘Key Moments of Change’ in Strands Two and Three. While there is broad agreement that an element relating to the theme of political change is appropriate, the word ‘moments’ is not considered by some to be appropriate and it is suggested that this might be amended.

A focus group member addressed a theme in history education research relating to how students learn and advised that such research advocated unpacking students’ historical preconceptions. In this context, it was suggested that advice on p. 14 of the draft that Strand One not be taught as a discrete entity but interwoven with Stands Two and Three should be reconsidered, as researchers such as Peter Lee from the University of London recommend that students can be helped to acquire ‘usable historical frameworks’ by being explicitly taught concepts and skills before engaging with context, and that these can then be reinforced over three years. Continuous professional development will be provided by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) to support the introduction and implementation of this specification and it is suggested that the merits and drawbacks of this approach may be considered by the JCT team in supporting teachers’ engagement with the specification.

It is also observed that the current syllabus provides for progression from the concrete to the more abstract over the course of three years and that there is merit to this approach. It is noted that the draft specification did not prohibit this approach, as learning outcomes are not ‘ticked off’ but are revisited in a spiral over time.

Comments and observations about the nature of learning outcomes relating to Stands Two and Three are referred to in later parts of this report. However, the view was expressed in some of the feedback that while many learning outcomes relate to generally appropriate themes, they may not be specific enough to guide teachers effectively. The insertion of the term ‘including’ or to include is recommended in some feedback as a means of making overtly vague learning outcomes more specific, while also retaining flexibility to allow teachers to unpack them in other ways appropriate to the needs and interests of their students.

A further general concern relating to the learning outcomes in Strands Two and Three deals with significant people in the past (LO 2.4 and LO 3.6 respectively). The wording of these outcomes, referring to the influence of individual people on historical change in Ireland and in Europe and/ or the wider world across different periods of history, including references to biographical backgrounds, was viewed as too vague by some respondents, who called for greater clarity, including in some cases the specific nomination of significant people in history. However, the counterbalancing view was also offered that prescribing personalities to be studied might be too inhibiting.

2.3 Strand 1: The Nature of History

This strand explores the nature of history as a discipline, including relevant historical skills and conceptual understanding. Respondents to the online questionnaire indicated as follows how appropriate they considered the learning outcomes to be in enabling students to:

* develop a sense of historical consciousness (70.39%)
* develop skills in working with evidence (75.53%)
* acquire a ‘big picture’ overview of the past (61.7%)

There was broad agreement that a strand focused on students acquiring the disciplinary and conceptual understanding to allow them to interrogate the context of the past is appropriate.

One respondent affirmed the importance of the strand as follows:

This is essential information to students understanding the language of history and becoming historians in their own right. Developing the concept of chronology, bias, objectivity, discovering and recognising their own place in family, local and national history is also essential to creating a passionate History student.

The learning outcomes were welcomed by another respondent who wrote:

It should go without saying that these learning outcomes are appropriate as they are each vital to the study of history. The draft specification suggested that Strand 1 would be studied in tandem with the other two strands, weaving in and out as the students acquire and develop research and critical thinking skills. This is something the outgoing curriculum sorely lacked, and for the new course to succeed, this joining of the strands should be done properly. It would be terrible for the subject if all that came of this idea was lip service with no real follow up.

The observation below from a respondent noted the capacity for teachers to engage in differentiation in working with Strand One:

These LOs should link nicely with the other two strands and allow more able students to challenge their higher order thinking skills.

A focus group response affirmed the ‘excellent, empowering language’ employed in this strand, while the cross-linear nature of learning outcomes, whereby the outcomes in the strand could be integrated with the other two strands was affirmed.

Other respondents expressed concern at a perceived vagueness or lack of clarity, as indicated by this comment:

the first two [elements], while appropriate, need to be defined more clearly. The big picture is also unclear to the point where I am nearly inclined to tick 'very inappropriate' as it seems like we must teach students chronology without going in chronological order, focusing on themes instead. Again this needs to be made much clearer and would be an incredibly difficult thing to do with a mixed ability group as higher level students on the current syllabus often struggle with chronology alone.

A strongly expressed view from a focus group event and a follow-up submission is that:

an introductory focus on the nature of the discipline of history (in an age-appropriate format) is important if the exploration of specific historical themes and topics is to be carried on in a genuinely educational manner. The How People Learn and How Students Learn studies (1999 and 2005 respectively) and subsequent studies have increased our understanding of how students acquire historical knowledge and the part played in the process by the development of conceptual understanding. Exploring students’ understanding of the fundamental ‘second order’ or disciplinary concepts such as ‘evidence’ and ‘time’ needs to precede engagement with the study of specific topics if those topics are to be understood in a genuinely historical manner

In some cases, concerns expressed related to how teachers might enact the specification in their classrooms rather than to the structure of the specification itself.

2.4 Strand 2: The History of Ireland

The designation of a strand to deal with the history of Ireland is considered appropriate. Respondents to the online questionnaire indicated as follows how appropriate they considered the learning outcomes to be in supporting:

* students’ awareness of the forces that drove change in Irish history (69.72%)
* students’ knowledge of significant personalities, issues and events in Irish history (69.23%)
* students’ understanding of important concepts in Irish history (70.52%)
* students’ capacity to think historically (65.82%)
* students learning through meaningful historical context (68.75%)

Amongst the comments was the following:

Properly exploring context, and a good use of primary source material will help, I would hope, to transform the study of Irish history. No History teacher wants Irish history to carry on being regarded as "boring", and it is regarded as such. It is only by using engaging and entertaining methodologies that teachers can awaken students' interest in topics that at first glance to them might seem incredibly dry. The new course should reflect this need. It is encouraging to see new elements included - the contribution of a movement to change in Ireland could include so much.

The figures indicate that there is a consensus around what the learning outcomes in the strand should encapsulate. However, a recurring theme in the feedback was that the learning outcomes as laid out in the draft lacked focus and direction; one respondent represented the views of many others in claiming the outcomes were ‘very vague in comparison to Strand Three’ and expressed concern at the perceived diminution of key periods of Irish history

This specification leaves out any specific mention of at least 6,000 years and the ‘bigger picture’ of Irish history from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Ages to Early Christian, Viking and Norman times…..[Junior cycle] is the only time within the formal education process that young people get a chance to acquire some sense of scale and how one period of history relates to another.

This view is strongly echoed in the HTAI submission.

The scope of the learning outcomes is the subject of some commentary by respondents. One teacher is concerned that:

…. in LO 2.2 only political violence, conflict and/or rebellion is listed as a key moment of change. An exploration of the more peaceful, constitutional tradition in Irish history as represented by people and movements such as Daniel O’Connell, the Home Rule movement, the Land League, the Early Suffrage Movement and indeed the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland should also be included.

Concerns about the manner in which historical personalities are mentioned relate to the lack of specificity. As the HTAI submission notes,

In both the sections on Key Moments of Change and People, Culture & Ideas there are references to individuals/people without mentioning any one specifically. ‘How individuals influence key moments’ [2.4] and ‘How Irish people achieved distinction in various fields of human endeavour …..’ [2.7]. Surely there should be some specific people mentioned here. The only place where there is any reference to historical context in the section on People, Culture & ideas is ‘how the experience of women in Irish society has changed in the twentieth century’ [2.11]. But is this not a Key Moment of Change too? The separating of the people from the moments in history again seems an very unhistorical way of looking at History – the people and the moments interact and need to be studied together.

The learning outcome relating to the role of women in the twentieth century was raised, with strong feelings expressed at one table in the focus group event that the insertion of LO 2.11 ‘looks like tokenism; inadequate only referencing the twentieth century-reductionist’.

In addition to the points mentioned already in the report, there were many divergent views expressed during the consultation about what was perceived to be included or excluded in Irish history in the draft. These views need to be read in terms of the balance between avoiding content overload-a particular criticism of the current syllabus- and ensuring an appropriate coverage of the past in keeping with the age and profile of junior cycle students. Among the issues raised in this context were

* More specificity needed around key moments of change, e.g. Early Celts
* Perceived lack of detail about Irish history in the period after independence
* The need to ensure that 12-15 year old students are acquainted with the Troubles in Northern Ireland as the political legacy still endures, not least in terms of peace and reconciliation, dealing with controversial issues and ideas around identity and nationality, including in the context of British withdrawal from the European Union. In this context, there was discussion about confining unionist identity in Ireland to Ulster

It is suggested that the development group consider these issues in revising the draft specification.

2.5 Strand 3: The History of Europe and the Wider World

This strand allows students to explore the impact of change on events, issues and personalities in the history of Europe and the wider world, and to extend their historical thinking and conceptual understanding. The designation of a strand to focus on the theme of Europe and the Wider World is considered appropriate. Respondents to the online questionnaire indicated as follows how appropriate they considered the learning outcomes to be in supporting:

* students’ awareness of the forces that drove change in the history of Europe and the wider world (74.03%)
* students’ knowledge of significant personalities, issues and events in the history of Europe and the wider world (74.03%)
* students’ understanding of important concepts in the history of Europe and the wider world (76.63%)
* students’ capacity to think historically (63.63%)
* students learning through meaningful historical context (66.24%)

These figures indicate a greater level of approval with the learning outcomes in Strand Three. This quote from an online respondent shows support for the ideals underpinning the strand:

In terms of students’ awareness of the forces that drove change… there again is an element of choice for students which gives greater ownership to students who have a particular interest/passion in a civilization, there are many cross curricular links in the learning outcomes in key moments of change along with incorporating numeracy too. The learning outcomes allow for reality in allowing students to see the human side to wars/rebellions in exploring how the war/rebellion impacted people. The learning outcomes allow for reflection and debate which can greatly enhance learning…

Other comments reinforce criticisms of the specification expressed previously, including the vague nature of learning outcomes. There is also a perception that the learning outcomes are too focused on Europe and are not specific in relation to how aspects of the history of the wider world might be incorporated. One online respondent suggests:

Because of the current multicultural nature of a lot of urban schools, it would be nice for scope to include and explore global history, especially from the homelands or ancestral homes of the students.

Another submission observes:

Teachers welcome the idea that there would be more focus on the wider world but we feel that this should be highlighted by identifying particular contexts where this could be done. We note that the decade of the 1960s is referred to in both Strands 2 & 3 and this is an area where links could be made with, for example, the Civil Rights Movement in America and the Civil Rights Movements in Northern Ireland which led to the ‘Troubles’.

The perception of content overload is mentioned in the feedback, with one online respondent noting anxieties about how the specification might be assessed in the final examination

The material seems most interesting. However there seems to be a lot of content, and without being sure what will be examined at the end, this could prove difficult. Although I am aware that there is (rightly) a move away from excessive focus on a terminal exam, for good or bad it is still there. Students and teachers will still be concerned about preparing for it.

As in the case of Strand Two, many divergent views were expressed during the consultation about what is considered to be included and excluded. There is a view that the make-up of this strand does not differ significantly from what is currently included in the Junior Certificate syllabus. On the other hand, some respondents welcome the flexibility offered to approach historical themes not covered in the existing syllabus

3. Feedback from the consultation: Assessment

The assessment for certification in Junior Cycle History aligns broadly with other subjects. Assessment for certification is provided for at a Common Level. Assessment of History will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs): *A Young Life in Time* and *The Past in My Place.* Students will undertake a two-hour examination at the end of third year.

The introduction of CBAs is part of the broader junior cycle reform. CBAs allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. CBAs are assessed by the students’ teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

3.1 CBA 1: A Young Life in Time

This classroom-based assessment entails a report on the life of a young person at a particular time in the past, focused on Europe and the Wider World. The intention behind the designation of this assessment is to enable students to develop a sense of historical empathy by exploring how a person of similar age to themselves might have lived. In the online survey, just 43.42% of respondents considered this CBA to be effective in allowing students to display their learning. The responses demonstrate, not for the first time, the widely differing views that aspects of the draft provoke. One online respondent noted:

This would be effective however it is limiting as it is a young person in history. While I understand this is so learners can "identify" or relate with/to person this should be broadened to encompass any age as some will have interests beyond children in history.

Another respondent observed:

I love the idea of there being Classroom Based Assessment. It is a great idea and should and incorporated. I am not convinced that A Young Life in Time is the way to go though. Seems a little patronising to the students who from experience really don't find a child's place in History half as interesting as the key figures themselves.

A positive viewpoint raised other concerns as follows:

I think this is a fantastic idea. The notion of allowing a student occupy the character of a person from the past should allow for real experimentation and engagement. There are a few concerns. Time will be an issue. When will the CBAs take place? How much of the already limited 200 hours will they take up? How do we ensure fairness considering how much support at home some students will have compared with others? Will it mitigate against students who are shy or reticent about public displays/speaking?

The HTAI view is:

While we welcome the focus here on a young person we don’t think it is realistic for the students to be able to do an evidenced based enquiry, because for many periods of History there is not much evidence available on the lives of young people. There are a few instances where this material is easily available e.g. 19th century industrial Britain where conditions for young people in mines and factories and even their criminal records can be easily accessed. Another example would be the Diary of Anne Frank, together with evidence about Concentration camps and the Holocaust, but we feel that this study could become very hackneyed because of the scarcity of this type of evidence about young people in many other periods.

A commonly expressed view is that:

More guidelines are needed to clarify what students need to do. Focusing on the life on a young person is relevant for their age but limits their scope to learn about other interesting figures. It is difficult to foster a love of history in JC so allow them more free reign (sic) to learn about someone they are interested in.

The dangers of ‘recycled’ projects, where teachers encounter the same types of project repeatedly, is referred to in feedback. Embedding the process of constructing the project over a number of weeks firmly in the classroom was seen as a factor which could mitigate this. Difficulties in avoiding very generic reports, similar to the ‘People in the Past’ section of the current syllabus are also mentioned. It is suggested that a revised CBA model might allow for students to explore a named figure from the past if they wish, as it is noted that for many students, engaging with an historical figure of their choosing who excites or intrigues them is an authentic pathway into appreciating and enjoying history and historical research.

3.2 CBA 2: The Past in My Place

In general CBA 2 is welcomed. 46.66% of the online respondents considered this model to be either effective or highly effective (over 22% of respondents are neutral on this question). This is in keeping with a generally broad welcome for local history, given its absence for the existing syllabus. As one online respondent notes:

Again, enquiry-based, self-directed learning is excellent for all students. …Researching their own area will give them a greater sense of pride and a stronger connection to where they live. They too will become historians and have evidence- based work.

This CBA is one aspect of the draft specification which is warmly welcomed by HTAI:

We are delighted with this and feel it could be a very exciting opportunity for real autonomy in order to allow for an investigation at local level. In … Strand 2 we have referred to the way there could be a subsection of Irish History relating to the way one or some the Key Moments in the main study are particularly relevant at local level. This would provide room for genuine engagement with enquiry based study which students could complete for their C.B.A. This would really help them to link up the general history they are studying with the history outside their door or in their locality….this could be anything from an investigation of a local prehistoric site, or an early Christian monastery or local castle or medieval town or manor, or a workhouse from Famine times or even evidence of the early 20th century struggle for independence in their own local area. The choice would be theirs as to what would be most fruitful in their own area.

In its submission, Cork HTA advises that the focus on local history is too narrow in focus and may lead to difficulties where the same project appears repeatedly over time, perhaps leading to apathy among teachers in areas where local sources may be limited. Consideration is also given to teachers who may be new to a school and not familiar with its local history context. The submission recommends that the scope be broadened to include family history. Other responses mentioned aspects of one’s personal history that might include a place different from where they now live or attend school. This raises the question of students who are not born in Ireland but who would lie to explore an aspect of their country of origin. It is noted that allowing for such an approach might help such students to feel valued and appreciated in their adopted home, while also extending local students’ awareness and understanding of historical themes such as identity and migration. However, given that the focus is intended to be on the local in terms of Irish history, it is noted that allowing students to research their country of origin would mean that there would not be an Irish focus in either CBA.

4. Other comments and suggestions

79% of respondents to the online questionnaire indicated that there were aspects of the specification that needed to be revised. Many of the comments related to questions about what the assessment arrangements would be, how the course would be examined and concerns around the common level. Other issues raised have been explored elsewhere in this report. The comments below offer a flavour of the type of issues raised in this section of the questionnaire:

At times the curriculum is vague e.g. L.O. 3.5 'wars'. Vaguer learning objectives allow for a wider scope of learning and a more enjoyable experience for the student but will only work if the final assessment and marking scheme reflect this. It will be imperative that both assessment and marking scheme match the learning objectives in not being overly specific. Otherwise some specificity is required in order to achieve an effective and equitable assessment. Close collaboration between the main agencies involved, specifically the NCCA and SEC, will be vital to ensure this happens.

Action verbs: The link between the action verbs and the learning outcomes is tenuous. All learning outcomes should contain an action verb listed in the glossary.

Overall, the aims cover the important aspects of the teaching and learning of History as a subject at second level, except for the lack of importance of acquiring knowledge as already discussed. In general, the possible historical topics on the course is to be welcomed although, at this stage, a little vague. There is plenty here for students to engage with in the Twentieth Century but are previous centuries missing out?

Inclusive Assessment The English CBA Guidelines state - 'Special provisions may be put in place by schools for a student with a specific physical or learning difficulty to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the student’s performance in both Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement.' The History specification, and others, removes 'and the Assessment Task'. I would suggest the phrasing from the English CBA Guidelines is used for a common message and clarity for schools.

A huge amount of resources needed for this to work. Teacher supports needed i.e. competent advisers who are readily available to answer queries and give practical support.

While the Assessment Task is largely a reflective exercise it should try and challenge some of the historical skills students will have developed over their time in history class. It needs to go beyond the CBAs. The CBAs seem to suggest written pieces. There needs to be more choice in terms of presentation and what students can do in these tasks. map making, model building, etc. There are a lot of students who will love history but struggle with the level of literacy required.

5. Messages from the consultation

The consultation process generated much discussion and debate on all aspects of the draft specification. It is noted that the main structure as represented by the three strands is welcomed, with a general acceptance of the strands proposed. Moreover, notwithstanding the points raised in the report, the designation of elements is not a major source of controversy. Some concern is, however, expressed about the following key areas:

* How Strand One integrates with the other two strands, particularly in relation to the notion of ‘the big picture’
* The volume of learning outcomes compared to other subjects
* The lack of specificity within some learning outcomes
* The lack of a distinct and coherent chronological narrative across Ireland and Europe and the wider world
* The exclusion of historical personalities, issues and events that are considered to be essential
* The absence of a prescribed core or canon in terms of a history course that should be taught to all students
* The lack of indicative content to support teachers in interrogating learning outcomes

5.1 Areas for further consideration

The consultation process revealed some constructive and considered concerns about sections of the specification. Addressing these concerns will be the immediate focus of the development group. The following are areas to be considered:

* *Rationale and Aim*: The text of the Rationale and Aim should be considered to incorporate the suggestions offered
* *Structure*: Some respondents are seeking further clarity on the relationship between the three strands. The nature of learning outcomes and the issue of chronology also need to be addressed
* *Strand 1*: There is a need to further explain how the formational and unifying model envisaged will facilitate engagement with Strands Two and Three. Clarity on the extent to which aspects of the strand should be taught discretely, particularly in the context of’ the big picture’
* *Strand 2*: Greater clarity is required around learning outcomes, with omissions and gaps needing to be addressed
* *Strand 3*: While more specific that Strand Two, learning outcomes in this strand require further consideration in terms of specificity and in terms of a perceived ‘Eurocentric’ focus
* *CBA 1*: *A Young Life in Time*: In general, greater clarification is needed regarding assessment and how the CBAs will be explored. It is suggested that this CBA might lend itself to generic reports and might be better if broadened to allow students to research a person of historical interest
* *CBA 2: The Past in My Place*: It is suggested that thought be given to the parameters of what is meant by ‘local’, with a liberal definition to include the locality of students not born in Ireland and to include personal or family history.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment appreciates that so many respondents took the time to complete the online questionnaire, submit written reflections or attended focus groups. Gratitude is extended also to those who took time to share views with the Education Officer at different times during the consultation process in meetings or telephone conversations.

The History Teachers Association of Ireland and the Cork History Teachers Association facilitated feedback from members through meetings and consultations that informed their own comprehensive reports. It is acknowledged that these reports included constructive suggestions in terms of revisions and amendments. NCCA appreciates such thorough engagement with the consultation process.

The issues raised in these various forums will inform the work of the History Development Group in revising and amending the draft specification.

Appendix 1

Written Submissions

* History Teachers Association of Ireland (HTAI)
* Waterford Branch HTAI
* Dublin Branch HTAI Cork History Teachers Association (Cork HTA)
* Department of Education and Skills
* A written submission from a Co Waterford based teacher (using the online questionnaire template) sent to NCCA by registered post.
* Cashel Community School, Co Tipperary
* Coláiste Iosagain, Baile Atha Cliath
* Muckross Park College, Dublin
* St Andrew’s College, Dublin
* Clonkeen College (through online consultation)
* St Mary’s Secondary School, Glasnevin (through online consultation)
* St Oliver’s Post Primary School (through online consultation)
* Cork Life Centre (through online consultation)
* Dublinia Heritage Centre (through online consultation)
* Submission from History methodology lecturer, School of Education UCD
* Individual teacher submissions facilitated by Waterford and Dublin branches HTAI
* Emails from participants at focus group event following up on contributions made at the event
* Individuals from University College Cork, University College Dublin and NUI Maynooth History departments

Appendix 2

Focus Group attendees

* National University of Ireland Maynooth (History Department)
* Open University
* Irish Committee of Historical Sciences
* Royal Irish Academy
* Discovery School
* Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
* Digital Repository Ireland
* Trinity College Dublin History Department
* National Library of Ireland
* The Heritage Council
* Dublin City University
* History Teachers association of Ireland
* National Museum of Ireland
* University College Cork School of Education
* Queen’s University School of Education
* National University of Ireland Maynooth (School of Education)
* Trócaire
* Archaeology 2025 Transport Infrastructure Ireland



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