



Written submission: Consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate English specification

NCCA is redeveloping Leaving Certificate English. The aim of this consultation is to obtain the open and honest views of all stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and other interested parties. The feedback gained from the consultation will inform the work of the development group in preparing the final specification.

NCCA would greatly appreciate your feedback on the draft specification which can be found here: https://ncca.ie/media/kocjunfw/lc_english-draft-specification_for-consultation.pdf

When providing feedback, observations or comments, please reference the specific section and / or relevant learning outcomes.

The closing date for this consultation is May 2nd 2025 at 5pm.

Data protection and open data section

NCCA is committed to protecting your privacy and does not collect any personal information about you through this written submission, other than information that you provide by your own consent. Where a respondent selects 'yes' to the question: *Are you consenting to be listed as a respondent to this consultation*, respondents are consenting to having their name / organisation's name published in the final report as respondents to the consultation.

Where a respondent selects 'yes' to the question: *Are you consenting for your submission to be published*, respondents are consenting to having their submission published on ncca.ie.

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NCCA may use the data you provide in the form of quotations. Where this happens, the quote will be anonymised.



Respondent's details

What organisation are you submitting on behalf of?

Mercy Mounthawk

Are you consenting to be listed as a respondent to this consultation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please enter the name you wish to have published in the final report.

Yes, Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School

Are you consenting to have the submission published on ncca.ie?

- ☐ Yes -
- ☐ No



Rationale, Aim, and Key Competencies [pages 3 - 9]

Rationale: The rationale (pages 3 – 4) outlines the nature of Leaving Certificate English and the role and importance of Leaving Certificate English in realising the purpose and vision of senior cycle.

Aims: The Aims (page 4) outline the over-arching purpose of the subject and the relevance and expected impact of the subject on student learning.

In your opinion, do the rationale and aims capture the overarching purpose and nature of Leaving Certificate English; the importance of the subject in realising the vision of senior cycle and the relevance and expected impact of this subject on student learning. Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

We have no issues with the aims and rationale per se. However, we have grave reservations about the implementation of assessment practices.

Key Competencies: Key competencies is an umbrella term which refers to the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students develop in an integrated way during senior cycle. These competencies are linked and can be combined; can improve students' overall learning; can help students and teachers to make meaningful connections between and across different areas of learning; and are important across the curriculum.

The draft specification sets out examples of how key competencies can be developed in Leaving Certificate English on pages 7 – 9.

In your opinion, does this section effectively capture the development of student key competencies in Leaving Certificate English? Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

We have no issues with the key competencies per se. However, we have grave reservations about the implementation of assessment practices.



Strands of study and learning outcomes [pages 10 - 18]

Course overview: The course overview sets out the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions for students in four strands. The specification emphasises a non-linear, integrated approach to learning across the strands.

The details of the strands are described on pages 10 - 18 of the specification.

In your opinion, does the structure illustrate the connected nature of the strands and the development of student knowledge, skills, values and dispositions in an appropriate way? Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

No

Student knowledge: The gap in knowledge and skills is increasing due to junior cycle specification. Students for example don't have critical thinking developed enough in 5th year.

Issues with the integrated approach: the DES needs to discuss this with teachers and students involved. Skill development is a process and an integrated approach disrupts this process. Skill development is systematic that needs both time and student engagement to facilitate reaching a level of skill attainment where students will give the best account of their learning. This student learning happens at varying rates, and in our opinion, students at the end of Fifth Year are not yet ready to give the best account of their learning or attainment in terms of assessment.

Strand 1: Exploring [pages 12 - 13]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Our concern regarding this strand centres around the fact that students at the end of Fifth Year certainly haven't mastered the key competencies that they need for English. We also have concerns around the nature of equity for all students.



Schools that are less financially comfortable will have huge issues around technology access for all students.

Strand 2: Creating [pages 14 - 15]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Our English Department has issues around the readiness of students to produce Creative Writing by Dec of 6th Year. LC students at this stage of the year don't have a clear sense of their creative voice as yet. Furthermore, their wellbeing will be seriously hindered, in the this time of the year dovetails with the opening of their CAO forms and their stress levels are already running high.

Strand 3: Comparing [page 16]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

While our Department welcomes the advent of an oral assessment, we have issues around the timing of it. Once again, we feel that students are not ready or able by the end of Fifth Year to successfully manage to understand modes of comparison. Students will not be able to read texts, analyse them and wrap their heads around three separate modes of comparison. We advocate the NCCA adopting discrete modes where students will have choice in what they study, and



won't be burdened by the need to study three modes in time for an assessment at the end of Fifth Year.

Strand 4: Analysing [pages 17 - 18]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Access is a huge issue due to equity and socio economic circumstances-
Technology and resources.

Challenges around time are a huge concern. We recommend reducing the
prescribed poets from 8-6.

Rotation of text has become unmanageable as they change too frequently. We
strongly recommend. 4 consecutive years for the selection of texts.

Additional Assessments (AAC) [pages 22 - 25]

The draft specification for Leaving Certificate English outlines two Additional Assessment Components, an oral examination and a creative writing task. Descriptions of these AACs, the descriptors of quality and the timing of these components can be found on pages 22 - 25 of the draft specification. It is proposed that the Oral Examination would take place at the end of fifth year and the Creative Writing Task would be submitted in term 1 of sixth year.

AAC: Oral Examination (pages 22 – 23)

The Oral Examination focuses on communicative competence through a discussion on the comparative study.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the **AAC: Oral Examination** in Leaving Certificate English with reference to:

- impact on motivation on students
- alignment with the learning outcomes in the specification
- opportunities for the development of key competencies, and
- access and challenge for students.



Issues with the integrated approach: the DES needs to discuss this with teachers and students involved. Skill development is a process and an integrated approach disrupts this process. Skill development is systematic that needs both time and student engagement to facilitate reaching a level of skill attainment where students will give the best account of their learning. This student learning happens at varying rates, and in our opinion, students at the end of Fifth Year are not yet ready to give the best account of their learning or attainment in terms of assessment.

Too much pressure on students, too much responsibility without any skill development.

Is there a preferred timing for this component? If so, when?

Oral interview is very challenging for 5th years it would be more beneficial in 6th year.

Creative writing – 5th year

Interview – 6th year

How does the impact on teaching and learning influence the timing of the Oral Examination?

The oral exam has its own proficiencies that will need to be taught. However if it is focused on the comparative in 5th year, you are expecting higher order thinking before the foundations have been laid out. That higher order process of thought will not be developed until the end of 6th year. If the oral was perhaps on the poetry section or on the single text the timing would be fine.

The specification proposes that the Oral Examination should take place at the end of fifth year. What implications is this timing likely to have for students, schools and the State Examinations system?

See above

What benefits and opportunities might an oral examination offer LC English students, schools and the system?

In line with rationale IF it is completed in a certain pattern of progression of learning and the task being assessed is appropriate.



What challenges do you think an oral examination might create for the student, the school and the system?

See above

The Oral Examination focuses on communicative proficiency through a discussion on the comparative study. What is your opinion on this mode of assessing the comparative study?

See above

AAC: Creative Writing Task (pages 23 – 25)

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the **AAC: Creative Writing Task** in Leaving Certificate English with reference to:

- impact on motivation on students
- alignment with the learning outcomes in the specification
- opportunities for the development of key competencies, and
- access and challenge for students.

Se above

Do you have any other comments on the assessment arrangements and alignment with the rationale, aims and learning outcomes of the specification?

See above

Supports for Successful Enactment

What supports would schools need to enable the successful implementation of an oral examination for LC English?

Access to technology for all components



Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on supports that might be needed for successful enactment of this subject specification.

Teacher training, longer lead in time and learn the lessons from the JC implementation. You **MUST** listen to teachers on the ground who have the real experience