



Written submission: Consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Geography specification

NCCA is redeveloping Leaving Certificate Geography. 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: [Draft Leaving Certificate Geography specification](#)

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

The closing date for this consultation is 25th April 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?

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

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.

Emer Whyte and Sarah Rice

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

- ☒ Yes
☐ No



Rationale, Aim, and Key Competencies (pages 2-7)

Rationale: The rationale (page 2) outlines the nature of Geography and the role and importance of Geography in realising the purpose and vision of senior cycle.

Aim: The Aim (page 3) outlines 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 aim capture the overarching purpose and nature of Geography; 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.

Yes

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 Geography on pages 5-7.

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

Yes



Strands of study and learning outcomes (pages 8-23)

Course overview: The course overview sets out the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions for students in 4 strands (the unifying strand and 3 contextual strands). The specification emphasises a non-linear, integrated approach to learning across the strands.

The details of the strands are described on pages 8-9 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.

Yes. The overview of the four strands is very clear and connecting in the illustration given. There is a smooth connection between learning from Junior Cycle specification and there are key concepts of learning that can be built upon.

Unifying strand: Applying geographical thinking and skills (pages 10-12)

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.

These LOs are very clear and succinct. The specific guidance and working in the section students learn about is very clear and prescriptive for planning. They clearly align with the rationale and allow teachers to build on the foundations of learning and skills development. This provides ample opportunities for key competencies and the choice between working individually or in a group and inside or outside the classroom allows for choice and flexibility for all learners. The concepts stated are very clear and they provide a range for teachers to effectively differentiate the content.

Strand 1: Where we live – the physical environment (pages 13-17)

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.

These LOs are very clear and succinct. The specific guidance and working in the section students learn about is very clear and prescriptive for planning. They clearly align with the rationale and allow teachers to build on the foundations of learning and skills development. This provides ample opportunities for key competencies and the choice between working individually or in a group and inside or outside the classroom allows for choice and flexibility for all learners. The concepts stated are very clear and the provide a range for teachers to effectively differentiate the content.

Strand 2: Where we live – the human environment (pages 18-20)

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.

These LOs are very clear and succinct. The specific guidance and working in the section students learn about is very clear and prescriptive for planning. They clearly align with the rationale and allow teachers to build on the foundations of learning and skills development. This provides ample opportunities for key competencies and the choice between working individually or in a group and inside or outside the classroom allows for choice and flexibility for all learners. The concepts stated are very clear and the provide a range for teachers to effectively differentiate the content.

Strand 3: How we live – the connected environment (pages 21-23)

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.

These LOs are very clear and succinct. The specific guidance and working in the section students learn about is very clear and prescriptive for planning. They clearly align with the rationale and allow teachers to build on the foundations of learning and skills development. This provides ample opportunities for key competencies and the choice between working individually or in a group and inside or outside the classroom allows for choice and flexibility for all learners. The concepts stated are very clear and the provide a range for teachers to effectively differentiate the content.

Additional Assessment (AAC) (pages 26-28)

The Applied Geography Project provides an opportunity for students to apply and showcase the learning set out in the unifying strand in the context of one or more of the three contextual strands. To complete the Applied Geography Project, students will conduct an inquiry in line with the contents and requirements of the SEC brief. This will involve completing research into an area related to the contents of the brief. They will plan and carry out their inquiry. They will gather and analyse data which will contribute to their learning and facilitate them to draw and communicate informed conclusions.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the AAC in Leaving Certificate Geography with reference to how the AAC might motivate students, how it aligns to the learning outcomes in the specification and how it facilitates the development of key competencies.

Page 27 AAC: Applied Geography Project

“students will produce an individual report on their Applied Geography Project in a format prescribed by the SEC”

Flexibility in format will be required for inclusion of all students.

Students will also need to be able to avail of accessibility features that remove barriers in general.

We request access to the Draft Assessment Guidelines when available, to allow consideration regarding the diversity of learning need and input from the NCSE Post Primary Team.



Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Page 24 Teaching for student learning

Paragraph 3 states that

“by prioritising learning outdoors and working in the field, students will have opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge”.

This is a concern for students with physical disability, for example a student who has difficulty walking on uneven ground, uses a wheelchair or who is visually impaired. While these issues themselves can be geographical and accessibility barriers could exist in any community, it is most welcomed to see Inclusion addressed in paragraph 4.

Variation regarding location and settings of field and outdoor work will also help support inclusion of diversity in paragraph 5.

Page 25 Assessment

Teacher awareness and consideration of RACE for inclusion should be included in assessment at Senior Cycle, perhaps in paragraph 2. For example, if a young person at Senior Cycle is studying Geography and had access to a Waiver in Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation for their Junior Cycle Examinations, then their Geography teacher should be aware of this from reading the Student’s Support Plan and should actively target Senior Cycle vocabulary with intervention such as the Frayer Model. They should correct student punctuation and grammar in written work and model best practice to continue to promote development of literacy skills in line with SMART targets set in collaboration with the lead SET. These actions will “promote learner autonomy... support learning and promote progression, support the development of student key competencies”. Equally, if a student had access to a laptop for Junior Cycle Examinations, the geography teacher should be aware and continue to support typing skills, saving documents as recommended by the SEC for examination. Then the geography teacher will “Demonstrate flexibility in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, to enhance the learning experiences and learning outcomes for all.” (Pg 25, Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes, DOE, 2024)

Page 29 Reasonable Accommodations - final paragraph.

If we are aiming for an education system inclusive of diversity, subject specifications cannot state that students “should carefully consider whether or not they can achieve the learning outcomes, or whether they may have a special



educational need that may prevent them from demonstrating their achievement of the outcome, even after reasonable accommodations have been applied.” Rather, teachers need to develop their own pedagogy to include all learners in their class. While RACE could be improved for inclusion too, once the teacher has cognisance of RACE and thorough pedagogy has been delivered the results will speak for themselves.

Furthermore, the English specification has removed the wording above and has mentioned specifically the UDL framework that can be applied to remove barriers for all students. Teachers need to be reminded that it is their responsibility to design the curriculum around the needs of their students and to always plan for variability. The geography teachers “adapts teaching approaches, as required, to meet individual needs and specifically, to facilitate the achievement of targets that are set in the Student Support Plans, as appropriate to the subject area.” (Pg. 25 Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes, DOE, 2024).