WorldWise Global Schools Response to the English Specification for Leaving Certificate.

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.

Respondent's details

What organisation are you submitting on behalf of?

WorldWise Global Schools

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.

WorldWise Global Schools

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.

Rationale

Language is a vital aspect of how we experience and engage with the world. We know our world by naming it. We understand language as a structured system of communication conveyed by speech, writing or gesture. While governed by rules and conventions it is also ever evolving and adapts to new situations and contexts. Language is fundamental to learning, communication, relationships, identity, cultural awareness, empowerment and expression. We explore and understand our world through observing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Leaving Certificate English builds on the aims of Junior Cycle English and encourages the further development and expansion of the skills of communication, creativity, aesthetic appreciation and critical thinking. These skills will enable students to interpret, compose, discriminate, analyse and evaluate a range of material so that they can be independent learners who can flourish in the world beyond school in a range of contexts with fluency and confidence.

Language does not exist in a vacuum and all creative acts reflect and influence the context, culture and circumstances of its creation. The English classroom reflects the diverse society in which we live. Students will explore a variety of texts in many forms from historical, canonical texts to contemporary texts. Students will have the opportunity to explore Irish cultural contributions in varied and diverse modes. They will engage with a range of texts that give voice to varied cultural identities, representations and social perspectives. Students will see the world they live in reflected in the texts they engage with, but also, they should explore other lives, times and experiences to develop empathy and an understanding of the world around them. Through close reading, depth of engagement and creatively modelling students will engage with a variety of texts. Texts in this instance encompass the wide range of written, oral, visual and digital texts encountered by students in their interaction with the world. Students will learn how to read, create, interpret and discuss these texts and understand how language varies according to purpose, source, register, audience, context, mode and medium. Through the development of critical literacy, students will interrogate the prevailing circumstances and power structures at work in texts.

The English classroom is an inclusive space for discussion, debate and argument. Oracy in the English classroom is pivotal to the development of the skills and competencies required by students as they develop lifelong learning and prepare for active involvement in the world around them; a world where they will ask critical questions, interrogate opinions, respond and

engage empathetically, create imaginatively, formulate reasoned responses and work collaboratively.

Students will have the space to develop and expand their own creativity. The integration of language and literature allows for creative exploration, modelling and reimagining of texts. Through the exploration of many forms of texts, students will be encouraged to develop their own creative voice.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening can be pleasurable activities. The joy of exploration and the pleasure of engagement with literature and language should be embedded in interactions with the specification.

Leaving Certificate English empowers students to be active agents in their own lives.

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.

Aims

The aims of this specification are to develop in students:

- A mature and critical literacy to prepare them for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life in all contexts
- A knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of language and literature in its many variations
- An understanding of the power of language to capture a moment, evoke feelings, convey ideas, persuade, challenge, reason and entertain
- An awareness of the value of literature in its diverse forms for enriching their perceptions, for enhancing their sense of cultural identities, and for creating experiences of aesthetic pleasure
- A respect and appreciation for language used accurately and appropriately
- Creative skills and capacity to apply these skills in a variety of situations
- Skill, capacity and competency in observing, listening, reading, speaking and writing in a range of contexts and modes for varied purposes and audiences.

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.

The Aims and Rationale of the new NCCA English Curriculum Specification for the Leaving Certificate offer a strong foundation but present clear opportunities for further development, particularly in aligning with the SC Guiding Principles. There is meaningful scope to expand on the themes of participation and citizenship, which are vital in fostering students' sense of agency and responsibility as global citizens. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected society, English education should reflect the global context; our place in the wider world. It should create space for students to encounter and engage with a range of voices and perspectives beyond their immediate environment. Encouraging this breadth of understanding contributes to nurturing empathy, critical thinking, and active global citizenship.

Debate is a powerful pedagogical tool that enables students to examine complex global issues, articulate informed viewpoints, and develop a critical voice and should

be included at every opportunity. The Concern Debates, for example, have demonstrated how young people can meaningfully engage with global topics through structured argumentation and reflection. Integrating such models within the curriculum strands would not only enhance students' communication skills but also reinforce their understanding of global interconnectedness and civic engagement.

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.

Senior Cycle Guiding Principles	
Wellbeing and relationships	Choice and flexibility
Inclusive education and diversity	Continuity and transitions
Challenge, engagement and creativity	Participation and citizenship
Learning to learn, learning for life	Learning environments and partnerships

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

The key competencies can be developed in Leaving Certificate English in a range of ways.

Being creative

Being Creative is central to the experience of studying Leaving Certificate English. Students through their exploration of and learning from creative works will develop a range of strategies and processes to develop their own creativity. They will develop an awareness and appreciation for creative acts and will explore ways of responding, analysing, reflecting and creating individually and collaboratively. Students will be given space to nurture their creativity and develop their own creative voice in various written and oral formats.

Communicating

Communicating is foundational to the study of English. Students of Leaving Certificate English will deepen their understanding of various forms of communication in written and oral formats. Through their analysis and response to various forms of communication they will mediate meaning, examine varied approaches for different formats, audiences and situations and develop a critical understanding of how meaning is created. A critical approach to information, misinformation and disinformation is fostered in students. Through their experiences in English, students are encouraged to

be open to diverse perspectives and worldviews and to use their knowledge and understanding in an empathetic, ethical and responsible way. Students will develop skills and competence in oral and written formats to enable them to communicate effectively.

Participating in society and Working with others

In the study of English students will engage in developing and expressing their own ideas. The study of literature allows students to investigate societal issues, both historical and current, and to reflect on their role and agency in relation to societal challenges. The development of a critical literacy allows students to reflect on values, perceptions and actions encountered and learn to critique, challenge and transform the society in which they live. In the English classroom, students are encouraged to work co-operatively in pairs or groups. In doing so, students take on different roles, set and achieve shared goals, navigate differences of opinion and approach, interact ethically and reflect on their experiences.

Thinking and solving problems

Throughout their engagement with the learning outcomes in English, students gather knowledge, ideas, theories and concepts from different sources; analyse, synthesise and evaluate these ideas; explore different options and create their own solutions. They are encouraged to ask questions and seek challenges to given interpretations. They will make connections across different learning, knowledge and experiences and be open to differing points of view.

Cultivating wellbeing and Managing learning and self

*Students in Leaving Certificate English are encouraged to set personal learning goals, reflect on and evaluate their own learning and have a sense of self-efficacy and experience achievement. Through their engagement with the varied texts and sources on the course, students will appreciate, celebrate and understand diverse identities and cultures. In this exploration, students are encouraged to develop and express their own personal identity, values and beliefs and contribute to an inclusive, supportive classroom space. They will reflect on their own learning, being open to feedback and using it to improve their learning. Through listening, speaking, discussion and collaboration, student agen*cy and self-efficacy are developed both individually and in collaboration with others.

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

It is excellent to see that a critical approach to information, misinformation, and disinformation is being fostered, equipping students with essential skills for navigating an increasingly complex media and digital landscape. Likewise, the recognition that the study of literature enables students to investigate societal issues, both historical and current, and to reflect on their own role and agency in addressing these challenges is highly commendable. However, it would be valuable to clarify how this will be meaningfully achieved within the strands and classroom practices. Will there

be guidance or examples to ensure that engagement with literature consistently supports critical reflection and social awareness? The competencies offer a strong framework for developing thoughtful, informed, and active citizens, but their impact will depend on how explicitly they are embedded in curriculum design and classroom activities.

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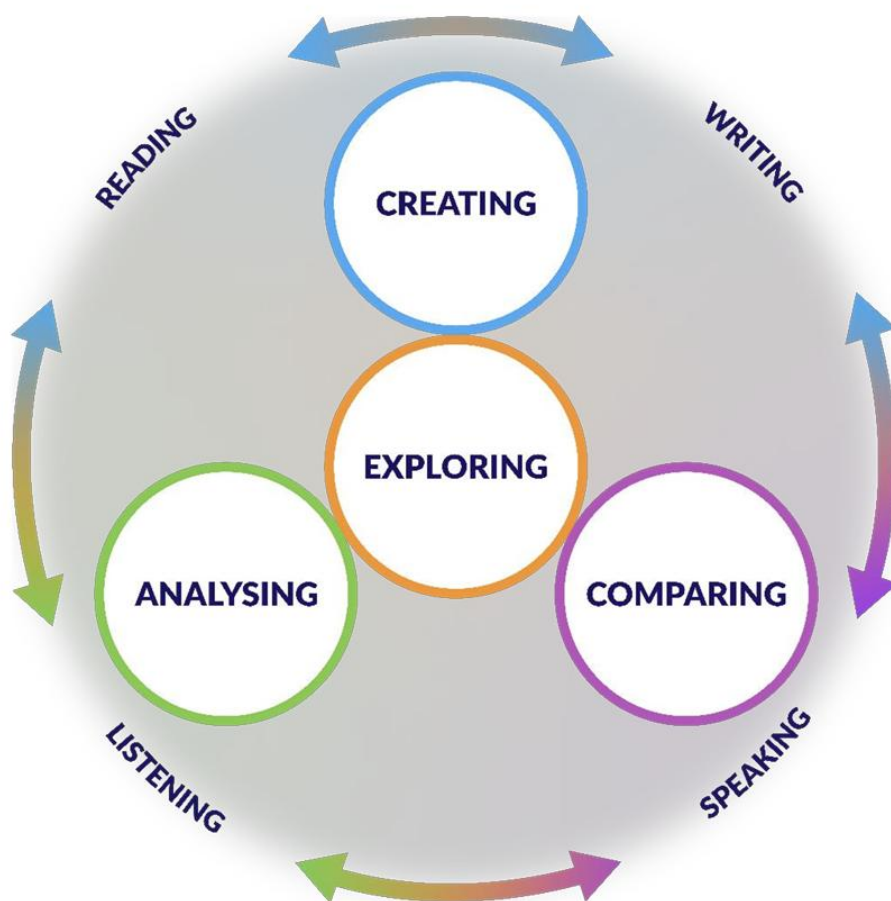The details of the strands are described on pages 10:18 of the specification.

Figure 3: Structure of the strands in LC English

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.

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.

Strand 1: Exploring

1. **Understanding Texts & Their Features**: Students analyse various texts, exploring forms, formats, narrative tools, stylistic devices, themes, and language to deepen comprehension.

2. **Diverse Range of Texts**: Engagement with traditional canonical literature, Irish literature, modern 20th & 21st-century texts, media texts (film, news, podcasts), and non-literary texts.

3. **Language & Audience Awareness**: Exploration of how language features, grammar, structure, and register vary according to purpose and audience, including identifying bias and misinformation.

4. **Exploring Text Elements & Responses**: Examination of setting, character development, context, thematic structures, and aesthetic qualities, with opportunities to respond through various writing and speaking modes.

5. **Developing Communication Skills**: Strengthening comprehension, analysis, and evaluation strategies while practicing different modes of responding, including critique, creative responses, debates, and discussions.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Strand One of the new Leaving Certificate English Specification, *Exploring*, presents an exciting opportunity to broaden students' understanding of the world and their place within it. Including texts from a wide range of cultures, backgrounds, and global issues allows students to engage with different worldviews, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding. These are skills essential in an increasingly interconnected world.

Encouraging students to explore themes such as human rights, inequality, and conflict through literature and media deepens their awareness of global challenges and promotes critical reflection on their own role in addressing them. Teaching students to recognise bias, misinformation, and disinformation in both media and literature helps develop responsible, informed global citizens capable of critically assessing the information they encounter.

Additionally, examining how language is used to influence, persuade, and <u>empower through political speeches, protest literature, and media narratives</u> supports students in understanding the powerful role of language in shaping global perspectives.

By encouraging students to express themselves through various modes such as essays, speeches, debates, and creative writing on these issues, the curriculum can empower them to become active, thoughtful, and engaged participants in society.

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.

Strand 2: Creating

1. **Developing Creative Expression**: Students refine their creative voice by producing texts in various genres (e.g., stories, poetry, speeches, scripts, podcasts) for different audiences and purposes.

2. **The Creative Process & Techniques**: Emphasis on planning, drafting, editing, and evaluating creative work, using strategies like creative modelling, writing prompts, peer assessment, and digital tools.

3. **Collaboration & Reflection**: Opportunities for group work, discussions, oral presentations, and self-assessment help students refine their writing and evaluate both their own and others' creative work.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Strand Two of the new Leaving Certificate English Specification, *Creating*, holds rich potential to support students in becoming imaginative, informed, and globally engaged writers and thinkers. By encouraging students to explore pressing global topics such as human rights, and social justice through creative forms like storytelling, poetry, and persuasive speeches, this strand can deepen both their empathy and their sense of agency.

Drawing on literature and media from diverse cultures not only broadens students' creative horizons but also inspires meaningful responses to complex global challenges.

Introducing creative modelling using texts from a variety of cultural backgrounds and global viewpoints ensures that students are exposed to different styles, narratives, and ways of thinking, which can help shape more authentic and reflective work. Furthermore, the strand offers opportunities for collaborative learning; peer collaboration that brings together different experiences and perspectives allows students to explore issues from multiple angles, fostering critical thinking and mutual understanding. Group discussions and oral presentations can also be powerful tools for unpacking ethical dilemmas and navigating global issues, helping students develop the confidence and skills to express their views clearly and constructively.

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.

Strand 3: Comparing

1. **Comparative Analysis of Texts**: Students examine at least two texts, comparing themes, genre, style, and context to deepen their understanding of literature.

2. **Exploring Context & Perspectives**: Analysis of historical, social, and cultural influences on texts, including how identities, places, and groups are represented differently.

3. **Critical Thinking & Communication**: Students develop insightful, well-supported responses through critical analysis, discussion, and comparative writing, strengthening their analytical and communicative skills.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Strand Three of the new Leaving Certificate English Specification rightly focuses on *Comparing*, and it presents a critical opportunity to deepen students' global awareness and engagement through literature and media.

A key element in realising the potential of this strand lies in the careful selection of prescribed and recommended texts. To ensure that a global perspective is meaningfully embedded, consultation with Global Citizenship organisations is essential.

By exploring global themes such as justice, inequality, identity, through comparative studies of texts from different cultures and regions, students can recognise both shared human experiences and culturally specific perspectives.

Including literary voices from marginalised or underrepresented communities is particularly important in promoting intercultural understanding and encouraging students to critically reflect on the stories that are told and those that are often left out.

Strand Three should also support classroom discussion around bias, stereotypes, and power dynamics in storytelling, helping students develop a more nuanced understanding of how literature can both challenge and reinforce social norms.

This strand offers valuable space to not only foster deep engagement with texts but to inspire active, informed citizenship. When students connect their learning to real-world issues and diverse perspectives, they are more likely to see themselves as participants in global conversations, capable of advocacy and change.

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.

 Strand 4: Analysing

In-Depth Textual Analysis: Students critically analyse a prescribed single text (e.g., a novel or play) and a selection of poetry, examining aspects such as character development, themes, context, and literary conventions.

Exploring Literary & Non-Literary Texts: The strand includes the study of both literary (novels, plays, poetry) and non-literary texts, allowing students to assess purpose, impact, and narrative techniques across different forms.

Poetic Analysis & Appreciation: Students engage with poetry from various poets, time periods, and perspectives, analysing elements such as form, structure, style, and poetic intent.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

Strand Four of the new Leaving Certificate English Specification, *Analysing*, offers a vital platform for developing students' critical thinking by engaging deeply with texts across cultures, time periods, and perspectives.

This strand is particularly well-placed to support a global outlook by encouraging students to analyse how literature reflects, shapes, and challenges social and political realities.

By examining texts from different regions and cultures, students can explore global issues such as inequality, conflict, migration, and social justice, and gain insight into how narratives can influence public perception and collective memory of these events. Comparative analysis between global texts enables learners to identify both universal human concerns and culturally specific experiences, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding.

Strand Four should encourage students to examine how poetry has served as a powerful tool for activism, resistance, and advocacy across various historical and political contexts. From anti-colonial and civil rights movements to contemporary struggles for environmental and gender justice, poetry offers rich examples of how language can inspire change and give voice to the marginalised.

This strand, when infused with a global lens, can equip students not only to interpret texts with greater depth but also to see the power of literature as a force for social awareness and transformation.

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.

☐

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

☐

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

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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?

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

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

☐

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?

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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.

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

Supports for Successful Enactment

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

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