



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.

Any personal information you volunteer to the NCCA will be respected and NCCA will apply the highest standards of security and confidentiality in accordance with GDPR (2016) and the Data Protection Acts (1998 - 2018). Further information on the NCCA's Data Protection Policy can be found at <https://ncca.ie/en/legal-disclaimer-and-data-protection/>.

NCCA, as a public body operating under the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), is required to publish publicly funded research. In accordance with this Directive, any data from this will be anonymised and aggregated and only made available after the final report is published. This is expected to be in June 2025. All open data is made available alongside the report itself on the website www.ncca.ie

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?

IDEA Formal Education Working Group

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.

IDEA Formal Education Working Group

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.

It's very good to see the rationale of students becoming more Geographically literate and are '*enabled to understand the interactions, interconnections and implications of decisions that shape our natural and human environments*'. We feel there is an opportunity to integrate themes such as Global Responsibility, social justice and sustainability here.

It's also welcome to see that '*Students are empowered to actively engage with and apply their learning, through the development of geographical thinking and skills*'. We advocate for the inclusion of 'informed action'.

We suggest clearly defining what is meant by the '*development of skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving*'. This could be expanded by stating that students will be invited to critically assess power dynamics, economic inequalities and historical contexts.

We suggest linking the Sustainable Development Goals to global ethics to help '*students develop an informed worldview [equipping] them to make ethical, future-orientated decisions*'. By connecting the SDGs here students will be encouraged to consider equity, human rights and environmental justice.

'The aim of Leaving Certificate Geography is to develop students' understanding of the Earth and its people, and their interest in and appreciation of the real-world significance of geography'. We suggest adding to this that students will be invited to critically assess global challenges like climate change and inequality, fostering an understanding of global interconnections and the shared responsibility of global citizens in addressing these issues.

In the aims of the Geography course it is stated that students '*use evidence-based decision-making and judgements to explore creative and sustainable responses to economic, environmental and social challenges*'. We suggest the inclusion of 'global challenges' to highlight the connection we all share on our planet.



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.

It is wonderful to see the emphasis on 'participating in society' and inclusion of many themes which are at present current topics in our society . It is encouraging to see language like 'express own ideas based on evidence', 'use their voice in discussions' and 'challenge the status quo'.

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.

The diagram is useful as it shows the interconnectedness of the course and how we live in the world.

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.

In Geographical Knowledge and Inquiry, students can explore global issues like climate change, migration and inequality. It is heartening to see that students are using critical thinking and inquiry methods; we notice that there is space here to recognise, through data, the interconnectedness of global systems and how we can go about providing solutions using Geographical thinking. We notice that students will have the opportunity to understand key Geographical concepts like patterns and sustainability. There is an opportunity here to explore the inequalities in our world and the shared responsibility we have to create a just world. In Fieldwork and research there is an opportunity to encourage students to use data to advocate for human rights and global equity.

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.



There is an opportunity across all strands to incorporate learning related to the SDGs. Much of Trócaire's work in the post-primary realm focuses on engaging young people with the SDGs in a way that is meaningful to them. It strikes us as unusual that the SDGs seem absent from this subject specification.

We see an opportunity for the inclusion of the human impact when studying the tectonic impact on geographical areas and perhaps comparing the impacts on Global North and South Communities.

When exploring fossil fuels, there is an opportunity to include the effects on the environment on the over-use of fossil fuels along with examining sustainable alternatives. In addition it would be welcome to see the impact of mining on communities in the Global South as well as interrogating what the demand is for and how this demand on resources affects communities.

When students are examining fluvial processes there is an opportunity to include environmental justice and mitigation for future strategies. When studying about atmosphere and weather there is a chance to explore the effect and impact of weather on humans, on agriculture and the trends associated with migration. We advocate here for the emphasis on the connectedness of our world.

When studying Climate Change we encourage the use of the phrase 'Climate Justice' to work in alignment with the Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development course. It is good to see references to Climate agreements such as the Paris Climate agreement. Perhaps there could be more Global examples as we must work together to have a just and sustainable world.

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.

When exploring human settlement patterns and finding sustainable responses to the challenges facing rural and urban communities we suggest the addition of the idea of fostering a culture of global responsibility in achieving sustainability.

It is excellent to see the inclusion of urban renewal, eco-cities and smart cities. When discussing population growth and distribution, we advocate for examples to



be used by the Global North and South. Examples from the Global North and South could be used when exploring population growth and distribution.

When studying migration, while it is very important to study the social, economic and environmental factors affecting migration, the inclusion of colonial history, climate change and policies is welcome. Students should be encouraged to see the wealth in inclusive societies that prioritise human dignity.

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.

When exploring Agriculture and Fisheries, there are opportunities to examine food security, food as a weapon of war, food/agriculture sustainability and fair trade. We advocate for the importance of global solidarity in ensuring a sustainable and just global food system. There are opportunities here to look at government policies on trade and the role of governments in shaping equitable, ethical and sustainable agricultural practices.

When examining Tourism, we suggest the inclusion, if not already part of the syllabus of the impact of tourism on local communities and resources; natural and other resources.

If not already included, when exploring Globalisation and Trade, include equitable trade practices.

We are delighted to see the inclusion of Geopolitics and Development. This section is wide in scope and will need to be supported by relevant and ongoing CPD; there is a risk here that a textbook could highlight one model of development/territorial dispute etc.

When studying humanitarian aid, students could be invited to explore the challenges of poverty, climate change and inequality and how the Global North and South are interconnected through these challenges. There is room here to connect the SDGs to the challenges and mitigation of these challenges. We feel that there is room too, to include discussion about peace and the importance of solidarity when addressing conflict/territory/resources.



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.

There is an opportunity within this brief to have student explore current global issues as they do in the Junior Cycle CBA for Geography in the news.

Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Ongoing relevant CPD for teachers imperative when dealing with current issues of which the students will come to the classroom with some (and not always accurate) knowledge.