



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

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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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Respondent's details

What organisation are you submitting on behalf of?

Cork Geography Teachers Association

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.

Cork Geography Teachers Association

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.

We are happy to see the recognition of Geography as involving critical thinking and problem solving skills, and that it is important in the development of creative and sustainable responses to complex geographical challenges. Furthermore we are pleased to see the recognition of geography in the development of an informed worldview in our students in a very complicated world. The skills that senior cycle geography students develop are transferable to a wide range of contexts.

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.

The competencies that were highlighted are thinking and solving problems, participating in society and communicating, which we already develop in our students, we feel that further highlighting the literacies and numeracy involved in the delivery of geography is warranted. We would go so far as to say that no other subject uses such a variety of resources to support the different type of literacies and numeracy.



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 presentation of the 4 strands help to show the interconnectedness of the strands, with the centrality of the unifying strand as being extremely important as the skills are the foundations of the connections but are also transferable to the students lives following Senior Cycle.
Possibly should be a relabelling of strand 1 as 2 or 3, to encourage teachers no to start there in their planning/teaching.

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.

U1 – developed through the teaching of geography throughout senior cycle. How would this be assessed?
U2 – welcome the application of geographical thinking. Again this is transferable to the post senior cycle life of students. Should be embedded in the other strands.
Will appropriate resources and samples be provided.



U3 – Strong list of concepts, again need to be embedded in the course, but easily identifiable by students.

U4 – many students should be able to do this if they took Junior Cycle. How will this be assessed?

U5 – teachers felt strongly that fieldwork, similar to that conducted in the current investigation should continue to be a part of the course, especially as part of the AAC. This is the most positive and enjoyable part of the course for many of our students and it would be regressive to remove this. Teachers also were eager that there would be an element of choice in the AAC so that students could explore their local geography.

U7 – samples of the synthesis are needed – is this sketch maps, graphs and charts or something else. These skills will need to be explicitly taught to the students, so we will need to know what to teach them.

U8 – is this the evaluation part of the current investigation? Clarification needed.

U9 – is this an expansion on the results and conclusion of the current investigation?

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.

20 learning outcomes compared with 10 in strand 2 and 13 in strand 3. Questions regarding the weighting of the strands in the exam.

General concerns regarding the amount of Los focused on weather and climate. Many members said that they lack confidence in teaching parts of this section. Noted that karst landscape was absent, concern as it is a unique landscape in Ireland.

1.1 – very broad, large amount of content. Concern regarding the scale of the course and ability to cover it. Also concern regarding the depth, teachers worry that they will not do enough detail/too much detail.



- 1.2 - clarification regarding the examples of mountain ranges. Should they be chosen based on orogenies or on the processes that form them ie oceanic/continental collision v continental/continental collision?
- 1.3 – clear LO and SLA. May need clarification on if it is just volcanic landforms or if plutonic landforms also need to be studied.
- 1.4 - clear LO and SLA. Please consider changing global north and global south to LEDC and MEDC. This may be more accessible to students and teachers. Some students, especially those who think in a very literal way, may struggle with some countries north of the equator being classified as global south. May need a clarification as how many benefits and how many hazards.
- 1.5 - could 1.5 and 1.6 be combined, causes, effects, preparation and responses. Again consider the use of global north and global south.
- 1.6 - see above
- 1.7 - LO is clear but need clarification on the amount of rocks to be studied. 2 of each type?
- 1.8 - seen as important but too vague. Potentially a massive amount of work to properly deal with this LO. Do 4 natural resources need to be named in the SLA. Could it be specified 2 natural resources and allow an element of choice for the teachers.
- 1.9 - This and 1.10 were one of the most controversial Los of the night. Teachers were very concerned that fluvial was being singled out for special treatment and wanted to know why coastal was not getting a similar treatment. Many teachers conduct their investigation around the coast and coastal landforms and processes. They are worried about their students not having the opportunity to access and study their local environment. The feeling was that there should be a choice between fluvial and coastal, which teachers would choose based on students locality. Choice is extremely important of teachers in this section.
- 1.10 -
- 1.11 - felt this could be evidence of fluvial, coastal, glacial and weathering on the Irish landscape.
- 1.12 - This could be moved further down to the section dealing with climate change (1,18). This could exist in that section or become part of the SLA for 1.18.
- 1.13 - This could be combined as part of the choice between a deeper look at fluvial/coastal. If doing fluvial do 1.10. If doing coastal do 1.13.
- 1.14 - There was a concern from some members as they do not feel confident in teaching this section. They also felt students don't particularly enjoy this section at Junior Cycle and it may not excite them at Senior Cycle. Many of the students may struggle with the concepts. Teachers who teach ocean and atmosphere were happy with this section.
- 1.15 - See above.



- 1.16 - Teachers would like to know how we are to distinguish between the climatic zones (latitude, temperature, precipitation). All of these factors for each of the named climatic zones including the range of seasons. This is a lot of similar information for our students. Clarification needed.
- 1.17 - Teachers were generally interested and excited to teach this topic and believed it could be made accessible and exciting for students.
- 1.18 - Seen to be very important. The LO was clear but the SLA is too big, too many topics named. Again an element of choice or self determination by the teacher. Maybe 2 physical and 2 human impacts. There was a concern around some of the language and concepts which seem 3rd level and may be inaccessible to our students.
- 1.19 - Concern around the action verb research. This is a huge undertaking given 6 very different mitigations and adaptations were named in the SLA. Again could it be 2 mitigations and 2 adaptations. Could the verb also be changed.
- 1.20 - could be combined with 1.18 in terms of the monitoring of climate change. Concern about agreements and policies, as these frequently change and may not help future proof the course.

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.

- 2.1 – clear LO. Perhaps should be 1 urban and 1 rural settlement
- 2.2 – clear LO and clear SLA. Absence is also a pattern of settlement.
- 2.3 – clear LO. Clarity needed around rights of nature.
- 2.4 – should the context be more explicit, urbanisation in a LEDC and a MEDC?
- 2.5 – clear LO but too many factors in the SLA. 11 impacts and responses listed seems excessive. Language may be inaccessible for some students. Would it be possible for the teacher to choose 2 impacts and 2 responses which could fit the local context of the students, rather than the longer list which may not be easily accessible concepts. This is very prescriptive.
- 2.6 – clear LO and clear SLA



2.7 – some teachers may not have done this in quite a while depending on the elective they choose. What type of resources are available for information on the local setting? Training in accessing these resources will be necessary.

2.8 – This was confusing. Members struggled to think of policies impacting birth rate in Ireland. Also worry regarding keeping up to date with changing policies. This could be an onerous task.

2.9 – Felt this was important. Clear LO. And broad SLA

2.10 – While members felt this was important there was concern regarding dealing with this topic as it could prove very controversial in some communities.

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.

3.1 – a well put learning outcome, should be of interest to students and is important that students understand where their food comes from, sustainability in agriculture and its centrality to the Irish economy.

3.2 – similar to what exists already. Is there a need to include the CFP, especially when there are concerns regarding the amount of content in the course?

3.3 – good learning outcome, well put, should be of interest to the students.

3.4 – why is mass tourism focussed on the Mediterranean in this case. Could it not be more open to incorporate more students experiences.

3.5 – 5 different parts to students will learn about. Will there be enough time to cover all 5 in the course.

3.6 – very important, especially in the current context, for students to understand what makes us an attractive base for MNCs. Good that it is focused on just one company, allows for local example.

3.7 – is there a need for the 3 models? There is value in the different measures of development.

3.8 – should lead to a good understanding by students of HDI but is government policies too broad/vague. Also could the referral to global north and global south be changed to LEDC and MEDC

3.9 – good LO and clear, again change to a LEDC.

3.10 – very interesting but will need significant support from OIDE as will be new information to many teachers.



3.11 – felt this was a very important topic but not sure if 4 freedoms is too many given the concern regarding the amount of content and if we will be able to complete the course.

3.12 – felt this LO should be removed. Why was water chosen as a named resource and not something else.

3.13 – should be very interesting for students but teachers will need significant support by Oide

A general comment from members regarding the absence of culture and identity in the specification but a feeling it should appear in strand 3.

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.

The greatest concern was that around the phrase “a common brief”. Teachers were very concerned that there would be a lack of choice. The current system allows teachers to choose 1 brief from 5, which they can conduct locally and will help students better understand their local environment. Teachers were also very concerned as currently many teachers are confident in carrying out some of the briefs but not all, they worried about the significant upskilling necessary for teachers to lead students in these new briefs. With recent surveys stating 86% of teachers felt some level of burnout, the SEC must be mindful of extra training, in unfamiliar investigations that they may require of teachers. There were also concerns regarding schools being properly equipped to undertake these new investigations/applied geography project. This will require a significant budget. 12million euros is being made available to schools to support implementation of science at senior cycle. Geography is also a science and will require similar resourcing.

Teachers were also concerned that a lack of choice in the brief would make it difficult to accommodate some students with additional needs i.e. those with vision



impairments or those who may be wheelchair bound. The current choice is key to the real inclusion of all students and this choice must be maintained going forward.

Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Geography is a science and should be recognised and resourced as such. There is a vast discrepancy in the resources available to geography teachers and their students in different schools. A list of equipment that each school **MUST** have is necessary so that when money is made available to schools to fund resources, it is spent firstly on the most necessary equipment. This needs to be informed by a greater knowledge of what the AAC will require. There is little point in funding schools regarding resources if we as teachers do not know what will be necessary, as we do not know what the AACs will encompass.

Schools will also need a bank of physical maps and photographs available. These are the best resources for students to learn map skills on. We need upskilling and reskilling in the use of scoilnet maps which is an important resource that is underutilised. If this resource could be focused on the LOs and the unifying strand it would give greater confidence to those delivering the specification.