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?

IFI

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

- o √Yes
- o No

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

Alicia McGivern IFI

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

- o √Yes
- o 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.

The focus on language offers a good continuum from JC English. However, I think 'an awareness of the value of literature' also needs recognition of the value of enjoyment, understanding and critical response to created works, beyond modelling, but enjoyment of literature and creative works for their own sake and to develop an awareness of the vast field and longevity of literature in all its forms. The rationale presents a concept of 'texts' 'encountered by students' but, from an access point of view, or language perspective, many students may not encounter a range of texts of their own accord for any number of reasons. English and school offers the possibility for connecting students with a range of 'texts' including literature so the encounter has a different origin. Re text selection, specifically: 'texts should be selected that are culturally responsive, relevant and of interest to the students in the class … students should be involved in the selection of texts and given agency to exercise autonomy in their learning' it highlights a need for school /library resources to be enhanced to offer the space for reading, exploring that will ensure equal access to texts and original work. In our experience with regard to film, topics which may be regarded as 'sensitive' albeit directly relevant to students such as LGBTQ+, racism etc are often avoided which can have direct impact on cultivation of identity as referenced in Key Competency, Managing wellbeing. Perhaps PLE with external organisations would be useful in this regard such as Belong to etc.

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.

Being creative as mentioned above, should reflect the students capacity to critically engage with creative works – for their own sake as well as to develop their own creativity. Communicating, that students learn to communicate (express, articulate) opinion on created works, how to formulate and parse ideas in response to works and also to develop and learn language of critical engagement.

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.

Is there a hierarchy within the strands? Re Image on page 11, while the text outlines that study is not linear, at the same time it is not fully clear that there is no hierarchy; thus does creating come first in order to establish a baseline of language and comprehension or is this through exploring etc? some more detail would be helpful here.

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.

'elements' of text suggests that extracts rather than complete works become a focus, which would be a limitation in terms of students cultural experience and engagement. It is not clear whether specific texts other than 'a single text' would be required such as eg Shakespeare etc so do certain 'texts' become relegated to particular students? Also as information/disinformation is referenced, it is essential that factual and fictional texts are included, along with egs of reportage etc. Perhaps clarity on form of texts could be included with egs.

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.

Useful to include mention of AI here as it will inevitably arise in the classroom, especially as digital tech is referenced to facilitate proofing. Can students be introduced to AI tools constructively for creative purposes? Perhaps an outcome regarding differentiation/awareness and understanding of, and tying in with 'information/disinformation' discussion. Also perhaps link with DFTS 'critical response' element.

Again, as mentioned, in terms of planning and delivery, if there is a hierarchy within the strands, this needs to be explicit and the order needs to tally throughout the specification. (pp10 vs pp 11-18)

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.

LO11 'examine and compare' lends itself perhaps unhelpfully to a whole range of interpretations – will the 'no of texts' be specified? What is a 'meaningful' way? Perhaps criteria could be offered here. Also if plan is to include film in the 'no of texts', is there potential overlap with DFTS/a bonus for those students but would need teacher alignment so similar use of language etc and agreed terminology. Also as mentioned above, inclusion of factual offerings would be required, and in terms of access, perhaps texts in translation, or is there an option to respond in English to a piece in original language ?

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.

Give examples of 'non literary texts' such as film, or factual. Various examples could be offered as ideal for comparative study of form, format and conventions. Film script could be included in the prescribed texts, while ideal for comparative study of form, format and conventions it could be ignored if an optional text- this will also integrate English within the wider Leaving Cert context.

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.

> The oral is a terrific addition, but definitely should include a film option among the 'two texts from prescribed list'. It would be a real missed opportunity if film which can be a huge cultural element in young peoples lives, is not a 'text' on which they can share their views in this exciting new assessment element.

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

> Given the packed nature of year 6, it seems end year 5 is the likely timing, Though further engagement with texts and the spec throughout year 6 would allow for more confident and fluent presentations.

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

> A concern that all energies would go into preparing for oral at end of year 5 and the designation of two texts etc.

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?

> As above.

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

> A % less pressure on the written paper. For many students the oral option will be a lifeline, but just as it opens up possibilities, so too should they be able to select any

‘text’ as the emphasis will be how they present their case not whether they have selected ‘the specific book’.

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

Timing; equality of access; pressure on students who are uncomfortable speaking/students who are ESL; school facilities; PLE

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?

The comparative is challenging in written form, and so too may it appear in oral form. It is interesting why the emphasis must be comparative when the rationale for this spec is to ‘read create interpret and discuss’ which seems more open that a specific emphasis on comparing. In an oral context, it is not clear what this mode will necessarily achieve when they are being encouraged to develop as learners ‘who can flourish..beyond a range of contexts’. Hearkening back to current spec where language to persuade/compare/argue is specified, perhaps this needs to also be iterated in this spec – if that is the framework within which the oral is to function.

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.

Again a really great addition, the challenge will be AI undoubtedly, and teachers will need upskilling in working with the tools or introducing students to informed and critical use of same if that is to be the case, The spec itself must address AI so there is a recognised DES approach that will inform schools facing into new subjects.

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

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Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Facilities to include screening room, library additions, reading spaces; learning support to ensure equal access;

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

Teacher prof. learning, whole school pl as English covers all students.
Parent/guardian/student info; cross subject sharing eg DFTS & English