



Circular Number: 0054/2023

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Post Primary Schools, Special Schools and Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

Curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2023/24 and onwards



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to inform post primary schools of curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle, with particular reference to the school years 2023/24 and onwards.

Boards of Management, Principal teachers of all second-level schools, special schools, and the Chief Executives (CE) of all Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are asked to ensure that this circular is brought to the immediate attention of all teachers. In addition, Boards of Management are also requested to ensure that parents/guardians and students are advised of the relevant elements of this circular.

This circular follows circular 0070/2020.

2. Assessment Arrangements for Certificate Examinations 2024

The Department recognises that assessment considerations for students sitting Certificate Examinations in 2024 must take account of the disruption in learning experienced by this cohort due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, changes have been made to the assessment arrangements for the Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme for the 2024 state examinations.

Details of these revised assessment arrangements are available [here](#).

3. Revisions to Leaving Certificate Computer Science Specification

Leaving Certificate Computer Science (LCCS) has been available nationally as an optional subject since September 2020. In May 2023, the NCCA completed an early enactment review of LCCS. The final report of this review is available [here](#).

Arising from the early enactment review, the following changes have been made to the LCCS specification. The revised specification will apply to students entering 5th year in 2023 and onwards¹:

¹ It should be noted that there are adjustments in place for the 2023/24 school year as a result of the disruption to learning experience owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further details in relation to the specific adjustments for LCCS are available [here](#).



- Python will be the only programming language assessed in the end-of-course assessment. Python and Javascript will continue to be assessed in the coursework assessment.
- The Computer Science coursework project brief will be issued towards the end of term 1 of the second year of the course, with ten weeks available for the completion of the coursework assessment.
- The text of the specification has also been revised and provides greater clarity in relation to the current format of the end-of-course assessment for certification. In relation to the structure of the written examination, the text 'computer-based assessment of learning outcomes has been replaced with **written and** computer-based assessment of learning outcomes' This change has no implications for the structure of the assessment.

A revised version of the specification is available at curriculumonline.ie.

4. Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (non-examinable)

Schools are reminded that all senior cycle students must be provided with the opportunity to study Physical Education in some capacity. In particular, schools are required to ensure that a double class period (totalling 80 minutes per week), or its equivalent, of Physical Education is timetabled for all senior cycle students. Schools operating a one-hour timetable must ensure that the time allocation is provided.

From September 2020, the Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) Framework replaced the existing guidelines set out in the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools. The Framework is designed to support teachers in planning quality learning in Physical Education for all students in senior cycle.

The non-examinable framework assists schools in designing a physical education programme for senior cycle students, including students who do or do not elect to take Physical Education as a subject for their Leaving Certificate examination. The framework is designed to provide significant flexibility and choice both for schools and individual students regarding its implementation.

If a student is studying the optional LCPE specification, they are not required to also study the SCPE framework, although this is not prohibited.



Oide has provided an overview of the curricular options and supporting resources for planning and teaching Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework which is available on www.scoilnet.ie.

5. Senior Cycle SPHE

The NCCA is developing a specification for Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education, which will be available to schools in September 2024. The draft specification is currently available for public consultation until 3 November 2023. The draft specification, and details in relation to the public consultation, are available [here](#).

6. Ukrainian as a non-curricular language

Ukrainian is being introduced as a non-curricular language. As a non-curricular language, students will be able to opt to be examined in Ukrainian if they meet certain criteria. Details in relation to those criteria are available [here](#). The first examination will be available for students sitting the Leaving Certificate in June 2025.

7. Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme update

Preparing Senior Cycle students for the world of work in all its complexity is an important facet of the Senior Cycle experience.

In schools offering the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), students commencing fifth year may now access the LCVP Link Modules (Preparation for the World of Work and Enterprise Education) without meeting the vocational subject grouping criteria or the Modern European Language (MEL) requirements set out in Circular Letter 0040/2013. These requirements no longer apply for students opting in to the LCVP programme.

The updated LCVP Programme Statement reflecting these changes is available [here](#).

8. Leaving Certificate Applied update

To enhance students' options further and support more flexible learning pathways within school, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) students starting fifth year may now access LCE Mathematics and, subject to certain conditions an



LCE MFL if they wish. Students may choose to study Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) Mathematics either in addition to LCA Mathematical Applications, or instead of LCA Mathematical Applications. Students wishing to study an LCE Modern Foreign Language (MFL) will do so in addition to the LCA programme.

Students' ability to engage with LCE Mathematics and/or the LCE MFL will be central to decisions relating to students' accessing the subject.

The updated LCA Programme Statement reflecting these changes and including specific information in relation to certification is available at [is available here](#).

9. Development of follow-on Senior Cycle modules for students progressing from Level 1 and 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle level

The NCCA has established a Post-Primary Special Education Development Group to develop follow-on Senior Cycle modules for students progressing from Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle level.

These modules will be introduced from September 2024.

10. Revised Transition Year Programme Statement

A new Transition Year (TY) Programme Statement will be introduced in 2024. A draft revised Programme Statement is available for public consultation until 20 October 2023. The draft Statement, and details on the consultation are available [here](#).

11. Future updates to Senior Cycle curriculum and assessment arrangements

The changes and developments to Senior Cycle set out at sections 7-10 align with and support progress towards a redeveloped Senior Cycle, including changes to curriculum and assessment arrangements across the four Senior Cycle programmes, as announced by the Minister for Education in March 2022 and September 2023.



Further updates on the redevelopment of Senior Cycle will be the subject of a separate communication, which will issue in due course.

Celeste O'Callaghan
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