

ASTIR

ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY TEACHERS, IRELAND

ISSN 0790-6560 | VOLUME 42: NUMBER 5: NOVEMBER 2024

Ireland last place for second-level funding



- | Senior Cycle concerns
- | Teachers' right to disconnect
- | Convention 2025

ASTI



POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AT MIC

EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
- Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching)
- Master of Education (M Ed) with Specialisms (NEW)
- M Ed in Literacy Education
- M Ed in Leadership of Wellbeing in Education
- M Ed in Educational Leadership & Management
- M Ed in Education for Human Rights & Equality
- M Ed in Education for Sustainability & Global Citizenship
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Inclusive Special Education
- Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Adult & Further Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/MA in Autism Studies
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Digital Leadership in Education
- Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/M Ed in Middle Leadership & Mentoring
- An Teastas Iarchéime i dTeagasc Ábharbhunaithe san Iarbhunscolaíocht Lán-Ghaeilge & Ghaeltachta
- Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

Learning; Society & Religious Education; Language & Literacy Education; Arts Education & Physical Education; Reflective Pedagogy & Early Childhood Studies; Educational Psychology; Inclusive & Special Education; STEM Education

LIBERAL ARTS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- Structured PhD in Applied Linguistics
- MA in Climate, Justice & Sustainability
- MA/M Sc in Environment, Society & Culture
- MA in Modern English Literature
- Graduate Diploma/MA in Applied Linguistics
- MA in History
- MA in Local History (with UL)
- MA in Media Studies
- MA sa Ghaeilge (Ceannaireacht i dTeanga, Cultúr agus Pobal)
- Certificate/MA in Christian Leadership in Education

PhD & MA BY RESEARCH AND THESIS IN THE FOLLOWING LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENTS

Business Studies; Drama & Theatre Studies; English Language & Literature; French Studies; Gaeilge; German Studies; Geography; History; Mathematics & Computer Studies; Media & Communication Studies; Music; Philosophy; Psychology; Theology & Religious Studies



Inspiring Generations for 125 Years

mic.ie/postgraduate

CONTENTS

- 4 From the President's Desk
When the stakes are high, we stand up for education
- 4 General Secretary's update
Blanket 40% assessment component cap is unsound
- 5 News feature
What's behind the teacher shortage crisis?
- 5 News
- 10 News feature
Teachers call for better resourcing for special education needs
- 12 Feature
Right to disconnect
- 14 News feature
Education needs more than a glance
- 16 Features
Senior Cycle Chemistry, Biology and Physics: concerns with research investigation coursework
ASTI celebrates outstanding contributions
Supporting teacher engagement with research
ASTI helping to provide safer schools in Uganda
- 24 Committee profile
Meet your Standing Committee representatives
- 25 Annual Convention
ASTI Annual Convention 2025
- 26 ASTI in the media
- 27 Obituaries
- 28 RSTA news
- 29 Noticeboard
- 30 Crossword



Editorial Board

Donal Cremin	President
Kieran Christie	General Secretary
Geraldine O'Brien	Immediate Past President
Pádraig Curley	Vice President
Pádraig Murphy	Honorary Treasurer
Adrienne Healy	Standing Committee nominee
Anne Loughnane	Standing Committee nominee

Media and Communications Officer:
Gemma Tuffy

www.asti.ie

Published on behalf of ASTI by Think Media

Editorial: Ann-Marie Hardiman, Paul O'Grady, and Colm Quinn
Design: Rebecca Bohan and Tony Byrne
Advertising: Paul O'Grady

ASTI
Thomas MacDonagh House,
Winetavern Street,
Dublin 8,
D08 P9V6
Tel: 01-604 0160 Fax: 01-897 2760
astir@asti.ie

ASTIR is published five times annually by the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland. The opinions expressed in ASTIR are those of individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the ASTI. While every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure information published is accurate, the ASTI cannot accept responsibility for articles or advertisements. Publication of advertisements does not equate to endorsement by ASTI.

The ASTI reserves the right to edit all material submitted for publication

The ASTIR Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on ASTIR.

Members can email astirfeedback@asti.ie or text 087 934 9956.

When the stakes are high, we stand up for education

The stakes are high in any education reform. Some of the Minister's proposals for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle are welcome. However, others will undermine education standards, exacerbate inequalities, and cause additional stress for students and teachers. For this reason, ASTI members will protest outside their schools at lunchtime on Tuesday, November 19. We have serious concerns about a number of Senior Cycle Tranche 1 subject specifications, which are due to be taught in all schools from next September. We are calling on the Minister to pause the rushed implementation of these specifications and address teachers' concerns.

'One size fits all' spells disaster

If implemented in September 2025, Tranche 1 subject specifications will see a 'one size fits all' approach introduced for all Leaving Cert additional assessment components (AACs). The problem is that this approach ignores the advice and expertise of teachers of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, who say a blanket 40% minimum grade weighting for AACs is not appropriate for these subjects. Teachers believe this approach will lead to an over-focus on the AACs, which will detract from overall teaching and learning. It will also increase workload and stress for students, as well as their teachers, and inequalities in schools with less than adequate resources.

In my own subject – engineering (a Tranche 2 subject due for introduction in September 2026) – teachers favour a 50% weighting for two additional components: an engineering practical (25%) and project work (25%). What this demonstrates is that teachers support AACs, but believe the weighting must be appropriate to the subject.

Another major concern is the extra workload and stress for students facing multiple AACs across subjects. The impact AACs will have on student workload is outlined on page 16 of this *ASTIR*. Students get one chance at second-level education. We must ensure that changes to the Senior Cycle improve students' experience and maintain standards.

ASTI surveys

In the coming months, the ASTI will issue two important questionnaires to members by email. The first questionnaire, which will be issued in late November, relates to teachers' experiences of compiling, storing and submitting examination materials to the State Exams Commission. The findings will be used as part of our Senior Cycle campaign. The second survey relates to psychosocial hazards for teachers. The findings of this survey will be used in our ongoing campaign to protect teachers' safety, health and welfare. Both questionnaires will take a few minutes to fill out and will provide valuable data for the ASTI. Make sure your voice is heard.



Donal Cremin

ASTI President

Blanket 40% assessment component cap is unsound

How long does it take for a good idea to become a bad idea in post-primary education? A brand new subject specification in Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science was introduced in September 2019. There are two assessment components at both higher and ordinary levels. The written component is awarded 75% and the coursework component is worth 25%. Fast forward to March 29, 2022, and the announcement of Minister Foley's Senior Cycle redevelopment plan. All changed and changed utterly. What seemed like a good idea a few years earlier was no longer regarded as viable, to the point that an outright ban was announced, preventing any additional assessment components of less than a 40% weighting in all Leaving Cert subjects going forward. The answer to my opening question: just shy of 31 months it seems!

What were they thinking back in September 2019 that they all failed to rail against the vicissitude that was being unleashed upon post-primary education? Not a murmur. Why were ministerial advisors, the Inspectorate, the NCCA, the SEC, dare I say the ASTI, not up in arms that such an educationally unsound measure was being visited upon the system? I jest, of course, but it does beg an obvious question. It is unthinkable that, if it was known in September 2019 that a 25% additional assessment component was so abhorrent that it would be worthy of an outright ban, the great and good in Irish post-primary education would not have shouted stop. So why the insistence by the Minister on this provision? What oracle of wisdom had the Minister's ear? I am not aware of any major academic studies between the two dates in question that mandated such a *volte face*.

I have asked for a more coherent rationale and explanation for this outright ban on less than 40% of the marks for additional assessment components, beyond being told that it was in the Minister's announcement in March 2022 and as such appears to be beyond question. I await a response.

To be clear, the ASTI has consistently argued that the subject development groups contain the expertise and are best placed to advise on the optimum assessment arrangements for their subject, and the percentage weightings for additional assessment components that are most appropriate. We have already learned that for some, a 40% weighting or greater for additional assessment components works fine but for other subjects a weighting of no more than 20% is deemed necessary. There has been no movement by the Minister for Education on this to date. Leaving Certificate subject specifications are being redeveloped for introduction to the system at a rate of knots, itself a worrying situation. It is all a bit rushed. There will be a whole new line-up in place by 2029. This stubborn unwillingness to revisit what is obviously a flight of fancy, risks enormous damage to the teaching and learning of some subjects for many years to come.



Kieran Christie

ASTI General Secretary

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TEACHER SHORTAGE CRISIS?

Teacher shortages and retaining new teachers are key challenges for the Irish education system.

Despite an unprecedented recruitment and retention crisis in teaching, Budget 2025 in October failed to address the problem.

The extent of the crisis is demonstrated in the 2024 ASTI/RedC survey published in March of this year. Of principals surveyed, 82% said they had no applications for an advertised post or posts during the 2023/24 school year.

Impact of crisis

Almost 80% of principals reported having to employ a non-qualified/casual teacher to manage teacher supply in the ASTI/RedC survey. In addition to employing non-qualified/casual teachers, schools also had to resort to reassigning special educational needs teachers to mainstream classes. Almost one-fifth of schools removed a subject or subjects from the curriculum.

Persistent teacher shortages damage the quality of students' education, according to the *EU Country Report 2024*. Recruitment and retention problems impact negatively on classroom teachers as well as their students. Almost 60% of principals surveyed in the ASTI/RedC survey said that the recruitment and retention crisis has resulted in increased workload for teachers in their school.

Job security

The *EU Country Report 2024* identifies teacher shortages and retaining new teachers as key challenges for education systems. It points to the issue of part-time and temporary teaching contracts as a disincentive. In Ireland we now have a situation whereby second-level schools can't fill teaching jobs, and recently qualified teachers are finding that many of the jobs advertised are fixed-term or part-time, or both. The ASTI has called for the introduction of *ab initio* permanency for newly appointed teachers (subject to satisfactory probation).

Make teaching attractive

A number of other factors are contributing to the decline in the attractiveness of teaching as a career. These include:

Teachers' pay scale: When it comes to teachers' starting salary, Ireland is in 18th place out of 36 countries, just below the OECD average, according to the OECD report *Education at a Glance 2024*. In addition to this, teachers taking up posts in Ireland face a 25-year pay scale, the longest in the public service.

Cost of entry to teaching: The current arrangement whereby a graduate must undertake a two-year Professional Master of Education course to qualify as a second-level teacher is too long and too costly.

Cost of living: The high cost of living is locking teachers out of the housing and rental markets. Ireland needs adequate affordable housing solutions. Pay increases must go beyond inflation. *Education at a Glance 2024* found that in real terms teachers' salaries in Ireland decreased by 6% between 2015 and 2023 at a time when they increased by 4% in most other developed countries.

Pension arrangements for post-2012 entrants: Since 2013 those entering teaching are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. These teachers are currently paying a similar amount into their pension as their teacher colleagues who started before them, but their pension benefits are significantly inferior. This impacts on the sustainability of teaching as a career choice.

Obstacles facing returning teachers: The red tape that impedes teachers returning to Ireland to take up positions, including restrictions on the awarding of incremental credit for service abroad, must be eliminated.

Teacher workload: Increased workload and work intensity have resulted in a significant drop in job satisfaction among teachers.

Lack of promotional opportunities: Schools are at breaking point due to the absence of sufficient support for their management. Middle management posts were cut dramatically during the economic crash 15 years ago. These posts must be restored. This move would also help to ensure the recruitment and retention of teachers in the long term.

Share your views in ASTI surveys

Teacher well-being, stress at work, and curriculum and assessment change are key areas of concern for ASTI members. In response, the ASTI is commissioning two surveys in the coming months on stress at work/identifying psychosocial risks and changes to assessment in the redeveloped Senior Cycle curriculum.

The first survey will issue in late November and focus on teachers'

response to the Minister for Education's decision that all Leaving Certificate subjects will have an additional assessment component worth a minimum of 40% of the overall examination mark and related organisational issues.

These surveys will provide the ASTI with valuable evidence-based data and ensure that teachers' voices are central to policy change for schools.

Check your email this November and make sure to take part.

ASTI Student Bursaries awarded



Adam Daly.



Mark Kilgannon.



Elaine McMahon.



Isabelle Meehan.



Tadhg O'Sullivan.


The ASTI has awarded five bursaries to the value of €1,000 each to assist students who have a parent or guardian who is an ASTI member or an ASTI staff member, in undertaking an undergraduate course in third-level education. The winners of the 2024 bursaries are:

- Adam Daly, Bachelor of Education in Primary Teaching, Mary Immaculate College,
- Mark Kilgannon, Bachelor of Actuarial and Financial Studies, University College Dublin,
- Elaine McMahon, Bachelor of Engineering, University College Cork,

- Isabelle Meehan, Bachelor of Science in Speech and Language Therapy, University of Galway, and
- Tadhg O'Sullivan, Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Mathematics, Dublin City University.

The successful applicants were picked by lot at a live draw on October 1. Congratulations to all of this year's recipients.

For more information on the ASTI Annual Student Bursary, see: www.asti.ie/memberbenefits/awardsgrants




Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION MASTER IN EDUCATION

APPLY NOW

Are you looking for an interesting and challenging Masters programme in education? Our M.Ed. will help you to develop and enrich your knowledge and practice in your chosen area of interest.

At Trinity College Dublin, Master of Education (M.Ed.) offers students the opportunity to further deepen their understanding of educational theory and research, contemporary issues, and practice and policy issues within their specialisms. Students can enroll as a full time student, 2 year part-time student or 3 year part-time student.



Admissions
The Applications for the M.Ed. 2025/26 academic year will open in late October/ Early November 2024. Applications must be made online at: www.tcd.ie/courses/postgraduate/faculty/subjects.php
For further details, and an outline of the format required, please contact MASTERED@tcd.ie

Fees and Further Information
We are reducing the M.Ed. fees to support teachers returning to education.
For further information please visit <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/masters-in-education/>.

For all other enquiries please contact the Admin Team at MASTERED@tcd.ie

In addition:
Our **M.Oid san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta** may also be of interest to qualified teachers looking to develop their professional knowledge of Irish immersion education.
See: <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/m-oid-san-oideachas-lan-ghaeilge-agus-gaeltachta>

Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin www.tcd.ie

Study Smarter with **REVISE WISE**

No.1 Revision Series for Junior Cycle and Leaving Cert



REVISE WISE



Revise Wise



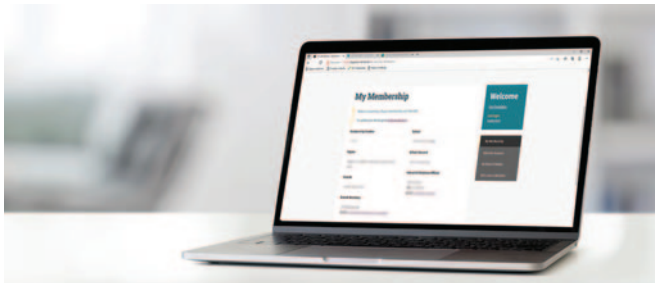
@edco_ie



revisewise.ie

**Available in your Local Bookshop or Buy Online at www.revisewise.ie
The Educational Company of Ireland**

Requesting digital publications through MyUnion



MyUnion, the members' only area of the ASTI website, allows members to decide how they would like to receive our publications – digitally or by post.

Once you have created an account, you will have convenient access to information about your membership and will be able to request digital and hard copies of all our publications, such as *ASTIR* and *Nuacht*.

Members can also update their personal details directly in the MyUnion area, for example your home address and email address, to ensure that you receive the most up-to-date correspondence from the ASTI.

You can do this at www.asti.ie/my-union/

Change to ASTI information seminar dates

The ASTI has organised a number of information seminars on a variety of topics for members in 2024 and 2025. In response to positive feedback from members, a number of information seminar dates have been rescheduled. The revised dates apply to the following seminars:

- Career break/redeployment – now on Tuesday, December 3, 2024
- Posts of responsibility – now on Tuesday, February 4, 2025
- Health and safety – now on Tuesday, February 11, 2025

Members interested in attending any of the seminars are advised to register early as places are limited.

To access the full list of seminars and to sign up, please scan the QR code.



BY PINPOINT

THE UK & IRELAND'S LEADING PROVIDER OF STAFF ALARM SYSTEMS TO DE-ESCALATE INCIDENTS AND IMPROVE SAFETY

CREATING SAFER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

RELIABLE EASY TO USE
EFFICIENT DISCREET

High-performance wearable devices for teachers to activate for assistance

PINPOINT.LTD.UK

World Teachers' Day 2024



ASTI President Donal Cremin joined attendees at an ASTI school steward training event held on World Teachers' Day to celebrate with a slice of cake. ASTI Industrial Relations Official Conor McDonald, Vice-President Padraig Curley, and General Secretary Kieran Christie were also in attendance.

As in previous years, ASTI school staff were invited to organise staffroom cakes to celebrate during the week of World Teachers' Day in October, and recoup the cost by submitting receipts directly to their branch treasurer. This offered ASTI staff an opportunity to welcome new members to the union.



Teachers at CBS The Green, Tralee, Co. Kerry, were joined by ASTI President Donal Cremin, Industrial Relations Official Bernard Moynihan, and Honorary National Organiser Michael McGrath in marking World Teachers' Day.

World Teachers' Day takes place on October 5 each year. For more information on World Teachers' Day events organised by UNESCO, see: www.unesco.org/en/days/teachers

WIN TICKETS TO A PROVINCIAL RUGBY MATCH!

Tackle Your Feelings (TYF) is giving teachers the opportunity to win tickets to a provincial game if they register their interest and sign up to the programme. There will be four sets of tickets available with one winner per province. All teachers who register and sign up also will get a visit from a rugby player to their classroom during the 2024/25 school year. To register your interest please email info@tackleyourfeelings.com and mention you saw us in ASTIR for more information.

WHAT IS TYF SCHOOLS?

The TYF Programme is designed by experts in mental health and wellbeing to support and nurture the positive mental health of young people. Brought to you by Rugby Players Ireland in partnership with Zurich Ireland and the Z Zurich Foundation, the TYF Schools programme is approved by clinical and educational psychologists and helps build awareness, encourage positive habits and skill adaptation, as well as changing attitudes and behaviours towards mental health and wellbeing amongst second level students in Ireland.

FOR WHO?

The **FREE** TYF Schools programme is a classroom based, teacher-led programme that has been designed to be delivered to students between the ages of 14 and 19 years and comprises of 8-lessons that directly align to the wellbeing guidelines set out in the Junior Cycle Curriculum and can compliment both Junior and Senior Cycle SPHE classes.

#TACKLEYOURFEELINGS

Competition closes on December 20th 2024.

TEACHERS CALL FOR BETTER RESOURCING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Second-level schools are committed to inclusive education, but teachers need training and schools need additional promotional posts, says MOIRA LEYDON, ASTI ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.



Pictured at the recent ASTI Education Conference are (from left): John Kearney (CEO, NCSE), Natalie Doyle Bradley (ASTI member), Ingrid Miley (Conference moderator and former Industry and Employment correspondent at RTÉ), Pat Knightly (ASTI member), David Duffy (Education & Research Officer, TUI), Donal Cremin (ASTI President), Brendan Doody (Principal Officer, Department of Education), Prof. Sheelagh Drudy (Professor of Education, UCD), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Anne Tansey (Director, National Educational Psychological Service), Paul Crone (Director, National Association for Principals & Deputy Principals), Sinéad Corkery (ASTI member), and Moira Leydon (ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research).

The annual ASTI Education Conference took place on Saturday, October 12, in Athlone. The Conference theme, 'Inclusive Education in our Schools: Challenges and Opportunities', was particularly appropriate given that 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004. Indeed, 2024 also marks the convergence of a number of important policy developments for special education provision:

- publication of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Policy Advice to the Minister (January 2024) – *Inclusive education for an inclusive society: A progressive pathway towards a more inclusive education system for Ireland*,
- review of the EPSEN Act 2004 is almost complete,
- imminent publication of the first SNA Workforce Development Plan,
- publication of the first national Autism Innovation Strategy (August 2024),
- publication of the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026 and the Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026: Disability Services for Children and Young People, and
- the Ombudsman for Children Office (OCO) Report: 'Plan for Places, Two Years On'.

A major factor driving this policy process is the obligations arising on the Government since Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2018.

The need for resources

Emeritus Professor of Education at UCD, Sheelagh Drudy, highlighted the progress of special needs education since the foundation of the State. While the implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004 was pivotal, only certain sections were implemented. Prof. Drudy noted that while Ireland ratified the UN Convention in 2018, it has yet to ratify the protocol allowing for a complaints mechanism. Prof. Drudy noted the lack of teaching posts, remarking: "We need more special education needs posts". On the lack of supports and resources, she said: "We need therapeutic and clinical supports, universal design for learning [and] partnership with parents". She noted that the training mainstream classroom teachers receive does not equip them to deal with the demands of special needs students in mainstream classes.

Prof. Drudy highlighted the need for additional training opportunities for special needs assistants (SNAs), as well as the need for additional supports to help SNAs navigate their role, and to ensure that students receive the best possible education.

Policy response

In October 2018, then Minister for Education, Joe McHugh TD, requested advice and recommendations from the NCSE on future educational provision for students in special schools and classes. This was provided in January 2024. John Kearney, NCSE CEO, outlined this policy advice, which focuses on assessing the increasing number of special needs classes and aims to improve educational outcomes. The consultation process raised concerns about the integration of special needs students into mainstream classes and whether the environment is sufficiently inclusive. John also stressed the need for sufficient resources and infrastructure to ensure an inclusive education system.

Brendan Doody, Principal Officer in the Department of Education, shared his experience, saying: "We know that the demographics will certainly be hitting the post-primary [schools] and have begun to hit this sector, and will require more and more resourcing".

The journey yet to be taken

The panel discussion provided ASTI members with an opportunity to share their experiences of delivering special educational needs services in Irish post-primary schools. ASTI members Pat Knightly, Maria Markey-Greene, Natalie Doyle Bradley and Sinéad Corkery took part in the discussion. They emphasised the need for inclusion in Irish classrooms, for training and professional development of post-primary teachers, and for additional time allocated in order to efficiently carry out the role and to ensure that these students receive adequate attention in the classroom.

On the need for additional resources such as external therapeutic and assessment services, Pat Knightly said: "The Department of Education should have psychiatric services, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, special speech and language therapists, and they should all be employed by the Department so that when schools need them, they just contact one number".

YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE ONLINE SAFETY FRAMEWORK



Did you know children and adults have rights under the Online Safety Framework?

These include the right to protection from harm, the right to report and the right to express yourself.

At Coimisiún na Meán, our role is to help protect these rights. Check out our new educational resources about rights online under the Online Safety Framework, which includes the new Online Safety Code.

Our educational resources include:

- An engaging **infographic** and **poster** for the classroom (Irish/English).
- **An editable PowerPoint lesson** on Rights, Rules and Reporting Online for Junior and Senior Cycle, with accompanying handouts.
- A student and parent **video**.

Scan this QR code to access our educational resources



Coimisiún
na Meán

Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's media regulator. Our mission is to develop and regulate a thriving, diverse, creative, safe and trusted media landscape. For more information, go to www.cnam.ie.



RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

All workers in Ireland officially have the right to disconnect from work to have a better work–life balance.

In 2021, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) prepared a Code of Practice to give guidance on best practice to organisations and their employees on the right to disconnect. The right to disconnect gives employees the right to switch off from work outside of normal working hours. There are three rights established in the Code:

1. The right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours.
2. The right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours.
3. The duty to respect another person's right to disconnect.

All workplaces should now have a right to disconnect policy. This policy should emphasise that there is an expectation that staff disconnect from work emails, messages, etc., outside of their normal working hours and during annual leave. The policy should allow for occasional legitimate situations when it is necessary to contact staff outside of normal working hours.

ASTI members should be aware that all schools are now expected to have implemented a right to disconnect policy.

The WRC recommends that policies include a section outlining communication expectations. Suggestions include:

- where possible, emails should be checked or sent only during normal working hours,

- the sender should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance, and the recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences,
- employees should not feel that they must respond to social communications from colleagues outside of their working hours, and the policy should state whether or not social media platforms are acceptable means of communication, and
- communications from management sent outside agreed working hours could include an attached comment tempering the expectation of an immediate response.

Impact of technology

Teachers have always had to work to establish boundaries between time spent working and expectations regarding administration tasks, extracurricular activities, school sports events, school trips, etc. Increased levels of administration duties and the rise of digital technologies have created a rapidly changing workplace for the teaching profession. There are challenges and benefits to these changes, but almost certainly a further increase in workload.

Digital technologies that may aid teaching, and social media use, have meant that teachers are more contactable, and so boundaries have to be established. The sudden increase in communication with teachers that occurred during Covid was never recalibrated and became normalised.

ASTI members should be aware that all schools are now expected to have implemented a right to disconnect policy.

ASTI research

ASTI-commissioned research in 2022 found that the most important measure to improve teachers' well-being was identified as the right to disconnect from communications outside the school day.

More recently, the results of a March 2024 ASTI survey on 'Technology in the Classroom' show that one in five teachers say there is no right to disconnect policy in their school that they are aware of. Some 93% of those say they would like one introduced.

Teachers surveyed were positive about the ways technology can be utilised in planning, preparation, recording and teaching work. However, they highlighted that this work is often done in the evenings or at weekends as there is no time allocated during the school day to create or input digital content, for example the increased use of e-platforms to store students' examination results.

Added to this, the ease of communication technology has resulted in higher volumes of emails, WhatsApp messages, texts and calls from management, students and parents outside of working hours.

Over half of all teachers surveyed said that they receive out-of-hours communication from management, students or parents on a weekly basis. Some 19% said that they receive out-of-hours communication from management on a daily basis.

Most teachers described the impact of this practice on their work-life balance as negative, including feeling 'constantly on', 'under pressure to reply', and feeling that they 'cannot switch off'.

The survey found that the impact of digital technologies on teachers' workload was a universal concern. The hope is that an increased awareness and implementation of right to disconnect policies will go some way towards addressing these concerns and improving working conditions for teachers.

What can teachers do?

While the implementation of a right to disconnect policy is the responsibility of the employer, teachers can:

- familiarise themselves with the school policy on the right to disconnect, or draw their employer's attention to the lack of one,
- foster an atmosphere where the right to disconnect is promoted and discussed,
- draw the employer's attention to breaches of the right to disconnect policy, and
- ensure that their board of management representatives are familiar with the right to disconnect policy.

For further information please visit:

www.workplacerelements.ie/en/what_you_should_know/codes_practice/code-of-practice-for-employers-and-employees-on-the-right-to-disconnect.pdf

and

www.asti.ie/document-library/red-c-asti-survey-2024-digital-technology-and-its-impact-on/



Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Trinity College Dublin
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

RECRUITMENT

An M.Oid. San Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

Más maith leat cur le do shaineolas ar an oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge, cuir iarratas isteach ar an M.Oid. san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

Tugann an cúrsa seo an deis do rannpháirtithe ardchaighdeán feabhais a bhaint amach ina gcleachtais oideachais agus ina n-inniúlacht teanga. Tá an cúrsa M.Oid. nua seo i gColáiste na Tríonóide á mhaoiniú ag An Roinn Oideachais, rud a fhágann nach mbíonn ach €650 in aghaidh na bliana le n-íoc ag rannpháirtithe an chúrsa.

Struchtúr

Cúrsa solúbtha páirt-aimseartha é an M.Oid. agus dearadh an sceideal le dul in oiriúint do mhúinteoirí atá ag obair go lán-aimseartha. Beidh idir léachtaí ar líne (40%) agus ar an láthair (60%) i gceist, sna tráthnóint, ar an Satharn agus le linn laethanta saoire scoile.

Na Modúil

Bliain 1

- An tumoideachas agus an dátheangachas
- An dea-chleachtas i suíomhanna Gaeltachta agus lán-Ghaeilge
- An teagasc agus an fhoghlaim i suíomhanna scoile lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta
- An cleachtas pleanála agus measúnaithe
- An cheannasaíocht agus an bhainistíocht
- Múinteoirí lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta mar thaighdeoirí

Bliain 2

- Inniúlacht teanga sa Ghaeilge
- An tráchtas

Riachtanais iontrála faoi leith

Ní mór cáilíocht mar mhúinteoir bunscoile nó iarbunscoile a bheith ag iarrthóirí agus inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag leibhéal B1 ar a laghad ar an bhFráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach do Theangacha.

Tuilleadh Eolais

Chun níos mó eolais a fháil ar an gcúrsa nó chun iarratas a chur isteach, téigh chuig: <https://www.tcd.ie/education/courses/postgraduate/m-oid-san-oideachas-lan-ghaeilge-agus-gaeltachta/>

Tuilleadh eolais maidir le cúrsaí iarchéime – Teastais, Dioplómaí, an PME, an D.Ed. agus an PhD san áireamh – ar fáil ar ár suíomh idirlín.

Coláiste na Tríonóide | Baile Átha Cliath

www.tcd.ie



EDUCATION NEEDS MORE THAN A GLANCE

Ireland is once again bottom of the league for spending on second-level education in the OECD's *Education at a Glance* report.

Each year, the OECD compiles its *Education at a Glance* report from the data available from a broad spectrum of countries, and each year Ireland is at the bottom of the table for spending in second-level education as a percentage of GDP. This is a position the country has occupied for many years, despite evidence that investment in education pays for itself many times over and brings other benefits to society.

Ireland's expenditure on second-level education is at 0.9%, compared to the OECD and EU-25 averages of 1.9%. The Irish figure has in fact dropped from 1.0% in last year's report. We are among the countries where expenditure on primary to tertiary education as a share of GDP decreased between 2015 and 2021.

When we look at total expenditure on educational institutions per student at second level, Ireland spends \$12,390 per student. This is below both the OECD average (\$13,324 per student) and EU-25 average (\$13,225). Our nearest neighbour the UK spends \$14,664, France spends \$15,112, and across the water in the US \$16,301 is spent on each second-level student. Education in Ireland from the time a child enters Junior Infants until they graduate from college receives less funding than other countries as well. Ireland spends 2.9% of its GDP on educational institutions from primary to tertiary (including research and development), compared to the EU-25 average of 4.4% and OECD average of 4.9%. In Belgium, this figure is 5.6%, in Finland it is 5.4%, and in Italy it is 4.0%.

Salaries and working hours

When it comes to starting salaries for teachers, Ireland sits in 18th place, just below the OECD average. The starting salary for a second-level teacher in Ireland is \$43,442 per annum. While the Irish figure is above the starting salary offered to a teacher in England (\$39,677), the salaries offered in Scotland are higher at \$51,868. Other English-speaking countries also offer higher salaries for teachers, with the US paying starting teachers \$48,899, Canada paying \$46,354, and Australia paying \$55,605.

Ireland's expenditure on second-level education is at 0.9%, compared to the OECD and EU-25 averages of 1.9%. The Irish figure has in fact dropped from 1.0% in last year's report.

In the context of a teacher supply crisis, the fact that Ireland is below the OECD average for its starting salary for teachers is an issue that must be addressed, along with the lack of permanent teaching positions, the length of the teachers' pay scale, and teacher workload.

While the report notes that between 2015 and 2023, nominal statutory salaries increased by 16% in Ireland for lower secondary teachers with 15 years of experience, and that most of this increase compensated for the rising cost of living, it goes on to say: "In real terms (i.e., adjusted for inflation), teachers' salaries decreased by 6% over the eight-year period compared to an average increase of 4% across countries with available data".

Irish teachers teach more hours than many of their international counterparts. The report shows that Irish teachers teach a total of 704 hours per year, as opposed to the OECD average of 692.5 and the EU average of 625. In Greece, the figure is 613 hours, in Italy 626 hours, and in Portugal just 616 hours.

Importance of education

The report highlights the importance of education, and in order to have a good education system, teachers must be valued. Having a good education will stand to people throughout their lives, says the report:

“Workers with below upper secondary attainment are more likely to have temporary contracts or be in involuntary part-time jobs compared to their peers with greater educational attainment. For example, on average across the OECD countries with available data, 12% of all 25- to 64- year-old employees are on temporary contracts compared to 8% of those with higher levels of educational attainment”.

The report highlights teacher shortages in many countries and the need to ensure it is an attractive profession: “The widespread shortage of well-qualified teachers represents another pressing challenge. Many countries are struggling to fill vacant teaching posts”.

Further on in the report the fact that teaching must compete with other professions to attract and retain recruits is mentioned: “Teachers’ salaries relative to other occupations with similar education requirements, and their likely future earnings, may have an influence on whether individuals choose a teaching career or to stay in the profession”.

The report highlights the importance of education, and in order to have a good education system, teachers must be valued.

Artificial intelligence and the labour market

The report highlights that education systems should be prepared for how artificial intelligence (AI) will influence the labour market. Having a good education system will equip students with the ability to respond to any changes in the future: “Although AI and other digital technologies are likely to transform the employment skill structure by creating demand for skills that are complemented by technology rather than replaced by it, adults with low educational attainment are less likely to be able to adapt to the shift in skills needed”.

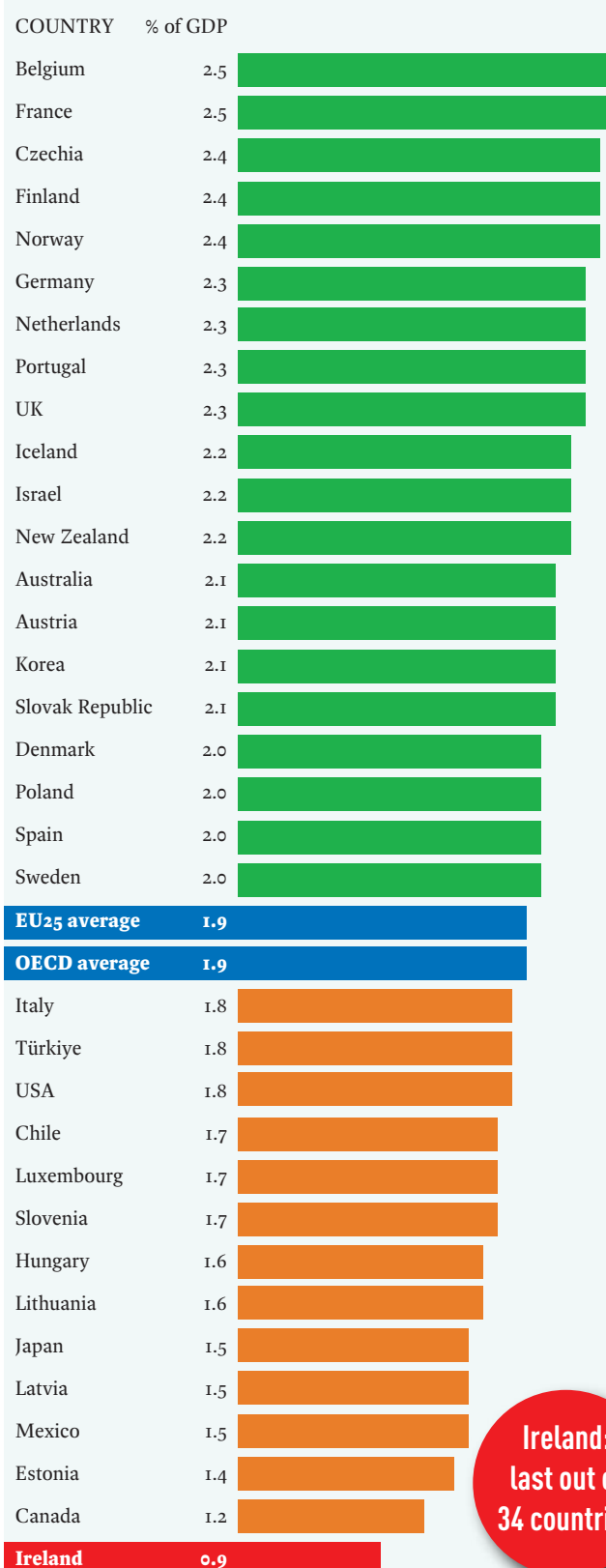
Adults who have not completed secondary education are at “considerable risk of poor social and labour market outcomes throughout their lives”, according to the report. Like many other countries, Ireland has been aiming to reduce the number of people in this category. It is a testament to the good work teachers in second-level schools are doing that, in spite of limited resources, this number is dropping. It now sits at 5%, having dropped three percentage points between 2016 and 2023. Having a good education is hugely important when students enter the labour market, states the report: “In Ireland, 44% of 25- to 34-year-olds without an upper secondary qualification are employed, compared to 76% of those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification”.

Read the full OECD education at a Glance 2024 report at:
www.oecd.org/en/publications/education-at-a-glance-2024_coocad36-en.html

Read the specific Ireland Note 2024 at:
www.oecd.org/en/publications/education-at-a-glance-2024-country-notes_fab77ef0-en/ireland_962b6c53-en.html

OECD, EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Total expenditure on second-level education
as a percentage of GDP 2021.



Ireland:
last out of
34 countries

SENIOR CYCLE CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY AND PHYSICS: CONCERNS WITH RESEARCH INVESTIGATION COURSEWORK

DR PATRICK O'DONNELL PGDE BSc PhD outlines significant concerns with the proposed additional assessment component for Leaving Cert Physics, Biology and Chemistry.



While it is recognised that the current Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics syllabi need reform and updating, it is important that the new specifications (syllabi) are designed to the best international standards (Hyland, 2014; Hyland and Kennedy, 2023). As a concerned educator, I am writing this article to express my concerns regarding the new specifications for Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics [to be implemented in the 2025/26 school year]. These new specifications, in their current form, pose significant challenges and limitations that will negatively impact both teachers and students. After a review carried out by the Irish Science Teachers' Association (ISTA) (ISTA, 2024), it has become apparent that several aspects of the new specifications raise serious concerns among teachers.

In this paper, I wish to concentrate on the second mode of assessment (the research investigation coursework or "additional assessment component") and outline the concerns I have with this component.

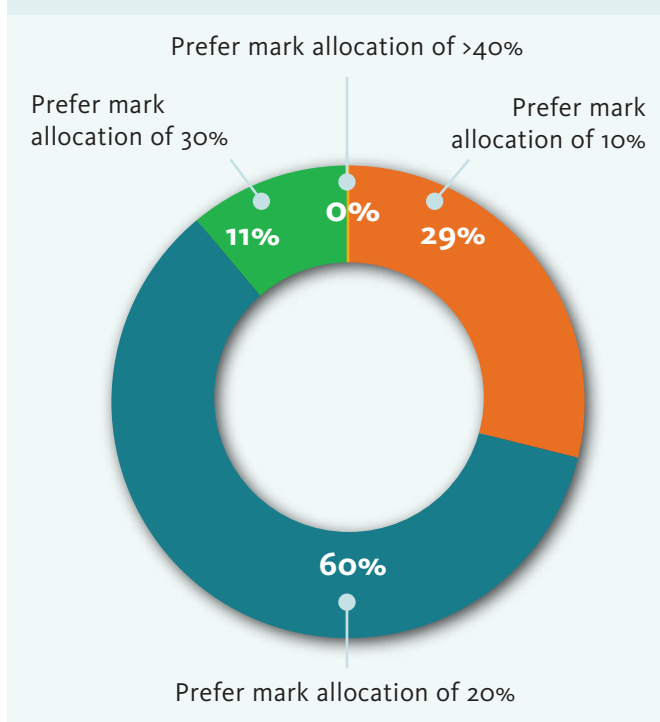
40% project work is excessive

Implementing a 40% project work component in the curriculum will pose

challenges. While project work is beneficial for practical understanding and skill development, allocating such a significant portion could potentially overshadow other essential aspects of the subject. Balancing theoretical knowledge and practical skills is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of chemistry. Teachers' views on the percentage allocation to coursework are summarised in **Figure 1**.

While it is recognised that the current Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics syllabi need reform and updating, it is important that the new specifications (syllabi) are designed to the best international standard.

Figure 1: ISTA report on teacher preferred allocation of marks for the additional research investigation assessment component.



Lack of clarity

In her address to the 2024 ASTI Convention, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, spoke of Leaving Certificate reform. In that speech she used the word “accelerated” when talking of these reforms. Why is everything in relation to these reforms accelerated? There are a number of issues with this approach:

- no samples of projects/exam papers available,
- when will we get more guidance on the coursework component?
- where is the list of mandatory experiments?
- where are the guidelines for teachers?, and
- no CPD yet!

Are we as teachers of Chemistry, Biology and Physics expected to teach and prepare students for the unknown in September 2025?

Resource implications for laboratory equipment/supplies

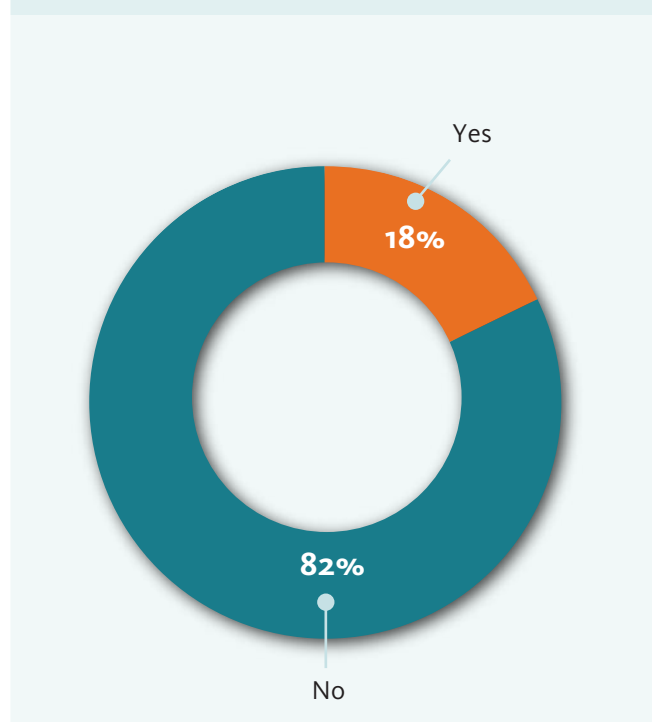
Introducing project work demands adequate resources, including laboratory equipment, chemicals and materials. Insufficient resources could hinder effective implementation and limit students’ ‘hands-on’ experiences. The views of teachers regarding laboratory resources (ISTA, 2024) are summarised in **Figure 2**.

It is clear that the vast majority of teachers surveyed feel they do not have sufficient resources to complete the additional research investigation assessment component.

Problems with access to school laboratories

A well-structured timetable for laboratory sessions is essential to ensure that students receive sufficient hands-on laboratory experience. Conflicting schedules or limited lab hours may restrict students’ opportunities to engage in practical work related to the research investigations involved in the coursework and undermine the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Figure 2: Do you believe that your school laboratories have sufficient resources to support your students in completing to the best of their ability the additional assessment component research investigation?



Added stress on students and teachers

The timing of the deadlines to submit the investigation in sixth year will be an issue for students who are under enormous stress with pre-exams, orals, project work from other subjects, and their coursework.

When writing this article, I spoke to three Leaving Certificate Chemistry students and asked them to outline their assessment workload during the second term of sixth year.

Student A

- Pre-exams: coursework, first two weeks in February
- Chemistry: It is envisaged that the additional assessment component will take up to 20 hours of class time to complete and meet a deadline during term two of sixth year
- Biology: It is envisaged that the additional assessment component will take up to 20 hours of class time to complete and meet a deadline during term two of sixth year
- History: Deadline April 26 (approximately)
- Orals: French and Irish

Student B

- Pre-exams: coursework, first two weeks in February
- Chemistry: It is envisaged that the additional assessment component will take up to 20 hours of class time to complete and meet a deadline during term two of sixth year
- Physics: It is envisaged that the additional assessment component will take up to 20 hours of class time to complete and meet a deadline during term two of sixth year
- Design and Communication Graphics: Deadline in January (approximately)
- Economics: Deadline in January (approximately)
- Orals: German and Irish

It is clear that the vast majority of teachers surveyed feel they do not have sufficient resources to complete the additional research investigation assessment component.

Student C

- Pre-exams: coursework, first two weeks in February
- Chemistry: It is envisaged that the additional assessment component will take up to 20 hours of class time to complete and meet a deadline during term two of sixth year
- PE: Two projects
- Geography: Field trip and project report
- History: Deadline April 26 (approximately)
- Orals: Polish

Increased workload on science teachers

Each student is doing their own research project with their own set of unique glassware and chemicals. The increase in laboratory equipment needed will be massive. The sourcing of this lab material will prove problematic and needs to be addressed. I believe the courses should have been trialled to identify what supports should be in place for teachers.

Lack of lab technician support

The availability of these qualified technicians may vary across educational institutions, impacting the quality of practical instruction. It is the teachers who will be expected to set up and maintain equipment, order chemicals, and make up any solutions needed for these investigations.

Lower uptake of science subjects at Leaving Certificate level

In view of the huge amount of work involved in the research investigation coursework, on top of a lot of subject content for the written paper, I fear that there will be a lower uptake of Chemistry, Biology and Physics subjects. This issue has already been highlighted in Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science, where the student uptake has dropped by 1,040 candidates in three years since the project work was introduced (Gallagher, Cronin and O'Brien, 2023).

Widening of the social divide

Disparities in resources and opportunities may exacerbate existing social divides among students. Schools with limited funding or located in disadvantaged areas will struggle to provide the same level of access to laboratory facilities and project resources compared to more affluent institutions. This has already been pointed out by the Irish University Association (Grenon *et al.*).

Health and safety implications

Maintaining stringent health and safety standards in laboratory settings is paramount. Who has responsibility for carrying out risk assessments associated with every additional research investigation assessment component project? This will add further stress to teachers as they try to cope with the additional workload.

Conclusions

The Irish Universities Association has recommended that an alternative model be developed to give students credit for carrying out laboratory practical work investigations, and that the 40% of marks for the project work be reduced to 20%. I am in complete agreement with these recommendations. I would ask all stakeholders in this process of Leaving Certificate reform to study the points I have outlined in this article and to put pressure on the Minister for Education to listen to the voice of science teachers.

References

ASTI. 102nd Annual Convention Handbook and Reports.

ASTI. ASTI survey: Teachers' Experience of the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. 2022. Available at: <https://www.asti.ie/document-library/asti-survey-teachers-experience-of-the-implementation-of-the/>.

Gallagher R, Cronin C, O'Brien J. Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science – implications for the new Leaving Certificate Biology, Physics and Chemistry syllabi. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/p6htrd7v>.

Grenon M, Kennedy D, McCauley V. Report submitted to the NCCA in response to the Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics Draft Specifications, by the IUA Representatives to these Subject Development Groups. Available at: <https://www.iaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/IUA-Report-re-draft-NCCA-LC-Biology-Physics-Chemistry-Specs.pdf>.

Hyland A. The design of Leaving Certificate science syllabi in Ireland: an international comparison. Report prepared by Áine Hyland. Available at: <https://www.ista.ie/the-hyland-report-2/>.

Hyland A, Kennedy D. Developing a new template for designing syllabi for Irish secondary school subjects. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/n3aunzn7>.

ISTA. Listening to the voice of science teachers. The response from science teachers in the light of their experience of teaching the new Junior Cycle Science curriculum. Available at: <https://www.ista.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Preliminary-Report-on-JC-Science-2019.pdf>.

ISTA. Report presented to the Minister for Education and NCCA in response to the 2023 draft specifications (syllabi) in Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Available at: <https://ista.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ISTA-Report-23-Feb-2024-HR.pdf>.

NCCA. Leaving Certificate Chemistry specification. Available at: <https://curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/chemistry/>

Dr Patrick O'Donnell teaches Science, Maths and Chemistry at Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra, Rathmore, Co. Kerry.

The ASTI Achievement Awards

recognise the outstanding contribution teachers make to schools, students and society.

Nominate an outstanding teacher or teaching team for their achievements in school or outside their professional life

The ASTI Achievement Awards recognise teachers in three categories:

The Outstanding Teacher Achievement Award

recognises the contribution of individual teachers to their schools and education

The Outstanding Teacher Team Achievement Award

recognises the contribution of a team/group of teachers to their school and education

The Outstanding Individual Achievement Award

recognises the outstanding achievement of individual teachers outside their professional life

Log on to the ASTI website to find out more or to nominate a colleague.

The closing date for applications is
Friday, February 7th, 2025

Take a bow



www.asti.ie

www.x.com/astionion

www.facebook.com/astiteachers


ASTI
A century of service

ASTI CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

The ASTI Awards celebrate those who have provided invaluable service to the teaching profession and the union, and those who excel in their own right and provide a valuable example to their students.



From left: Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Immediate Past President), Jason Poole (ASTI Achievement Award recipient), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

ASTI Achievement Awards

The ASTI Achievement Awards acknowledge the outstanding contributions of second-level teachers to their students, schools, communities, and to society. The winners are exceptional people who have often made a big impact as role models, and as advocates for their students.

Two ASTI members received Achievement Awards in 2024: Jason Poole and Alex Lee.

Jason Poole

Jason Poole, a teacher of Business and Economics at Beneavin College, Co. Dublin, was recognised for his work in campaigning for the introduction of 'Jenny's Law', named in honour of his 24-year-old sister Jennifer Poole, who died in 2021. The proposed legislation would allow for the creation of a register for those with a coercive control conviction, or any other offence under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997. Supported by Senator Fiona O'Loughlin, the Bill also seeks that anyone convicted of an offence covered by this Bill is required to notify the Gardaí of their name and address, and that this information is always kept up to date. At this time, the proposed Bill remains to be approved by the Seanad in order to move to the next stage of the legislative process.

Jason Poole was recognised for his work in campaigning for the introduction of 'Jenny's Law', named in honour of his 24-year-old sister Jennifer Poole, who died in 2021.

Since his sister's passing, Jason has spoken on TV, radio and in newspapers as part of his efforts to bring 'Jenny's Law' to fruition. In 2022, he spoke at a Ballymun vigil in honour of Ashling Murphy, another woman whose life was taken too soon, and later the same year, he spoke at the National Women's Council of Ireland's No Woman Left Behind rally outside Dáil Éireann in honour of National Women's Day.

As a teacher, Jason greatly contributes to his community and to the education of his students – he is an Assistant Principal in his school, Head of Business, and a co-ordinator for the Transition Year Programme. Jason is also a placement tutor at Maynooth University for PME students.

A former student of Beneavin College himself, Jason is described as a "role model to the young men he teaches".

As an ASTI member, Jason has been involved with the Dublin North West Branch for a number of years. He was Branch Secretary from 2015 to 2022, and has represented his branch on CEC and many times as a delegate at Annual Convention. Jason was presented with his award by the ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie and Immediate Past President Geraldine O'Brien at a special reception in the Gresham Hotel, Co. Dublin.

Outstanding contributions

The ASTI Achievement Awards recognise the outstanding contribution teachers make to schools, students and society. Branches can nominate members for an ASTI Achievement Award using the forms published on the ASTI website each November. The ASTI Achievement Awards recognise teachers in three categories:

- the Outstanding Teacher Achievement Award recognises the contribution of individual teachers to their schools and education,
- the Outstanding Teacher Team Achievement Award recognises the contribution made to schools and education by groups of teachers, and
- the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award recognises the outstanding achievements of individual teachers outside of their professional life.

For more information on ASTI Achievement Awards, see www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/



From left: Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Immediate Past President), Ray Nolan (Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipient), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).



From left: Geraldine O'Brien (ASTI Immediate Past President), Róisín Doyle (Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipient), and Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary).

The Thomas MacDonagh Medal

The Thomas MacDonagh Medal is awarded to members who have given distinguished service to the ASTI. This outstanding service includes representing members either within the structures of the ASTI or on an outside body, and taking an action or position that generates significant benefits for other ASTI members. This award recognises the outstanding service of activists

who devote their time to representing their colleagues and standing up for teachers' working conditions. This year's Thomas MacDonagh Medal recipients were: Róisín Doyle from Carrick-on-Shannon Branch, Ray Nolan from Drogheda Sean Higgins Branch, and Conor Murphy from Carbery Branch, who was awarded the medal in absentia.

Recognise your colleagues' activism and service to the union by nominating them for an ASTI Award

Each year the ASTI invites branches to nominate their members in a variety of award categories. The ASTI Awards ceremony is hosted each year in May and provides an opportunity for members to be recognised and honoured for their outstanding service to their branch and fellow members.

The ASTI awards are broken down into the following categories and branches can choose to nominate any of their members for:

- the PJ Kennedy Award,
- the Thomas MacDonagh Medal, and
- Honorary Life Membership.

PJ Kennedy Award

This award reflects the contribution of the recipient to the ASTI. Eligible nominees are retired members who have given valuable service to their branch and/or branch members. Such a nominee might be a diligent school steward or a branch officer whose years of commitment and sterling service warrant such recognition. Nominees for this award must be nominated by an ASTI branch.

The Thomas MacDonagh Medal

This award reflects the distinguished service and contribution of the recipient to the ASTI. Nominees for this award must be nominated by an ASTI branch or by a member of ASTI Standing Committee.

Honorary Life Membership

This award is conferred only in recognition of outstanding service to the Association and entitles the Honorary Life Member to all rights and privileges of full membership, including the right to hold office. Nominees for this Award must be nominated by an ASTI branch for the approval of the ASTI Awards Committee. If approved, the nomination will be referred to a vote at the January meeting of the Central Executive Council (CEC), who will then refer the nominee to Annual Convention for approval.

Nomination forms have been sent to all branch secretaries and nominations for the above ASTI Awards must be received in ASTI Head Office by Friday, December 6, 2024, in order to be considered by the ASTI Awards Committee.

For more information on the ASTI Awards, see: www.asti.ie/member-benefits/awardsgrants/.

Further information on the second Achievement Award recipient and the PJ Kennedy Award will be available in the next edition of *ASTIR*.

SUPPORTING TEACHER ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH

The Teachers' Research Exchange is a vital resource for post-primary teachers who wish to engage with and in educational research.

Engaging in and with educational research while teaching full-time is challenging. Ensuring that teachers' professional learning is "evidenced-based and adapted to the needs of the school" (LAOS, 2022, p.35) requires time. Given the constraints of a working day, research engagement often takes place individually, after school, which can potentially become an isolating experience. Accessing appropriate research material can also be difficult as it is often presented in academic journal articles, which may differ somewhat to the professional dialect used by practising teachers.

The Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX) is a non-profit online community that is aware of such challenges and supports teachers' research engagement through providing free resources.

Supporting engagement with research

T-REX hosts brief, asynchronous courses, including 'Getting into Research', designed for anyone at the early stages of research engagement. The 'Critically Reviewing Research Literature' course provides practical resources, and examples of questions to keep in mind when reading a research article, which support teachers in building expertise to make informed decisions on how best to use and engage with research.

Engagement in research

Some courses are designed to support engagement in research, including 'Classroom-Based Research and Professional Enquiry', which supports finding strategies to formulate the right research question and progress that into an actionable research plan. T-REX also provides a place for teachers to share research findings on their own terms, from their classroom/school-based projects or from postgraduate theses. Templates (called T-REX Bytes) can be used by members for research dissemination.

T-REX collaboration in action

T-REX provides a forum through which teachers who have research questions but may not have the time or resources to complete a full project, can discuss and collaborate with student teachers and researchers in higher education institutions, who may have the resources, but need a greater understanding of current challenges being faced on the ground in the classroom. One effective example of this is detailed by Dr Joanne O'Flaherty, lecturer in the University of Limerick



and Module Leader for 'Teacher as Professional':

"Year 2 Professional Master of Education (PME) students and Year 4 undergraduate concurrent teacher education students who were registered on a module titled 'Teacher as Professional' engaged with the Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX). The module follows school placement and affords students the opportunity to: critically reflect on their experiences; identify and question assumptions/biases they hold about the nature of teaching, learning, assessment and schooling; and, explore the multi-dimensional role of the teacher in co-operative groups that model collaborative learning and cultivate research capacity.

"As part of the module, students were required to select a topic that they would like to investigate further, that came to light during their school placement experiences and that was of relevance and interest to their professional development as a teacher. Students working in small groups were required to research the topic in two ways: through online discussion(s) with their partner T-REX teacher; and, by selecting at least four relevant sources that could help them develop their understanding of the topic. In-service teachers were invited to contribute to online discussions with students via the T-REX platform. The contributions of in-service teachers provided an additional 'lens' to explore the topic as identified by the student. Students were supported to engage with T-REX during their lecture and tutorials sessions.

"At the end of the module, each group prepared a 12-minute presentation/podcast that included consideration of the groups' engagement with T-REX, how this engagement enhanced their understanding of the topic, and any challenges they may have experienced. Students selected a variety of topics to explore including: emotional intelligence; classroom management; well-being; induction; homework; STEM; machine maintenance; and, self-regulated learning".

Becoming a T-REX member

If you would like to join our community, please register at www.t-rex.ie. Should you wish to discuss how T-REX could support you as an individual teacher or as a school community, please contact barbara.mulvihill@mic.ul.ie. The T-REX Project Team wishes you every success as you engage in and with research this academic year!

ASTI HELPING TO PROVIDE SAFER SCHOOLS IN UGANDA

The ASTI's Development Aid Fund is helping young people to access education in Uganda, says DIARMAID DE PAOR, ASTI Deputy General Secretary.

The ASTI, through its Development Aid Fund, provides support to aid agencies and projects throughout the developing world. In addition to disaster relief in response to war, famine, natural disasters and other tragedies, the Fund aids work that supports development, and in particular education development.

One of the most significant donations from the fund in recent times was the granting of €45,370 to Irish NGO Aidlink in support of the project WASH: A Better Vehicle for Education in the Kyankwanzi District of Uganda.

Addressing barriers to education

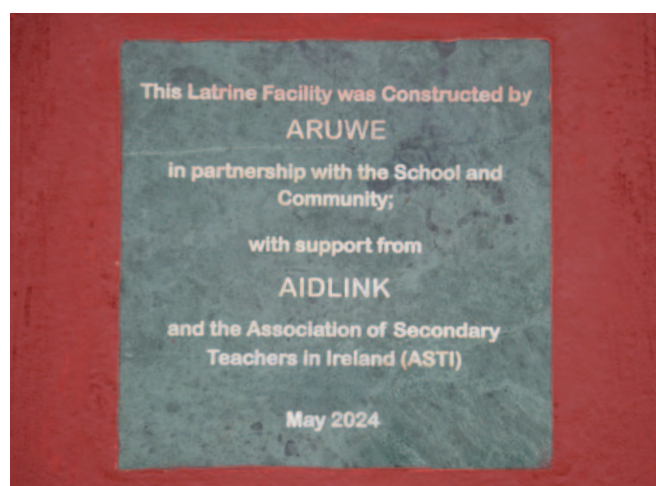
Lack of access to improved water and sanitation (WASH) infrastructure poses a significant barrier to educational attainment in rural areas such as Kyankwanzi. Families and school children travel upwards of four kilometres to reach their nearest clean water source and the responsibility for this time-consuming task is often on women and girls. Walking these long distances creates a barrier to education for girls, but also exposes women and girls to potential acts of gender-based violence, including physical assault and teen pregnancies.

Access to basic sanitation in rural areas of Uganda is poor, and the practice of handwashing at household level is low. There is no formal data on menstrual hygiene, an additional barrier to girls' education. Menstruation is often considered a taboo, with many myths creating a stigma around menstrual health for women and girls in rural areas. There is a lack of menstrual hygiene facilities and supports to assist girls with the physical and psychological changes they undergo during puberty. Girls face a loss of between eight and 24 school days a year due to menstruation.

WASH

The WASH project has delivered a safer school environment for almost 4,000 schoolchildren, their teachers, and families from seven universal primary schools. Using a twin track approach, the project not only improved school infrastructure but also supported school management, teachers and communities with training on water sanitation and hygiene, sexual reproductive health, and the operation, maintenance and sustainability of facilities, including:

- inclusive, gender-sensitive latrine blocks with five stalls, including one for people with disabilities, constructed in each of six schools,
- a 10,000-litre capacity rainwater harvesting tank installed in six schools – improving hygiene and ensuring that children have access to clean water for their basic day-to-day activities, including drinking, cooking, farming, general personal hygiene, and enhanced menstrual management,



The plaque recognises the ASTI's financial support to Ntunda Primary School, which facilitated the construction of latrine blocks for the students.

- two handwashing facilities installed in six schools, and
- school health clubs with a membership of 30-50 students have been established in target schools – the student members have been trained in general sanitation practices, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), and monitoring to maximise the impact and ensure the proper and effective utilisation of resources. This enables them to amplify the adoption of good healthy habits that benefit the overall well-being of children.

Collaborating with communities

Aidlink's local partner in this project, Action for Rural Women's Empowerment (ARUWE) collaborated with the Community Development Officer (CDO) and the town council chiefs to engage communities on the ground, as well as spearheading activities that enable children, including girls and children with disabilities, to attend and complete schooling. Five of the seven schools have recorded increased enrolment of children with disabilities – 17 in one school alone.

Esther is a primary six pupil at Ntunda Primary School located in Ntunda Town Council Kyankwanzi District. She is 11 years old and has been at this school for the last five years. She says: "The fact is water is a determinant of everything. Without water at school there is no porridge and food. Water is everything. We have been getting a lot of inconveniences resulting from limited access to water – we could go to the borehole at 7.30am and come back at 10.00am. Or in the evening we could go at 3.00pm and come back at 6.00pm. We have been missing a lot. Also, we were really fed up with queuing to use the former latrine, which was shared by all of us – the teachers, boys and girls. Normally, the teachers want us to use the latrines during break times and we could all find ourselves at the latrine at the same time. Now, the girls have a separate latrine, which is private. Therefore, we thank God for the breakthrough. No more inconvenience with the water tank and latrines, and we are profoundly happy".

MEET YOUR STANDING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES



Jimmy Staunton, Standing Committee Region 1: Donegal, Iar Thuaisceart Thír Chonaill, Sligo

I got involved in the ASTI because...

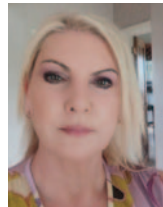
I got involved in the ASTI when I started teaching as I felt they were the best union to protect and improve my working conditions. I have undertaken a variety of roles at school, branch and national level, which have deepened my understanding of the range of issues impacting on teachers at all stages of their career. Being a member of a strong union not only provides support and protection during tough times, it is vital in terms of being able to influence issues such as curriculum policy, and ultimately it is teachers that must implement new curriculum policy in the classroom.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are...

The ASTI's biggest priorities are teacher supply and the new Senior Cycle. I would be very concerned about the proposed minimum 40% in additional assessment components (AACs) across all subjects. I believe this will have a serious impact on the well-being of our teachers and students. The shortage of teachers is very worrying but understandable, considering the significant changes in their working conditions, especially pensions.

Something people may not know about me is...

I love sea kayaking as a way to get away from the stresses of work and improve my well-being.



Geraldine O'Loughlin, Standing Committee Region 2: West Mayo, East Mayo, Carrick-on-Shannon

I got involved in the ASTI because...

As a young teacher I quickly realised that navigating the challenges of a new teaching career wasn't something I wanted to face alone. I witnessed colleagues join the ASTI for advice and protection, and saw the support system it offered. This gave me the confidence to join, which has been one of the most rewarding decisions in my teaching career. As an ASTI member, I've had the opportunity to serve as school steward and on the school Board of Management. I have been Chairperson of the West Mayo Branch, and it was a true privilege to be elected to the Education Committee.

The ASTI's biggest priorities are...

I believe the ASTI's current priorities centre on Senior Cycle change, supporting teachers in managing new subjects and curricular changes. Contributing to shaping Senior Cycle design and implementation is critical work that reflects the ASTI's real impact on the education system. I have always seen basic working conditions as a key focus for the union. The ASTI has consistently looked after its members, advocating for teachers and ensuring that their working conditions are a priority.

Something people may not know about me is...

I come from a teaching background and my mother is my greatest inspiration. As a teacher she sparked my lifelong passion for the Irish language. Looking back, my mum shaped me into the teacher I am, and for that I will be forever grateful.

Regional representatives

Eighteen regionally elected members, along with the President, Vice President, Immediate Past President and Honorary National Organiser, sit on Standing Committee. Standing Committee members bring the views of

the members and branches they represent to the table when important decisions are being made. You can find contact details for your Standing Committee representative on the ASTI website or in your ASTI Diary.

Region No.	Branches	Regional representative
1	Donegal, Iar Thuaisceart Thír Chonaill, Sligo	Jimmy Staunton
2	West Mayo, East Mayo, Carrick-on-Shannon	Geraldine O'Loughlin
3	Galway, Tuam, East Galway	Richard Bell
4	Clare, Limerick South, Limerick North, Nenagh	John Conneely
5	Desmond, Kerry, West Limerick	Siobhán O'Donovan
6	Cork South Paddy Mulcahy, Carbery	John Byrne
7	Cork North, Dungarvan, East Cork, Fermoy, West Waterford	Pat Knightly
8	Wexford Tony Boland, New Ross, Enniscorthy, Waterford	Gerard Hanlon

Region No.	Branches	Regional representative
9	Tipperary, Kilkenny, Roscrea	Donal Coughlan
10	Laois, Carlow, Kildare	Eamon Ryan
11	Longford, Tullamore, Navan, Athlone, Mullingar	David Wynne
12	Dundalk, Monaghan, Cavan, Drogheda	Louis Callaghan Sean Higgins
13	Dublin South 2, Dublin South County	David Murphy
14	Stillorgan, Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire, Bray	Ray St. John
15	Dublin South West, Dublin North West	Adrienne Healy
16	Dublin North 1 Miriam Duggan, Dublin North Central	Maria Markey-Greene
17	Dublin North East, Fingal	Seamus Keane
18	Dublin South Central, Dublin South 1	Sinéad Corkery

ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION 2025

Every Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members attend Annual Convention to discuss and vote on the Association's policies for the year ahead.



ASTI Annual Convention 2025 will take place in the INEC Conference Centre, Killarney, Co. Kerry, on April 22, 23, and 24.

Attending Convention

Delegates to Convention are selected at branch meetings, usually in January. Each branch is entitled to send a number of delegates to Convention depending on the number of members in their branch. Branches must submit the names of their chosen branch delegates to ASTI Head Office not later than January 31.

In addition to branch delegates, members of the ASTI Central Executive Council and Standing Committee also attend Convention as delegates.

If you wish to attend Convention 2025, you should go along to your next branch meeting. If you are unsure about when or where your branch meets, ask your school steward for your branch's meeting schedule.

When attending Annual Convention, you must be either a delegate or an observer. Please note that only delegates are allowed to speak on and vote on Convention motions.

Costs

The cost of travel and an overnight allowance is paid to all delegates attending Convention. There is also a registration fee of €30, which is paid directly to Head Office by delegates' branches.

Where to stay

Convention 2025 is being held in the INEC, Killarney, Co. Kerry. Accommodation for delegates will be available at the Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney. Delegates book their own accommodation. Please be advised that Convention accommodation at the Gleneagle Hotel is limited and is allocated on a first come, first served basis. The Gleneagle Hotel will be taking Convention delegate bookings from mid-January 2025.

There are several other accommodation options in Killarney. Details of other hotels and guesthouses located in the surrounding area are available on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Teachers in the spotlight

Key debates on education, teachers' terms and conditions, and the ASTI's role as a trade union take place during Convention. ASTI Annual Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the key issues for second-level teachers, for example, conditions for recently qualified teachers. Coverage focuses on key speeches made during Convention, including the President's address on Tuesday evening, and on key debates throughout the conference.

Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions, which are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated at Annual Convention. Motions are presented to Convention and delegates speak to these motions.

Branches normally decide on the topics they would like to see discussed at Annual Convention at their November branch meetings. A Convention Steering Committee, which consists of classroom teachers elected by Annual Convention each year, prepares a list of motions received from branches. The list is circulated to all branches before January 7. Branches are asked to prioritise motions for inclusion on the Convention agenda not later than January 31. They can also propose amendments to any of the motions circulated. Motions and amendments are considered again by the Steering Committee in early February and a final agenda is drawn up.

Connect at Convention

The ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates (some debates are closed sessions and delegates may not discuss these debates on social media). Social media platforms X.com and Facebook allow the ASTI and delegates attending Convention to spread the news to their colleagues who cannot attend, and to highlight important Convention issues to their followers.

FUNDING NEEDED FOR TEACHER RETENTION, NOT PHONE POUCHES

“The Government must address the funding crisis in education, both at second level and at third level, before we move forward with a lot of the proposals that the Minister has stated. We must also recognise that the system has evolved and is evolving, and many subjects have additional components, such as in my own area of project work and practical exams in engineering. This helps to produce a wider set of skills and such abilities can be assessed, which is overall good for students”.

Donal Cremin, ASTI President

The Pat Kenny Show, Newstalk, September 9, 2024

“We saw a 6% decrease in salaries [when inflation is factored in] compared to a 4% decrease across the OECD. If we look at salary scales, Ireland is ranked 18th out of 36 countries in the starting salary for a teacher. After ten years we are ranked 15th out of 36. Now these are the people who are leaving Ireland for places such as Canada, Dubai and Australia. It is a worldwide competitive market for teachers and this is something that needs to be addressed”.

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

Newstalk Breakfast, Newstalk, September 11, 2024

“[On the Minister’s decision to spend €9 million on mobile phone pouches] I have met several teachers who told me that they have good arrangements in place already in their schools to manage the mobile phone issue. And all they see with this new initiative by the Minister is more administration and more bureaucracy coming their way with no discernable improvement in the outcomes in their school. So essentially, the Minister is spending quite an amount of money solving a problem that is already under control. I think it would have been better if she had exercised her concern by engaging with the stakeholders and schools to discuss the issue before splashing this enormous amount of cash”.

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary

News at One, RTÉ Radio 1, October 3, 2024

“[On Budget 2025] I feel a bit disheartened and confused. I work long hours and pay a lot of tax. We’ve a windfall tax from Apple and a huge surplus. Where is it all going? Why is it in Germany that single people have access to social housing, yet here we’re on the bottom rung of the ladder? There’s not much for the squeezed middle. We tend not to qualify for much but pay for almost everything”.

Aisling Hughes, ASTI member

The Irish Times, October 2, 2024

“[On the Minister’s decision to spend €9 million on mobile phone pouches] I think every school, board of management, parent, pupils and teachers should come together to decide what policy works best for their own school, and go forward from there taking all partners on board. We in the ASTI were not consulted on the issue at all, and we would have suggested that perhaps the €9 million could have been better used in other areas like special educational needs, to reduce class sizes, and to try to get more teachers into the system because there’s a big problem with recruitment and retention in many schools, especially subjects such as engineering, construction, even in science and Irish. I could go on and on about the shortfall in teachers. Maybe the money could have been spent a little bit better”.

Donal Cremin, ASTI President

Kerry Today, Radio Kerry, October 4, 2024

“What was really interesting about the ASTI Education Conference is that there was a lot of learning on both sides about how policy can be better implemented at ground level. I cannot emphasise it enough but what really impressed people was the passion of teachers for the child to achieve, to flourish, and to be happy. But teachers have to be upskilled. Several years ago, terms such as ‘neurodivergent’ were not used – the language, understanding and skillset required to respond have changed since then.”

Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary

The Chatroom, CRCfm, October 14, 2024

Cliona Kelly



On August 21, 2023, our beloved friend and colleague Cliona Kelly passed away following an illness bravely borne. As a gifted and highly respected teacher, dear friend, and generous colleague, Cliona's death has left an aching void in our hearts and in our school community in Presentation College Headford.

Cliona had teaching in her lifeblood, with her father and her late beloved mam both prominent figures in the educational life of Tuam. Christy was vice principal of St Jarlath's

College and Margaret was a highly respected maths teacher in Presentation College, Currylea.

Cliona's first education posting was in Dagenham, UK, which whet her appetite for teaching. From there she went to the Donahies Community School in Dublin and, as the many tributes on RIP.ie and the large eastern representation at her funeral attest, she quickly became a vital member of their teaching staff. But the 'West' was calling and a maternity leave vacancy in 2000 saw her take her chances and up sticks to Presentation

College Headford, which was to become her forever school.

Almost instantly, Cliona became immersed in all aspects of the school community. Cliona's contribution to life in PCH went far beyond the classroom. She was involved in all aspects of school life. She was one of the first to greet new staff and to provide helpful tips that she had garnered throughout her years. She also possessed a rare gift, an innate nobility that allowed her to transcend all office and staffroom politics – everyone was equal in Cliona's eyes.

Cliona's work was deeply sacrosanct to her – to witness her at her craft was truly an amazing sight to behold. We, her colleagues, spoke of this and our collective abiding memory is of her petite frame bent over a student, pen or pencil in hand, deeply absorbed in the explanation of the mysteries of a maths concept to a student in difficulty. The many tributes from former students on RIP.ie attest to her passion for imparting mathematical knowledge to the sometimes reluctant learner in a good-humoured and non-patronising way. Her gift was to make her students feel at ease in her classroom, no matter their ability.

Rest in peace, dear Cliona, safe in the knowledge that you have indeed truly changed thousands of young lives, and the lives of many of your colleagues, for the better.

Joseph (Josie) Mc Donagh



It is with a heavy heart and deep sadness that we bid farewell to Joe Mc Donagh, a beloved friend and esteemed colleague whose impact on the lives of many will never be forgotten. Joe's passing on May 2, 2024, marked the end of an era for St Benildus College, where he served as a teacher and guidance counsellor for nearly three decades.

Joe's journey at St Benildus College began in 1978, where he dedicated himself to nurturing the minds of young students and guiding them towards a path of knowledge and success. Long

before it became fashionable in Ireland, Joe encouraged students to consider a career in the manual arts rather than exclusively focusing on academic careers for which, he believed, many were unsuited. He believed in developing the whole person, emphasising hands-on learning, creative arts, and independent thinking.

Joe's impact extended far beyond the walls of St Benildus College. Together with his good friend and colleague Eamonn Lowry, he organised cultural visits and school tours across Europe, broadening the horizons of many

young individuals and fostering a sense of unity among diverse cultures.

Outside of the classroom, Joe was a passionate advocate for the rights and welfare of his ASTI colleagues. He represented the Stillorgan Branch for many years at CEC and Convention, where he defended teachers' rights and working conditions. He was later awarded Honorary Life Membership, a privilege he embraced with great pride.

His kindness, generosity, and dedication to making a difference in the world touched the lives of many. He was regularly found late at night at Annual Convention in a corner with a young teacher he had just met, listening and giving advice. On social occasions with his friends, he often disappeared to engage with people who needed a listening ear and the hand of friendship, which Joe would happily provide.

Predeceased by his son Enda, Joe leaves a legacy of love and devotion, cherished by his wife Helen, daughter Aisling, sons Declan, Cillian and Finnian, and his adored grandchildren. He will be fondly remembered by his siblings, colleagues, friends, and the countless lives he touched with his passion for helping others.

As we mourn his loss, we find comfort in the knowledge that his legacy will live on in all of those he influenced.

Rest in peace, dear friend. You will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Encourage your retired colleagues to join the RSTA



Dear friends,

Now that schools are settled in for a new year, I would like to wish all serving teachers good health and plenty of energy for the year ahead. Many of you will have colleagues who have retired and are now looking forward to enjoying a well-earned rest. I am appealing to you, if you know of recently retired colleagues, to encourage them to join the RSTA. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions of GDPR, schools are not in a position to give us such information, which is why I am appealing to you directly.

The RSTA works constantly for the welfare of retired second-level teachers and to defend their pensions. In conjunction with the Alliance of Retired Public Servants, of which the RSTA was a founding member, we continue to fight for representation at talks where the pay and pensions of teachers are being discussed with Government. We are truly grateful for all the support we receive from the ASTI, not least its commitment to supporting us in fighting to maintain pension parity. In the meantime, our 18 branches are also forging ahead with a

programme of social events, at which our members can meet and get involved in activities in their local area. We need to increase our numbers and you can help by encouraging your recently retired colleagues to join us. Thank you so much.



Susie Hall
RSTA President

RSTA membership application/renewal

Name:

Address:

Home phone:

Mobile:

Email:

RSTA branch:

Annual subscription: €24
Annual renewal date: September 1

Payment options: Bank standing order (recommended by RSTA) or cheque (payable to RSTA)

Return to: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.

Contact: murielmcnicholas@gmail.com or 085-118 1330

The personal information requested here is required to administer your membership of the RSTA. It is used by the RSTA in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). See the RSTA Data Protection and Privacy Policy on the RSTA website – www.rsta.ie.

Standing order set-up form

To: The Manager (Bank name and full address)

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account:

Account name/s:

IBAN

BIC

And to credit the account of:

RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

IBAN: IE55 AIBK 9323 6112 7290 80 (**BIC:** AIBKIE2D)

with the amount of **€24** (twenty four Euro)

Start Date: ___/___/20___ **Frequency:** Annually until further notice

Reference: (To identify member's subscription on RSTA bank statement):

Member name

Signature: Date: ___/___/20___

Say NO to orphanage visits

As the new school year commences, the Comhlámh End Orphanage Volunteering working group would like to remind everyone about an important message – say NO to orphanage visits.

Orphanage care is harmful to children and orphanage visits by school groups contribute to this harm. Children belong in families where they can get the love and attention they need. The Department of Foreign Affairs has issued travel advice warning that people travelling overseas from Ireland should not visit or volunteer in orphanages, and has pointed to the links between orphanages and child trafficking. The campaign has also called on the Department of Education to develop child-safe guidelines for school trips, including guidance not to visit orphanages.

The Comhlámh End Orphanage Volunteering campaign has been working since 2016 to challenge orphanage volunteering and the institutional care of children. The campaign is endorsed by 45 organisations, including the ASTI and the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU).

There are many resources available on the campaign website, which delve into the issue in more detail. Tearfund Ireland, as co-convenor of this campaign, has also developed a global citizenship education resource

called Just Care: Just Volunteering, which explores the impact of volunteering in orphanages and institutional care on the lives of vulnerable children.

Comhlámh would like to remind all teachers, students, school management, and parents to:

- not support or organise visits to orphanages, and,
- not support or organise fundraising initiatives for orphanages.

ASTI members can support this work by signing the Put Children First Pledge and by committing to raise awareness about the harm caused by orphanage volunteering and the institutional care of children.

For more information, go to:
comhlamh.org/volunteering-and-orphanage-care/
 or
developmenteducation.ie/resource/just-care-just-volunteering/



ECO-UNESCO

Ireland's Leading Environmental Education Youth Organisation



Sign up for Our Young Environmentalist Awards

YEA is a free all-Ireland eco-action programme that empowers young people aged 10-18 to take action for a sustainable future.

Whether it's science experiments on energy conservation, art projects focused on upcycling, geography initiatives mapping local biodiversity, or home economic projects on creating sustainable recipes, there's a way for every teacher and subject to get involved!

Registration Deadline: Friday 22nd November
 Project Submission Deadline: Wednesday 12th February



YEA

Join Our Environmental Workshops!

Are your students passionate and eager to find ways to protect our planet? Dive into our engaging environmental workshops tailored for young people aged 10-18! Our workshops offer hands-on activities, discussions, and expert-led sessions!

Topics include: Fashion Focus, Exploring Ecology and Biodiversity, Climate Action, Waste Warriors and more!



Workshops



To participate or learn more about YEA or workshops, visit www.yea.ie, contact us at bookings@ecounesco.ie or call (01) 662 5491. You can also register your interest for either programme by scanning the QR code.

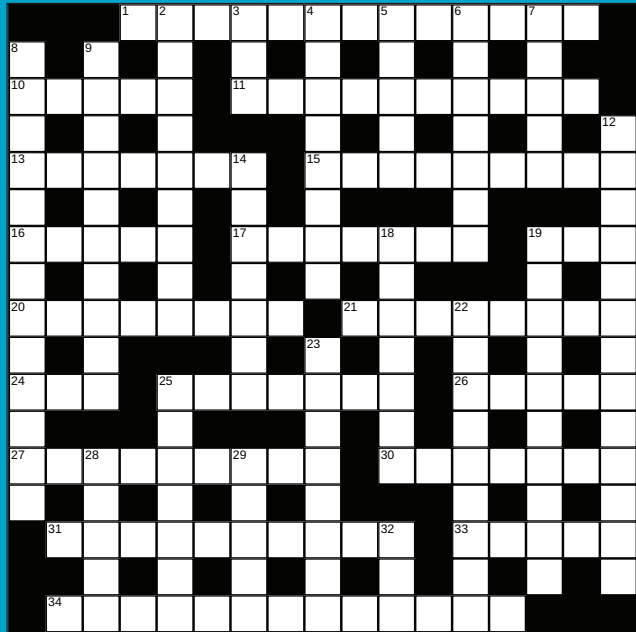


Sponsored by Cornmarket

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 2405

The winner will receive €250 in One4All vouchers.

If you wish to keep your copy of *ASTIR* intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: ASTIR Crossword No. 2405,
Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, December 6, 2024.

ACROSS

1. Extremely unlikely, or a very special person (3,2,1,7)
10. It occurs nine out of ten times (5)
11. 24-hour speculative thinker? (10)
13. Sounds like Dinah and Michael are energetic and full of new ideas (7)
15. 1973 Eagles song with Western theme (9)
16. Informally stupid (5)
17. Dublin monument destroyed in 1966: ... Pillar (7)
19. Ascent or rocky peak (3)
20. Countermand, disallow, nullify (8)
21. Subatomic particle with a near zero mass (8)
24. Used before names of vessels in the British Navy (1,1,1,1)
25. www.asti.ie, for example (7)
26. "... to disconnect": all workplaces should have one (5)
27. Former writer of JB Keane play could be costly (9)
30. "The of excuses has a leaky roof" – Ron Kaufman (7)
31. Burned, bedazzled, lit up (10)
33. Number of 26 Across established under WRC Code of Practice (5)
34. Equestrian sport consisting of dressage, cross-country and showjumping (5,3,5)

DOWN

2. One who shuns tobacco products (9)
3. Homemade bomb (1,1,1,1)
4. Almond-shaped part of brain responsible for emotions (8)
5. Elba, star of *The Wire* (5)
6. Alf rose and wore flat leather shoes (7)
7. *La Bohème*, for example (5)
8. Overly virtuous or well-behaved person (5,3,5)
9. Dupe in monster's loch for penny pinching (10)
12. Antique, ornate sleeping apparatus (4,6,3)
14. Informal private conversation or discussion (7)
18. Jacks or better, in poker (7)
19. Gail treats those who drive too close (10)
22. Area of Central Asia to the northwest of China (9)
23. Word for word, verbatim, exactly (8)
25. Spice Girls debut single (1996) (7)
28. Coarse fish or bird's roost (5)
29. One of Homer's epic poems (5)
32. Irish political leader and statesman (3)

Solutions to ASTIR Crossword No. 2404

ACROSS	DOWN
1. <i>Ice Cold in Alex</i>	2. Chipolata
10. Haiti	3. Cos
11. Sandstorms	4. Landline
13. Leonora	5. Ibsen
15. Landowner	6. Apology
16. India	7. Eamon
17. Dennehy	8. Chilli chicken
19. Cis	9. Disordered
20. Herbaria	12. Fresh as a daisy
21. Isabella	14. Addling
24. Cad	18. Eastern
25. Magnate	19. Collarbone
26. Clara	22. Bicameral
27. Ecosystem	23. Tasmania
30. Namibia	25. Mayfair
31. Celandines	28. Overt
33. Rings	29. Teddy
34. Stormy Daniels	32. Sui

Did you miss?

Leaving Certificate Chemistry, Biology and Physics concerns 16

ASTI celebrates outstanding contributions 20

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 2404: June Brennan, Willow Park Senior School, Rock Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Stillorgan Branch member.



**Both Virtual and
In-Person Available**



SCHOOL WORKSHOPS & LEARNING RESOURCES

Ireland's Role In Fighting Global
Poverty And Hunger



The Irish Aid Centre

Join us for a series of engaging and interactive workshops and have a look at the new learning resources available on www.irishaid.ie. The workshops provide an insight into Irish Aid's work and how this work contributes to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. All workshops are offered both in person and live online.

Scan the QR code to book a **free workshop** to suit your students. We look forward to welcoming your school to the Irish Aid Centre.

TRANSITION YEAR, CSPE, JUNIOR CYCLE & SENIOR CYCLE
POLITICS & SOCIETY

WWW.IRISHAID.IE

OVER 7,500 TEACHERS AND LEARNERS BENEFITTED
FROM IRISH AID CENTRE WORKSHOPS BOTH ONLINE
AND IN THE CENTRE IN 2023



Cornmarket's Health Insurance Comparison Service

- ✓ Ireland's largest Health Insurance broker
- ✓ Over 100,000 Health Insurance customers*
- ✓ Superior service & savings
- ✓ Team of 30 Health Insurance Specialists

Healthy Savings

€392

was the average saving for our customers last year, by reviewing their cover with us!**



We **compare the whole market** for you...
to save you **time & money!**

Call us on **0818 601 601**
or go to **cormarket.ie/health-insurance** to get a quote!



*Source: Cornmarket, Oct 2024. **Average saving based on 4,892 Cornmarket customers who reviewed & switched their cover between October 2022 & October 2023. Source, Cornmarket November 2023.

Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd. is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

20656 Health Ad 10-24