

SENIOR CYCLE UPDATE

A number of announcements have been made, and consultations are ongoing regarding Senior Cycle change.

In September 2023 the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, announced an accelerated process of redevelopment of the Senior Cycle curriculum.

Tranche 1 subjects

From September 2025, nine new and redeveloped subjects will commence in schools for fifth-year students:

- Ancient Greek,
- Arabic,
- Biology,
- Business,
- Chemistry,
- Climate Action and Sustainable Development,
- Drama, Film and Theatre Studies,
- Latin, and
- Physics.

Public consultations began in December 2023 and are either completed or ongoing. The aim of these consultations is to gather feedback to help inform the work of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Subject Development Groups in refining draft specifications. Oide – the support service for teachers and school leaders – will commence delivery of in-service training and other supports for these subjects from November 2024.

Tranche 2 subjects

From September 2026, seven redeveloped subjects will commence in schools for fifth-year students:

- Accounting,
- Construction Studies,
- Engineering,
- English,
- Geography,
- Physical Education, and
- LCVP Link Modules.

NCCA Subject Development Groups have been established and will be working on draft specifications in the coming months.

Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes have been developed as follow-on programmes for students who are progressing from Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes at Junior Cycle. The goal of the Senior Cycle programmes is to prepare students for life beyond school. These are personalised programmes that are tailored to the individual learning needs of the student. A Programme Statement for Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes is currently out for consultation.

Raising teachers' concerns

The ASTI recently met with the Senior Cycle Programme Delivery Board and raised a number of issues of concern to teachers, including:

- inadequate depth of treatment in draft specifications,
- the need for appropriate balance between written and other assessment components, which should be developed through consultation, and

- the need for improved communications with/to teachers regarding Senior Cycle redevelopment – the recent announcement regarding the holding of oral exams at Easter being a case in point.

The need for comprehensive syllabus documentation not less than 12 months prior to the implementation of a syllabus is in line with the joint position adopted last year at both the ASTI Annual Convention and the TUI Annual Congress.

Transition Year

A Transition Year statement was developed by the Transition Year Programme Statement Development Group. A public consultation on the statement was undertaken by the NCCA in 2023. A strong affirmation of Transition Year as a standalone programme in Senior Cycle was reaffirmed in feedback received. Key themes that emerged included:

- the section on encouraging participation and engagement could be strengthened through some further guidance,
- there could be more clarity on how the development indicators are expected to be used,
- the main graphical overview of the programme statement could convey how the Student Dimensions interconnect, while retaining the parity of each dimension,
- some of the descriptions and naming of Student Dimensions could be more aligned to the overall thrust of the programme statement, and
- there needs to be more emphasis on the responsibility of the student to contribute to the effectiveness of their school's TY Programme.

Other feedback included:

- continuing professional development (CPD): there is a real need for immediate and ongoing professional learning supports,
- funding a TY programme: realising the ambition of the Student Dimensions and in particular the student experiences, requires schools to source significant additional funding, and
- time and space for co-ordination: the evolution of TY requires an evolution in thinking about the role of the TY Co-ordinator and about co-ordination of the programme in general – a standalone programme was generally seen as requiring a standalone post.

The revised TY Programme will commence in schools in September 2024. Oide will provide online and in-person in-service and support, including school support, for the revised Programme.

SPHE

The redevelopment of Senior Cycle SPHE is ongoing. A publication consultation on the draft specification took place in 2023 and a report is expected to be published shortly.