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Online Submission - Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development

Más mian leat an fhoirm a chomhlánú trí Ghaeilge, roghnaigh an rogha Gaeilge sa roghchlár anuas teanga.

NCCA is developing a specification for a new Leaving Certificate subject – Climate Action & Sustainable Development.

The aim of this consultation is to obtain the open and honest views of all stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and other interested parties. The quantitative and qualitative feedback gained from the consultation will inform the work of the development group in preparing the final specification.

The NCCA would greatly appreciate your feedback on the **draft specification**. The consultation survey questions focus on the following areas:

1. Participant details
2. Rationale and aims
3. Key competencies
4. Teaching and learning
5. Strands of study and learning outcomes
6. Assessment arrangements
7. The appeal of the subject
8. Supports necessary for enactment

Completing this survey

Please read the draft specifications, which can be accessed at www.ncca.ie in advance of completing this survey. This written submission will take approximately **30 minutes** to engage with in detail.

In this survey, we invite individuals, or those representing an organisation to express their views on the draft Climate Action & Sustainable Development specification, through the three areas set out above. The questions are open in nature, providing an opportunity to outline your insights and perspectives on the draft specification.

When providing specific feedback / observations or comments, **please references the specific section and / or learning outcomes using the appropriate coding (e.g. strand number and learning outcome letter).**

The closing date for this consultation is Friday, 5th April, 2024 at 5:00pm.

Data Protection Statement

The NCCA is committed to protecting your privacy and does not collect any personal information about you through this survey, other than information that you provide by your own consent. Any personal information you volunteer to the NCCA will be respected in accordance with the highest standards of security and confidentiality in accordance with GDPR (2016) and the Data Protection Acts (1998 - 2018).

NCCA, as a public body operating under the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), is required to publish publicly funded research. Further information on the NCCA's Data Protection Policy can be found at https://ncca.ie/en/legal-disclaimer-and-data-protection/.

In accordance with the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), any data from this will be further anonymized and aggregated and only made available after the final report is completed. This is expected to be in June 2024. Where a respondent selects 'yes' to the question *Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation*, respondents are consenting to having their name / organisation's name published as respondents to the online survey.

Participant details

1

I am responding: *

- ○ as an individual
- ◉ on behalf of an ogranisation or body

2

Organisation or body name *

An Taisce

3

Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation *

- ◉ Yes

No

Areas of Focus

4

Rationale and aims (pages 2 and 3)

Rationale
The rationale of the draft specification (page 2) sets out of the context for learning in Climate Action & Sustainable Development. It acknowledges the challenge of environmental degradation, and the continuous innovation and capacity of young people as advocates for climate justice and social change.

Aims
Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development aims to develop students' capacity for informed and meaningful action for a just and sustainable world as they engage with key sustainability challenges, including the climate crisis.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the Rationale and Aims of the specification.

An Taisce very much welcomes this Draft Specification and the rationale and aims behind it. We believe it will be an excellent addition to the broader leaving certificate curriculum. It is very positive to see that students will "examine their role as global citizens, exploring the systems which govern decision making, the drivers of global poverty and environmental injustice".

In the Rationale, it states that, "We must ensure that human needs are met without breaching critical environmental limits." This phrase highlights an important issue that is not currently well addressed in any of the strands: what are human needs? What does it mean to thrive? What influences our understanding of what it means to live well? There is considerable opportunity here to engage students in a discussion of biospheric versus materialist values, and to help them to consider issues of extractivism, resource use, consumption, and waste – particularly as these relate to fairness, inequality and "earth overshoot" and particularly within the context of limits to growth, and how we might all live well within planetary boundaries (e.g., doughnut economics).

5

Key Competencies (pages 7 and 8)

Key competencies is an umbrella term which refers to the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students develop in an integrated way during senior cycle. These competencies are linked and blend together; can improve students' overall learning; can help students and teachers to make meaningful connections between and across different areas of learning; and are important across the curriculum.

The draft specification sets out examples of how key competencies can be developed in Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development on pages 7 and 8.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the development of key competencies in Climate Action & Sustainable Development



Enter your answer

6

Teaching and learning (pages 8-10)

Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development supports the use of a wide range of teaching and learning approaches. The nature of this subject and the areas explored presents an opportunity for teachers and students of Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development to build on existing good classroom practices. This opportunity can be realised through attention to the nature of action, the nature of the learning space, and the affective dimension of learning in this subject. This is outlined on pages 8-10 of the specification.

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the guidance offered on the nature of action, the learning space, and the affective dimension of learning in the draft specification

It is very positive to see a discussion of individual actions alone as insufficient in themselves but a necessary ingredient to collective action.

There is also a very welcome emphasis on climate emotions as valid, on the importance of creating space for the expression of emotions, and on a necessary balance between optimism and realism. It will be important to consider the full range of emotions - including negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and worry but also positive emotions inspiration, awe, love etc. so that students understand that there is space for positivity, particularly through their connection with others and with nature.

7

Strands of study and learning outcomes (pages 12-23)



The course overview (pages 11 and 12) sets out the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions for students in four strands. The specification emphasises a non-linear, integrated approach to learning across the strands. The learning outcomes in the strands Earth & Planet, People, Power & Place and Global Connections identify the core concepts, principles and theories through which students learn about and experience meaningful action.

The Applied Learning Tasks strand identifies four tasks through which students engage with contemporary issues as they learn about and through action, integrating and applying their learning across the specification. These tasks act as lenses through which students experience some of the learning in the first three strands.

The detail of the four strands is described on pages 13-23 of the specification

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the extent to which the overview illustrates the connected nature of the knowledge in an appropriate way

Enter your answer

8

Clarity and coherence in the specification

There are three design features of the specification, which aim to support curricular coherence and clarity; namely the overview of each strand, the students learn about column and the learning outcomes themselves. Considered along with the other sections of the document [the Rationale, Aims, Key Competencies, Teaching and Learning and Assessment], the students learn about column builds on the overview and indicates what students will be learning. The learning outcomes state what students should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the course.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the extent to which the strand overview and students learn about column bring clarity to the learning outcomes in an appropriate way.

Enter your answer

9

Strand 1: Earth & Planet

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the learning set out in Strand 1: Earth & Planet

Enter your answer

10

Strand 2: People, Power & Place

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the learning set out in Strand 2: People, Power & Place

We welcome the fact that "the interplay of socio-economic, institutional and technological activities, e.g. economic growth, agricultural intensification, urbanisation, transportation, information transfer, rising energy use, etc." will be considered root causes of environmental change.

The section on policy decisions and implementation in Strand 2 offers an excellent opportunity to review the recommendations of the Citizens' Assemblies. These are also very good exemplars of participatory democracy. Why the recommendations of the Citizens' Assemblies have not been taken up is something that students could be equipped to reflect on through to the discussion of political ideology, vested interests and lobbying groups.

11

Strand 3: Global Connections

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the learning set out in Strand 3: Global Connections

We welcome the consideration of alternative economic models, including degrowth – the fostering and facilitation of the imagination of alternative ways of organising or economies and societies, which can better allow people to live in alignment with their values is fundamentally important. The focus on climate justice, especially at a global level, is also critical.

12

Strand 4: Applied Learning Tasks

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the learning set out in Strand 4: Applied Learning Tasks

Enter your answer

13

Additional Assessment Component (AAC)

The Action Project provides students with an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and principles of Climate Action & Sustainable Development, while also employing the practical strategies and thinking they have developed through the course to take effective action. The senior cycle key competencies, developed through all the learning in this course, will be applied through the student's engagement in the Action Project. The Action Project provides opportunities for students to pursue their interests in Climate Action &

Sustainable Development, make their own decisions, acquire conceptual understanding and self-regulate their learning. The Action Project allows students to build on their experiences to date and demonstrate learning related to the learning outcomes of the Applied Learning Tasks strand, as well as learning outcomes from the other strands as appropriate to the brief (page 25)

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the challenges associated with introducing an AAC.

Enter your answer

14

Additional Assessment Component (AAC) continued

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the opportunities associated with introducing an AAC.

Enter your answer

15

Additional Assessment Component (AAC) continued

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the manageability of the AAC in up to 20 hours of class time.

Enter your answer

16

The appeal of Climate Action & Sustainable Development
In addition to its potential to support the development of competencies for twenty-first

century citizenship, it is hoped that this specification will appeal to a broad range of learners with a diverse range of post-school aspirations.

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the likelihood of the draft specification to appeal to a broad range of students with a diverse range of post-school aspirations

Enter your answer

17

Timing

The specification has been designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time with 20 hours dedicated to the completion of the additional assessment component.

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the likelihood of 180 hours of class time being sufficient to achieve the learning specified in the draft specification If you think it is unlikely that 180 hours of class time is sufficient to achieve the learning specified in the draft specification please indicate specific topics/learning outcomes (Use coding e.g Strand 1a) that might be edited (removed, merged, reframed) and include a rationale for your suggestion

Enter your answer

18

Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Enter your answer

19

Further Comment

Please make any final comments or observations on the draft specification. Can you suggest any gaps, omissions, or any other ways the specification could be strengthened?

One of the welcome features of the Draft Specification is, in fact, an absence - it is very positive to see that there the curriculum lacks a heavy emphasis on purely technological solutions, such as carbon credits and offsets, carbon capture and storage, sustainable aviation fuel, anaerobic digestion, AI etc. It will be important to include a critique of "technological optimism" and approaches that seemingly allow us to continue with business as usual but which fail to adequately reduce emissions and address environmental destruction.

There is a missed opportunity to consider the health impacts of the climate crisis - not only the health impacts of extreme heat and other extreme weather events, but also air and water pollution, changing disease vector ecology, plants vs meat-focused diets, etc. Discussing such health impacts enables a greater emphasis on the positives of addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. For example, a modal shift from private cars to active and public transport not only reduces emissions but gives us cleaner air and a healthier public. Such examples help students to understand that climate action should not be framed as inconvenience and hardship, but as bringing about a happier, healthier, fairer world for all.

In the context of policy decisions, while mitigation is generally well handled, the EU dimension could be strengthened, as could domestic policy responses.

The curriculum is a bit light on the science of global climate change. A recent EPA report suggested that most people couldn't distinguish the greenhouse effect from zone depletion and acid rain. Additional material on the nature and causes of the greenhouse effect would therefore be useful.

There is not sufficient focus on greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, in particular methane which is so much more potent in the lifespan of school children. How methane and other gases are included in concepts such as Global Warming Potential would be important to include.

As the major impact of climate change likely to affect Ireland, flooding merits some consideration in the syllabus. Impacts such as biodiversity loss also could receive greater coverage.

Some references are made to air pollution and air pollution project work. This is not really necessary in this curriculum. It would result in potentially students identifying climate change and air pollution problems as synonymous. Of course there are interactions between the two, but the syllabus should not reinforce false connections with climate change.

An important question that is raised by this excellent Draft Specification is what teacher training will be provided to enable teachers to teach this important curriculum?

Also, how will the roll out of this subject be supported and incentivised? It will be very important to ensure that the subject is taught widely across the country rather than be restricted to a small number of privileged schools, which will only serve to reinforcing existing inequalities.

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