



**Date:** 06/10/2020

**Circular Number:** 0070/2020

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

**Curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the postponement of implementation of revised specifications**

## **Contents**

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Guidance for the Reopening of Schools</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Assessment Arrangements for Certificate Examinations 2021</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Revised Specifications and Module Descriptors at Senior Cycle</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.1 Revised Timelines for the Implementation of Revised Specifications and Module Descriptors</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5.2 Leaving Certificate Computer Science</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.3 Leaving Certificate Physical Education (examinable subject)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.4 Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (non-examinable)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.5 Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese, Lithuanian, Polish, and Portuguese</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.5.1 Cessation of Non-Curricular Language Examinations for Lithuanian, Polish, and Portuguese</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.6 Leaving Certificate Arabic</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Future developments</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7. Review of Senior Cycle</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to inform post primary schools of curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle, with particular reference to the school years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Please bring this circular to the attention of the board of management, principal, teaching staff and students of your school as appropriate. Please also provide a copy of this circular to the appropriate parents' representatives.

This circular follows circulars 0061/2019 and 0001/2020.

## 2. Background

The announcement on 12 March 2020 of the closure of all schools, colleges, universities and other training and learning facilities was the commencement of a series of challenges across the education sector as a result of COVID-19.

The interests of students and their families, as well as the safety of the staff in the sector, has been at the forefront of decision making during this period.

The main priority has been to reopen and operate schools as fully, normally and safely as possible at the start of the new school year while minimising risk associated with COVID-19.

On 27 July 2020, the Department published a roadmap for reopening schools at the start of the 2020/21 school year. The roadmap includes a series of guidance documents for schools and are available to view at [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool).

It is acknowledged that students and school staff are faced with significant challenges in returning to school in the 2020/21 school year, after a lengthy period of disruption and absence from school. Recognising these challenges, changes are being made to the timelines for the introduction of revised subject specifications and revised module descriptors, which had been scheduled for implementation from September 2020. Information regarding these changes has been communicated to schools through the *Returning to School Guidance on learning and school programmes for post-primary school leaders and teachers* available [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool).

### **3. Guidance for the Reopening of Schools**

The Department has published a range of information and resources regarding the reopening of schools. Published documentation can be accessed at [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool).

The Department has also published guidance on [Supporting the Wellbeing of School Communities as Schools Reopen](#). This guidance relates to students as well as school staff, and the wider school community.

All members of school staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these documents and check [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool) regularly for new and updated documentation.

### **4. Assessment Arrangements for Certificate Examinations 2021**

The Department recognises that curriculum and assessment considerations for the 2020/21 school year must take account of the variable learning experiences of students that have occurred during the 2019/20 school year, and the context in which teaching and learning will be taking place in the new school year.

Therefore, changes have been made to the assessment arrangements for the Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme for the 2021 state examinations.

The Department has published information in relation to these changes. Details of these changes are available [here](#) or on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool).

### **5. Revised Specifications and Module Descriptors at Senior Cycle**

Circulars 0061/2019 and 0001/2020 outlined a series of curricular reforms which were scheduled to be implemented from the start of the 2020/21 school year.

Following the closure of schools in March and noting the significant challenges faced by schools on reopening, the planned implementation timelines for revised subject specifications and revised module descriptors have been amended. Changes to these timelines are outlined below.

## 5.1 Revised Timelines for the Implementation of Revised Specifications and Module Descriptors

Taking account of the loss of in-class time at the end of the 2019/2020 school year, the potential challenges facing schools at the outset of the new school year, and the workload of teachers and school leaders at this time, it is acknowledged that this new school year is not a suitable time for significant curriculum change. In order to support schools in the practicalities of re-engaging with their students a number of key decisions have been taken to pause elements of curriculum change that were due to commence in September 2020.

Revised implementation dates for a number of subject specifications and module descriptors are set out below. In the meantime, students will continue to follow the current specifications for subjects/module descriptors.

<b>Revised Leaving Certificate Established Subject Specifications</b>	<b>Original Implementation Date</b>	<b>Revised Implementation Date</b>	<b>First Leaving Certificate Examination</b>
Art	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023

<b>Revised Leaving Certificate Applied Module Descriptors</b>	<b>Original Implementation Date</b>	<b>Revised Implementation Date</b>	<b>First Leaving Certificate Examination</b>
English and Communications	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Mathematical Applications	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Introduction to Information and Communication Technology	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Information and Communication Technology: Specialism	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023

The implementation dates for the following subjects remain unchanged:

<b>Revised Leaving Certificate Established Subject Specifications</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>First Leaving Certificate Examination</b>
Applied Mathematics	September 2021	June 2023
Classical Studies	September 2021	June 2023

## **5.2 Leaving Certificate Computer Science**

Leaving Certificate Computer Science is available nationally as an optional subject as of September 2020.

As was outlined in *Returning to school - Guidance on learning and school programmes for post-primary school leaders and teachers*, published on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool), schools that had indicated they wished to introduce this subject from September 2020 were offered the option to defer implementation.

If a school chooses to defer, it may offer the subject from September 2021 and avail of the relevant continuing professional development (CPD) at that stage provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Where schools have decided to continue with the implementation of this new subject, the PDST will continue to provide support on request. Schools can apply at <https://pdst.ie/schoolsupport>.

## **5.3 Leaving Certificate Physical Education (examinable subject)**

Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) is available nationally as an optional subject as of September 2020.

As was outlined in *Returning to school - Guidance on learning and school programmes for post-primary school leaders and teachers*, published on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool), schools that had indicated they wished to introduce the subject from September 2020 were offered the option to defer implementation.

If a school chooses to defer, it may offer the subject from September 2021 and avail of the relevant continuing professional development (CPD) at that stage provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Where schools have decided to continue with the implementation of this new subject, the PDST will continue to provide support on request. Schools can apply at <https://pdst.ie/schoolsupport>.

#### **5.4 Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework (non-examinable)**

The Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) Framework is designed to support teachers in planning quality learning in Physical Education for all students in Senior Cycle. The non-examinable Framework will assist schools in designing a physical education programme for senior cycle students, including students who do or do not elect to take Physical Education as a subject for their Leaving Certificate examination.

All students in Senior Cycle should be studying the SCPE Framework which now replaces guidelines in relation to Physical Education at Senior Cycle currently set out in the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools. However, if a student is studying the optional LCPE specification, they are not required to also study the SCPE Framework, although this is not prohibited.

The PDST has provided an overview of the curricular models and supporting resources for planning and teaching Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework which is available on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie).

Delivery of the programme of CPD to support the implementation of the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework has been deferred until next year so as to minimise disruption to class contact time for PE teachers and students.

#### **5.5 Leaving Certificate Mandarin Chinese, Lithuanian, Polish, and Portuguese**

New curricular specifications for Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese will be implemented in September 2020. Expressions of interest in introducing the new subjects were sought in late 2019 by way of circular 0061/2019 for schools to participate in the rollout of these subjects and avail of CPD for teachers.

Examination in these language subjects by the State Examinations Commission will be aligned to assessment arrangements as set out in the specifications. From the 2022 state examinations, all students undertaking Leaving Certificate examinations in these curricular languages will be required to complete oral, aural and written assessment components.

It should also be noted that the CPD for these languages will be delivered by Post Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI). Information regarding PPLI is available at [www.ppli.ie](http://www.ppli.ie).

The new specifications for these languages are available on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie).

### **5.5.1 Cessation of Non-Curricular Language Examinations for Lithuanian, Polish, and Portuguese**

Following the introduction, in September 2020, of curricular specifications for Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese, the corresponding non-curricular examinations in these languages will cease to be offered. The last non-curricular examinations in these languages will be in 2021.

Students who are seeking to take certificate examinations in these languages, Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese, will need to demonstrate the language learning described in the curricular specifications, details of which are set out above. The assessment arrangements for these curricular specifications include oral, aural and written assessment components.

Schools are asked to advise potential candidates for these examinations of these changes. The Department is engaging with relevant embassies to further share this information.

### **5.6 Leaving Certificate Arabic**

Circular 0001/2020 introduced changes to the Leaving Certificate Arabic interim syllabus. Schools are reminded that these changes remain in place for students for the coming and future academic years.

The revised Leaving Certificate Arabic interim syllabus is available at <https://curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Senior-Cycle-Subjects/Arabic/>.



## **6. Future developments**

The NCCA is working on the development of new and revised subject specifications for Leaving Certificate Irish (L1 and L2), Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Arabic, Ancient Greek and Latin. The timeline for the development of these specifications is currently under review.

## **7. Review of Senior Cycle**

The NCCA is now completing an Advisory Report on the Review of Senior Cycle setting out areas of work and plans to be pursued in the future development of Senior Cycle education. Developments during recent months have highlighted aspects of Senior Cycle education that may warrant further consideration and additional attention within the Advisory Report.

When the Advisory Report is completed, it will be submitted to the Department for consideration.

**Eamonn Moran**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit**  
**06 October 2020**