



Written submission: Consultation on the Draft Leaving Certificate History specification

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

NCCA would greatly appreciate your feedback on the draft specification for Leaving Certificate History which can be found here: <https://ncca.ie/media/v31fj1zx/draft-specification-for-leaving-certificate-history-for-consultation.pdf>

Respondent's details

What organisation are you submitting on behalf of?

Irish Development Education Association ([IDEA](#)) Formal Education Working Group

Our working group comprises 60 members (networks, organisations and individuals) working to provide and promote Development Education (DE)/Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in formal education in Ireland. Many of our members work in and with primary and post-primary schools. This submission endorses also the individual submissions of IDEA members, such as WorldWise Global Schools and ASTI.

Are you consenting to be listed as a respondent to this consultation?

- Yes x
- No

If yes, please enter the name you wish to have published in the final report.

Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) Formal Education Working Group with extensive inputs from Deirdre O'Donohue, a Leaving Certificate history teacher from the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN), also a member of the IDEA Formal Education Working Group

Are you consenting to have the submission published on ncca.ie?

- Yes x
- No



Rationale, Aim, and Key Competencies [p. 2,3 and 5]

Rationale: The rationale, (p. 2) outlines the nature of History and the role and importance of History in realising the purpose and vision of senior cycle.

Aim: The aim, (p. 3) outlines the over-arching purpose of the subject and the relevance and expected impact of the subject on student learning.

In your opinion, do the rationale and aim capture the overarching purpose and nature of History; the importance of the subject in realising the vision of senior cycle and the relevance and expected impact of this subject on student learning. Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

In our opinion, the rationale and aim capture quite well the overarching purpose and nature of History as well as reflecting the importance of the subject in realising the vision of senior cycle. The relevance and expected impact of this subject on student learning are also articulated very well.

We very much welcome the emphasis on a teaching and learning approach to history that allows students to develop empathy and critical thinking skills. This aligns very well with core principles of development education (DE)/Global Citizenship Education (GCE), as per the [IDEA Code of Good Practice in Development Education](#).

We would recommend making explicit the undeniable global dimension of citizenship in today's Ireland. Therefore, we suggest including the word "global" before references to citizen. E.g. "This approach empowers students not only to appreciate history's role in shaping individual and collective identities but also to become informed **global** citizens capable of evaluating and challenging prevailing perspectives". (p.2) and "become informed, inquisitive and active **global** citizens equipped to interpret the past, engage with the present, and shape the future" (p.3)

We would also suggest that the words "globally" and "worldwide" be added in the second paragraph, last two sentence on p.3: "By examining different voices and viewpoints, students develop an informed appreciation of the shared human experience, **globally**. This in turn leads to the questioning of why the past unfolded as it did, and its ongoing relevance to the present and future, **worldwide**."

Key Competencies: 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 can be combined; 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 History (p. 5 - 9)

In your opinion, does this section effectively capture the development of student key competencies in Leaving Certificate History? Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

In our opinion, this section effectively captures the development of student key competencies in Leaving Certificate History, and we are heartened to see many statements that align very well with core principles of development education/global citizenship education, as per the [IDEA Code of Good Practice in Development Education](#).

As mentioned above, we would recommend making explicit the undeniable global dimension of citizenship in today's Ireland, as well as making explicit the undeniable interconnectedness and interdependence of Ireland with the rest of the world. Therefore, we suggest including the word "global" before references to citizen in this section. E.g. "they are encouraged to reflect on their work and understand its impact on them as **global** citizens in a contemporary **interconnected and interdependent** world" p.9.

Furthermore, we support the points made in the WorldWise Global Schools submission under this section.

Strands of study and learning outcomes [p.10-21]

Course overview: The course overview sets out the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions for students through four strands: Historical Inquiry, Critical Inquiry and Interpretation, Ireland and the World.

A table outlining the structure of the draft specification can be found on page 10. In your opinion, does the structure illustrate the interconnected nature of the strands and the integrated modes of engagement in an appropriate way? Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

In our opinion, the proposed structure of the draft specification illustrates the interconnected nature of the strands quite well, and it illustrates the integrated modes of engagement in an appropriate way.

The interconnectedness between strands could perhaps be strengthened by emphasising how learning across the 'Ireland' and 'World' strands is interdependent. This could support students to understand the global dimensions of Irish history and the ways in which local, national and global histories are mutually shaped.



Strand 1: Historical Inquiry [p.12-14]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

We interpret Strand 1 as fundamentally skills-based and providing a strong methodological foundation for learning History. While it does not explicitly reference global issues, we welcome many aspects of this strand, e.g. its emphasis on critical engagement with information, inquiry, evidence-based analysis, questioning of dominant narratives, understanding perspective and power, and interpretation. These are essential elements of critical media literacy, and informed judgement, all key GCE competencies and central to developing critically informed global citizens. This builds capacity to engage with complex global issues in an informed way.

The strand provides the tools for GCE, but not always the contexts. Explicit links to global issues (e.g. climate change, migration, human rights) would strengthen its relevance.

Clarity for planning teaching and learning

Strengths

- The progression from research → analysis → interpretation is clear and logical
- Skills are well-defined and transferable across topics
- The explicit focus on source evaluation, bias and interpretation provides strong guidance for classroom practice.

Challenges

- The outcomes are highly abstract, particularly for early-stage learners
- Teachers will need concrete examples and sample investigations
- The absence of explicit thematic content means teachers must create their own contexts to apply these skills
- Clear as a skills framework, but would benefit from applied examples linked to global issues and scaffolding guidance for different learner levels

Alignment with rationale and aims

This strand is strongly aligned with the aims of History education, such as developing critical thinking, understanding how knowledge is constructed and fostering independent inquiry.

**Potential gaps**

- The strand does not explicitly connect skills to citizenship or action. Without this connection, there is a risk that skills remain academic rather than applied
- Highly aligned in terms of intellectual skills but could better articulate its role in active global citizenship.

Access and challenges for all students**Opportunities**

- Skills-based approach allows for flexible teaching methods and use of varied and engaging sources (visual, audio, digital)
- Strong potential for active and inquiry-based learning.

Challenges

- Abstract nature of concepts such as bias, interpretation, subjectivity
- Demands high literacy of students to be able to read complex sources (especially in Strand 2 where documents may well use old English).
- Potential disengagement if skills are taught without relevant contexts
- Students may struggle without structured scaffolding and clear modelling of skills. Those with weaker literacy skills may find source analysis particularly challenging.

Strand 2: Critical Inquiry and Interpretation [p.15-16]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenge for all students.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

We interpret Strand 2 as overall very strongly aligned with GCE principles and key competencies and therefore we welcome most of what is outlined under this strand.

We especially welcome the strong emphasis within the learning outcomes on evaluating sources, including: ‘evaluate the relevance of source material’, ‘explore the context in which source material was created’ and ‘explore differing interpretations... in historiography’. These provide strong opportunities for the development of key competencies, particularly critical thinking, analysis and interpretation. We also particularly welcome the statement that ‘these inquiries will be equally weighted between Ireland and the world’, which supports a broader perspective beyond national history.



As mentioned in earlier sections, we would recommend making explicit the undeniable interconnectedness and interdependence of Ireland with the rest of the world. Therefore, we suggest adding explicit mention of “Ireland and the wider world” as part of the scope of analysis. E.g. on p.15, 3rd line: “The strand is organised so that students engage with and explore a range of prescribed historical inquiries, based on significant episodes, events, processes, issues, themes, or personalities drawn from different eras of the past (**both in Ireland and the wider world**), with a focus on documents.” Also on p. 16, Part 2.2 “Explore how individuals and groups contributed to change **in Ireland and the wider world**”.

Furthermore, we recommend clarifying what is meant by the references to “geographical location” and “the big picture”, e.g. on p.15, para 4 (after list of four themes): “and located across time and geographical location, supporting their understanding of the big picture of history and enhancing their historical consciousness.”, as well as on p. 16, Part 2.9 “Discuss historical documents in the context of learning about this inquiry and in relation to ‘big picture’ understanding of the past”.

Our understanding is that all parts of Irish history are connected with Europe and the wider world – going back as far as the Celts (and before). Perhaps the specification could clarify how all the inquiries will have a connection to Ireland, thus showing students, since the beginning of Irish history we have been connected to the world?

Strand 3: Ireland 1879-2009 [p.18-19] with details listed in Appendix 2 [p.31-34]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims
- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenges for all students

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

The learning outcomes in Strand 3 provide a strong platform for embedding Global Citizenship Education (GCE), particularly through their focus on power, inequality, lived experience, and global-local connections. However, as with similar strands, the effectiveness of this integration will depend on how explicitly these links are articulated in teaching and planning.



A number of the outcomes align very closely with core GCE themes, such as **power, justice, and inequality and human rights and inclusion**. Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, and 3.9 (causes/consequences, treaties, conflict, power structures, socio-economic factors) provide clear opportunities to explore global inequality, legacies of colonialism and conflict and decision-making and its impacts on different populations. Sections 3.7 and 3.8 (minorities and lived experience) are particularly important for GCE. They encourage empathy and highlight marginalised voices while supporting understanding of rights, discrimination, and identity.

The strand has strong implicit alignment with GCE, but these connections are not always made explicit. There is an opportunity to more clearly foreground themes such as sustainability, global responsibility, and active citizenship.

Clarity for planning teaching and learning

Strengths

- The outcomes are clearly structured and skills-based (describe, investigate, assess, analyse, explore)
- There is a coherent progression from knowledge acquisition (3.1) to higher-order analysis (3.9–3.14)
- The inclusion of themes like minorities, gender, culture, and sport provides clear and engaging entry points for lesson planning

Challenges:

- Some outcomes are broad and open-ended (e.g. 3.9, 3.10), which may create uncertainty around the depth of study and appropriate case studies
- The GCE dimension is largely implicit, meaning teachers may not consistently integrate global perspectives
- Overlap across outcomes (e.g. causes and consequences appearing multiple times) could lead to repetition.

The strand is clear in structure but would benefit from:

- explicit guidance on integrating global perspectives
- exemplar materials showing how to connect historical content with global issues. We must continue to make the connection between Ireland and her place and influence in the wider world.

Strand 4: The World 1917-2009 [p.20-21] with details listed in Appendix 3 [p. 35-37]

Please provide your views on the learning set out in this strand with reference to

- clarity for planning for teaching and learning
- alignment with the rationale and aims



- opportunities for the development of key competencies and
- access and challenges for all students

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments.

The learning outcomes in Strand 4 provide a strong foundation for integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCE), particularly through their focus on causation, lived experience, power structures, culture, and global-local connections. However, the extent to which GCE is realised will depend on how explicitly these links are drawn in teaching and planning. As in Strand 3, many of the outcomes align naturally with key GCE themes:

Power, justice, and human rights:

Outcomes such as 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, and 4.9 (causes, consequences, treaties, conflict, and power) support exploration of inequality, colonial legacies, and global injustice. For example: Persecution under totalitarian regimes, race relations in the USA, conflict and its consequences etc.

Diversity, identity, and inclusion

Outcomes 4.8, 4.11, and 4.12 (lived experience, women's roles, cultural change) align closely with GCE's emphasis on multiple perspectives and social justice.

Global interdependence

Outcome 4.14 is particularly significant, explicitly requiring students to connect global issues with local experiences.

Media literacy and critical awareness

Topics like propaganda and censorship link strongly to GCE through critical evaluation of information and power narratives.

Key observation: While the potential for GCE integration is strong, it is often implicit rather than explicit. More direct reference to themes such as sustainability, human rights frameworks, and global inequality would strengthen this alignment.

Access and challenges for all students:**Opportunities**

- Engaging, relevant themes (race, gender, culture, youth, music)
- Variety of contexts allows for inclusive and diverse perspectives
- Potential for different teaching approaches (discussion, visual sources, case studies)

Challenges



- **Conceptual complexity:** Ideas like ideology, propaganda, systemic inequality may be difficult for some learners. Appropriate time must be given to better prepare the ‘reluctant’ student.
- **Cognitive load:** There are a wide range of geographical contexts (USA, USSR, China, Germany, Afghanistan) mentioned but we suggest there is a missed opportunity for teachers to teach to their audience. There is a huge Nigerian community in Ireland. According to the 2022 Census, approx. 27-30% of the total of Black or Black Irish population, in Ireland, claim Nigerian birth or citizenship. 76,245 (1.5% of population) identified as Black or Black Irish. It is recommended that we focus on countries that are relevant to our students. South Africa (another nation present in many Irish classrooms, of late) could also fit here and as Apartheid is also being covered it would make it easier for the teaching and learning, of this topic, as this would need less planning.

Strengths

- Strong emphasis on analysis, comparison, and perspective-taking.
- Excellent opportunities to explore justice, inequality, and cultural change.
- Outcome 4.14 is particularly valuable for embedding GCE.

A **key recommendation** would be to embed guiding questions or prompts within outcomes, such as:

- How does this historical issue relate to global justice today?
- What parallels exist between past and present inequalities?

Strand 4 offers significant potential for meaningful integration of Global Citizenship Education, particularly through its focus on:

- power and inequality
- lived experience
- cultural change
- global-local connections

However, this potential will only be fully realised if:

- GCE links are made explicit in guidance and practice
- teachers are supported with clear examples and scaffolding
- learning is consistently connected to contemporary global issues

With these supports, the strand can play a key role in developing students as critical, informed, and engaged global citizens.



Additional Assessment Component (AAC) [p.25-27]

The History AAC provides students with the opportunity to engage in a research project that allows them to use the skills developed throughout the specification. They conceptualise their ideas in response to a brief issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and consider and generate a research question. They will establish the historical importance of a topic, identify and collate relevant sources, contextualise their topic, triangulate their sources and build an evidenced based narrative of their historical inquiry. The senior cycle key competencies of being creative, communicating, working with others, thinking and problem solving and managing learning and self, developed through working with learning outcomes across the specification, will be applied through the student's engagement with the AAC. Students will complete their AAC in response to the common brief, issued annually by the SEC which will set out the requirements. Students will be assessed at either Higher or Ordinary Level. The AAC will constitute 40% of the overall marks available for the subject.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the AAC with reference to how the AAC might motivate students, how it aligns with the learning outcomes in the specification, and how it facilitates the development of key competencies.

This course work module is not new to History. Unlike the subjects carrying out an 'Additional Assessment Component (AAC)' for the first time, the RSR/AAC has been part and parcel of LC History for over 20 years. The RSR/AAC is now worth 40% and this is greatly welcomed, and deserved, for the work that goes into it.

In relation to the point that "Students will develop a piece of individual historical research in response to a common brief", we would express some reservations. According to teacher representatives at the NCCA conference, on 23 April 2026, the NCCA implied that the Research Study Report (RSR)/AAC will have a common brief with headings open to interpretation. The RSR has always been central to LC History and teachers have been developing research skills, with their students, for over 20 years. Teachers in our network are of the view that there is no need to set a common brief or add headings as these may limit some students in researching their personal histories/interests and hinder research of history in the wider world (every history, no matter the result and/or consequence, is significant and important). It is imperative that students research a topic of personal interest as this will keep the reluctant student more engaged and allows the student ownership of their research. Teachers in our network have expressed that there is no need for the extra scaffolding as it limits the depth that students can research and hinders the research skills and interest for some.



Supports for Successful Enactment

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

Supports needed for successful enactment of this subject specification would be in our opinion as follows:

1. System-wide coordination and communication

Successful reform requires coherence at system level. Based on the experience of the teachers in our network and Working Group, there seems to be a lack of clear alignment and communication between key stakeholders, including the NCCA, Oide and the State Examinations Commission. There appears to be a disconnect in policy planning and rollout. A clear example is the introduction of the free, schoolbook scheme, followed shortly by a significant overhaul of the History curriculum. Schools have invested in textbooks over the past three years that may now become obsolete. This represents poor resource planning, unnecessary financial and environmental waste, and frustration for schools and teachers. Part of the successful enactment of this new LC History specification will depend on a. on how the new specification is rolled out to teachers and b. on how students are examined and assessed on its contents. In relation to both, we would recommend a strengthening of the coordination among NCCA, Oide and the SEC.

Recommendation

- Establish clear, joined-up communication and planning across all bodies
- Ensure that curriculum reform aligns with resource provision timelines and schools are given advance clarity on changes
- Provide transitional support

2. Reaffirming the importance of student-centred learning and relevance

A key strength of History—and of GCE—is its ability to connect with students’ lived realities. Therefore, we strongly recommend that teachers are supported to “teach to their audience”, which would mean allowing flexibility in the specification so content can be adapted to their specific student cohort and they can draw on the experiences and backgrounds of their students.

In many cases, students themselves (and their families) are living repositories of history. This is a powerful but underutilised resource; oral histories; migration stories lived experiences of conflict, change, and identity. Therefore, for successful enactment of this specification, we recommend providing guidance to teachers to encourage use of personal and community histories as valid primary sources, as well as explicitly recognising the classroom as a site of historical evidence and inquiry.



3. Strengthening global connections through meaningful case studies

There is a clear need for the specification to better “join the dots” across themes, topics, and global contexts. This could be supported with the use of concrete, relatable case studies, given to teachers in January/February and not September. Teachers will need time to familiarise themselves with case studies and documents supporting this learning.

Example: Apartheid in South Africa

This is a particularly powerful case study because it represents a key example of decolonisation and global justice and it connects directly to: “Movements for Change” → Ending Apartheid. It also resonates with the lived heritage of many students.