

IDEA Submission to the Leaving Cert Economics Background Paper and Brief Consultation

17.11.2025

Introduction to the Consultation

As part of the broader redevelopment of senior cycle, a revised specification for Leaving Certificate Economics will be introduced in schools from September 2028. The public consultation on the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Economics is now open. The first phase of the public consultation is on the Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Leaving Certificate Economics.

The background paper provides a context for the review of Leaving Certificate Economics and has been informed by the views of teachers, school leaders and students gathered through a series of school visits conducted in a representative sample of schools. The paper sets out how Leaving Certificate Economics is currently provided for within the Irish curriculum, considers similar education opportunities internationally and highlights some issues identified for consideration in the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Economics before setting out a brief which will guide the work of the development group.

The aim of this consultation process is to capture the views of teachers, parents, students and other interested parties on this background paper and brief. NCCA would greatly appreciate your feedback, which will support the work of the development group in the redevelopment of the Leaving Certificate Economics specification. In advance of completing this survey please read the background paper and brief, which can be accessed at: <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/Economics/>

The feedback collected through this survey will be shared with the development group responsible for the redevelopment of the Leaving Certificate Economics specification. This information will be used solely to support their work. All feedback shared will be handled in accordance with the GDPR.

Consultation questions

Informed by your reading of the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Economics, and in light of the issues for consideration identified in Section 5 what do you see as the opportunities for the redevelopment of this subject?

First, for context, this submission from the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) draws on and supports submissions made by IDEA members, WorldWise Global Schools, Financial Justice Ireland and ISSN. IDEA has also endorsed the submission of the discussion paper titled “Rethinking Ireland’s Economics Senior Cycle Curriculum: Five Transformative Shifts” as the proposed shifts align with the principles and values of Development Education/Global Citizenship Education.

The redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Economics provides many opportunities, four principal ones are mentioned below:

1. Redevelop the subject specification in a way that stimulates inquiry-based learning, whereby students are encouraged to be curious and ask questions about economic patterns, relationships and principles, and space is created for deep analysis and debate on economic, political, social and financial issues. The background paper already mentions the importance of inquiry-based learning and critical thinking, and we welcome this commitment.

2. Integrate vital shifts to the framing of economics as a subject to bring it into alignment and coherence with key national policy priorities in Ireland, and with the values and principles of Development Education/Global Citizenship Education, which the Irish Government has been supporting and funding for more than four decades.

In 2018, Ireland introduced its Wellbeing Framework Policy and since 2014, Ireland has had a national strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. In addition, for four decades, the Department of Foreign Affairs has been promoting development education and since 2003 has had successive national multi-year strategies on Development Education, now known more commonly as Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

These national policy priorities, which aim to centre wellbeing, sustainability and understanding of the connectedness between local and global systems and how dominant economic development approaches (extractive capitalism, neoliberal economic policies) contribute to and exacerbate climate breakdown, biodiversity loss and other wicked issues, imply that formal learning should also integrate these principles.

The framing of the current Economics specification is underpinned by conventional economic models that focus primarily on markets as the main driver of economic relations and trade. However, these are outdated and do not enable students to truly understand economics or see how economics connects to their lived experience. We would recommend that the new specification ensures that students not only understand economic theory but also see how economics connects with their lives and how we live on this planet. To address this, we recommend that LC Economics integrates the five transformative shifts to the specification as outlined in the discussion paper “Rethinking Ireland’s Economics Senior Cycle Curriculum: Five Transformative Shifts”. These are: Shift 1: Widen the system boundary of the curriculum; Shift 2: Clarify the purpose of the economy; Shift 3: Embrace the complexity of human nature and behaviour; Shift 4: Replace linear and binary models with systems thinking; Shift 5: Prioritise experiential learning over abstract modelling.

3. Create more space for students to critically explore global inequalities, sustainability, ethical trade and economic dimensions of global challenges such as climate change and migration (which also seems to be already a welcome commitment in the Background Paper). This aligns with the purpose of GCE, which is to enable learners of all ages and backgrounds to understand the globalized world they live in and be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to navigate and act to transform it.

4. Integrate more Majority World/Global South voices among the theorists and practitioners referenced in the LC Economics curriculum. Students should be also be supported to question whose perspectives are represented in data.

Informed by your reading of the Background Paper and Brief for Leaving Certificate Economics, and in light of the issues for consideration identified in Section 5 what do you see as the challenges for the redevelopment of this subject?

We endorse two main challenges identified by our members, WorldWide Global Schools and Financial Justice Ireland.

As with many subject specifications, defining the breadth and boundaries of the subject may prove to be a challenge for educators. IDEA supports members to support educators to be brave and include diverse, real-world topics in their classrooms which we acknowledge can come with challenges.

It is not clear what is being referred to in the suggestions that demographics be included in the new specification. Some possibilities include population growth and the aging of the population. In both cases, these could prove to be interesting and relevant real world developments for the new specification. Another possibility is migration/immigration. We would question the appropriateness of this topic to the LC economics classroom given that the economics of immigration is a well developed field and the big finding of this field is that immigration doesn't matter that much in relation to other possible drivers of change in the field of economics. In the study of economics in the past, immigration was framed as driving down wages but we know that this isn't the case, there is no evidence base for this belief and that there are other variables that need to be accounted for in understanding wage decline.

On your reading of the paper, are there any other issues to consider for the support of the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Economics?

Bringing Global Citizenship Education into the SC Economics classroom

Teachers and students have shown support for including relevant real-world developments in the new Economics curriculum, as well as a desire to understand how economic policy can influence societal change. This creates an opportunity to incorporate global citizenship education into the LC Economics classroom. By embedding global citizenship education to the new curriculum, students will learn how economic decisions in Ireland are linked to larger global systems. This approach will foster critical thinking about issues such as responsibility, sustainability, and interdependence.

On your reading of the paper, are there any other issues to consider for the support of the implementation of Leaving Certificate Economics?

Meaningful and effective CPD for teachers will be essential.

Education sessions for teachers of LC Economics to emphasise that they should be guided by the subject specification and not the textbooks, so that they may recognise the scope for developing lesson plans.

Providing sample lesson plans and developing and explaining guidance through pre-recorded tutorials.

Signposting existing resources that are still relevant and useful as teaching and learning material in the classroom.

Encouraging teachers to avail of supports and resources provided by civil society organisations such as IDEA members WorldWise Global Schools, Trócaire, Concern WorldWide, Financial Justice Ireland and 80:20, including their open repository of Development Education resources (developmenteducation.ie).

Directing Oide to engage with the Ubuntu Network to explore a tailored partnership between them to integrate training on the new Economics subject for pre-service post-primary teachers.

NCCA could support effective implementation of the redeveloped LC Economics subject by engaging with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Department of Education and Youth) to address potential structural barriers to effective implementation of the new Economics subject. E.g. teachers are time poor and perceive curriculum to be overloaded.