Leaving Cert Gaeilge
Draft Specification L1

Information & Consultation Session for Parents

10th May 2021
Ceisteanna Tuismitheoirí /Parent’s Questions
Príomhphointí/Main Issues

1. An Extra Challenge without Reward /Bonus Points/Dúshlán Breise gan Chúiteamh/Pointí Bónais.

2. Compulsory or Optional?/Roghnach nó Éigeantach?

3. Distribution of Marks /Leithdháileadh na Marcanna.

4. Moving to an English-medium school / Bogadh go Scoil meán Bhéarla /

5. Inequality compared to other subjects /Éagothroime
6. Parental opportunity to share their opinions? / Deis do thuismitheoirí tuairimí a nochtadh?

Why this session?

Gaeloideachas has organised this session to provide parents with information about the draft specifications for Leaving Cert Gaeilge which the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published recently.

It is also our aim to give parents the opportunity to ask questions about the draft specifications. Some of you have already submitted questions to us and you will have the opportunity to ask questions during the session as well. We will attempt to answer your questions as far as is possible.

It is important to understand that Gaeloideachas did not draft these specifications - the NCCA drafted the specifications and the Department of Education is responsible for implementing them in the schools.

It is most important that you have accurate and up to date information about the draft specifications in order that you, as part of the school community, can participate in the NCCA consultation process.
Important Terms

**Specification** Syllabus or course to be taught in a subject

**L1** Schools teaching through the medium of Irish

**L2** Schools teaching through the medium of English

**Junior Cycle** 1\(^{st}\) to 3\(^{rd}\) Year in Post-primary School

**Senior Cycle** 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) Year in Post-primary School (inc. Transition Year)

**Differentiated Specification** Different syllabus for L1 and L2 schools

**Learning Outcomes** Knowledge students are expected to have at the end of the course
The Background – how did we get here?

1999 Primary School Curriculum  L1 and L2 Gaeilge for the first time

Primary School Language Curriculum 2016 Builds on 1999 curriculum

Gaeltacht Education Policy 2017 – 2022
Gaeltacht Education Policy (GEP)

What does the Gaeltacht Education Policy say about its aim regarding the teaching of Irish?

Deliver high quality educational experiences through Irish to all students focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers as well as learners of Irish (GEP p. 11)

Various steps are laid down for Gaeltacht schools under the Policy

- **Primary schools** – early immersion to be implemented in the infant classes. The teaching of English is postponed until First Class.

- **Post Primary schools** – a different specification for the teaching of Irish to be provided in L1 schools

Develop differentiated L1 & L2 curriculum specifications for Irish at senior cycle and ensuring that the learning outcomes of the L1 curriculum specification meet the needs of students in Gaeltacht schools and Irish medium schools, including native speakers of Irish. (GEP p.34)

What does the Policy say about the L1 & L2 Specifications?

1. **It is expected that these specifications will be implemented from September 2017.**

2. **Work is expected to commence on the development of differentiated L1 and L2 specifications for senior cycle Irish once the differentiated specifications for Irish at junior cycle have been developed and are working well in schools.**

The NCCA provided the new specification for L1 and L2 schools for the Junior Cycle and they were implemented from September 2017. They were to be examined for the first time in 2020.

Due to the pandemic the 2020 and 2021 Junior Cycle examinations were cancelled.

It cannot be said that the new L1 and L2 Specifications are ‘**working well in the schools**’ at present. The exams have not taken place and there has been no review of the specification and the advantages and challenges it presents.

draft-specification-gaeilge-t1-en.pdf (ncca.ie)
Draft Specification L1 and L2

Where do we stand at present?

• The draft specifications were published on 23 February 2021 for consultation. They are drafts. Nothing is set in stone yet.

• The current plan is for their implementation in schools in 2023 and that they be examined for the first time in June 2025. There will be Higher and Ordinary Level in both specifications.

• There will no longer be Foundation Level.

• The NCCA compiled the specifications in consultation with various interested parties. draft-specification-gaeilge-t1-en.pdf (ncca.ie)

• The Specification documents are long and difficult to read without specialist knowledge.
Role of the Department of Education

The Department of Education is responsible for the implementation of the specifications in the schools. The NCCA does not have the answers to the major questions which are troubling parents.

What are these major questions?

- Will students have a choice or will the L1 specification be compulsory for all students in Gaeltacht schools and in Gaelcholáistí?
- Will there be compensation for students taking the L1 exam for the extra work and effort?
- Will extra resources and a proper course be provided to schools to support the new specifications?
- What exactly are the differences between the L1 and L2 specifications?

Gaeoloideachas is seeking answers to these questions on an ongoing basis from the Department of Education and the NCCA.
Compulsory?

- Will it be compulsory for all students in Gaelcholáistí and Scoileanna Gaeltachta to follow the new L1 specification?

- There is, as yet, no clear confirmation on this issue from the Department of Education, something which is adding to unrest and uncertainty among students, teachers and parents.

- The Gaeltacht Education Policy states, however, that there will be a requirement on all recognised Gaeltacht schools to make L1 Irish-language curriculum specification available for students and to actively promote student uptake of this.  

\[(GEP\ p.35)\]

and

Post-primary schools recognised as Gaeltacht schools may also make the L2 curriculum specification available for students where it is evident that the L2 specification will meet more effectively such students’ Irish-language learning needs.  

\[(GEP\ p.\ 33)\]

From the above it would appear that the L1 course will not be compulsory for all students in L1 schools and that students will have a choice as to which course best suits their learning needs. It would be of great assistance if the Department of Education would give clear and unambiguous confirmation of this.
Compensation?

Why would a student undertake to study the L1 course?

This question has been raised many times by various groups with the NCCA and the Department of Education. The NCCA does not have the answer to this question. The responsibility for providing answers to this question lies within the remit of the Department of Education. Teachers and school principals are very concerned about this issue.

Currently the Department is not in favour of awarding bonus points as in the case of Maths but the Minister, Norma Foley, said last week that the Department is reviewing measures to incentivise students to undertake the L1 specification and is in consultation with Roinn na Gaeltachta on the matter.

What incentives are on the table? There are 3 possibilities mentioned in the Gaeltacht Education Policy.

1. 3rd Level bursary scheme (scholarships)
2. 10% of places in training colleges reserved for students achieving a certain grade in Leaving Cert L1 Gaeilge.
3. Explore the potential for special recognition for L1 Gaeilge for entry to 3rd level courses requiring a higher level of competency in Gaeilge.
Supports and Resources?

• 1999 Primary Curriculum: Differentiated Irish curriculum for L1 and L2 schools for first time.

• A wide range of resources were developed to support this curriculum with a huge financial investment. These resources are currently being digitised and updated. Séideán Sí is a comprehensive language course and is available in the three dialects with books, videos, songs, rhymes etc. supporting learning from infants to Rang a 6. www.seideansi.ie/

• By 6th class pupils have read a wide range of literature and developed appropriate language skills.

• The need to build on this work at post-primary level to ensure continuity has been clear for some time and the roadmap for this was set out in the Gaeltacht Education Policy and led to the introduction of a differentiated specification for L1 and L2 schools at Junior Cycle in 2017.

• The same range of supports as are available with Séideán Sí have not been provided to support the L1 specification since its introduction in 2017.

• No work has begun to develop resources to support the proposed L1 Leaving Cert specification.
What are the differences between L1 and L2 specifications?

- **Different Learning Outcomes**
  Gaeloideachas has compared the learning outcomes in the two specifications and has found only a very limited number of differences between them. As a result is not clear what difference in standard will be expected from students in the final exam.

- It would appear from the specifications that an student taking ordinary level in an English medium school has more or less the same learning outcomes as a student taking Higher level in an Irish medium school.

- **Literature – 3 extra poems** – that is the only difference in the number of texts to be studied between L1 and L2 specifications at higher level.

- Until such time as list of texts and sample exam papers along with marking schemes are made available by the State Examinations Commission (SEC), it is impossible to assess the differences between the two specifications.

- The NCCA have told us that the SEC do not provide these until the November before the first exam. This is not acceptable for an exam as important as the Leaving Cert.
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<tr>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.6 critically choose texts that relate to their particular</td>
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<td>interests so that they can enjoy and understand it.</td>
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<td>1.26 manipulate information, opinions, and peoples’ attitudes.</td>
<td>1.24 deacrachaí tuisceana a shárú trí eolas agus tuairimí a sheiceáil agus a dhearbhú</td>
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<td>2.1 recognise and discuss accurate, rich input for each of the</td>
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<td>language skills.</td>
<td>language skills.</td>
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<td>2.8 compare and contrast other dialects with their own dialect.</td>
<td>2.9 compare different written texts from the various main</td>
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<td>3.10 critically assess their own performance/demonstration and</td>
<td>3.10 demonstrate an understanding of their target</td>
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<td>its impact on the target audience, in order to improve it</td>
<td>audience while presenting a message.</td>
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### Weighting of Marks

*(p.38 Draft Specification)*

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<th>Assessment Component</th>
<th>Higher Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oral language &amp; spoken interaction</td>
<td>35% <em>(reduced from 40%)</em></td>
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Where does Gaeloideachas stand?

Gaeloideachas believes that there should be differentiated specifications for Irish at post primary level which cater for the needs of all students, as provided for in the Primary Language Curriculum.

Gaeloideachas is advocating for the following from the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in order to ensure that such provision is made available at post primary level.
Gaeloideachas requests that

1. The deadline for consultation on the Leaving Cert Draft Specifications be postponed until there has been a review of L1 and L2 Gaeilge at Junior Cycle.

2. The Department of Education guarantee that no Leaving Cert Gaeilge Specification that is more challenging be introduced without providing compensation for students taking that exam in the form of bonus points.

3. Confirmation from the Department of Education that it will not be compulsory for all students in Gaelcholáistí and Scoileanna Gaeltachta to take the L1 examination if they do not wish to do so.
4. The NCCA takes cognisance of the concerns of teachers regarding **the reduction in the marks for the oral component of the exam recommended in the draft specification from 40% to 35**%. 

5. **A different name is given to the L1 course.** This course is not limited to students in Gaelcholáistí and Scoileanna Gaeltachta and is open to students in all post primary schools.
6. A list of the literature / texts be published immediately as, due to the lack of detail in the learning outcomes, the draft specification cannot be assessed without this list.

7. An Irish language course with a wide range of resources be developed for the Junior Cycle which would be comparable to and build on skills learned through Séideán Sí in the primary school.

8. Sample exam papers and marking schemes be provided to assist teachers in assessing the draft specification and to enable them to give accurate feedback in the consultation.
9. The Leaving Cert Gaeilge specifications not be introduced until such time as a language course has been developed which caters for the needs of all students. A list of learning outcomes is not adequate guidance for classroom teachers.

10. Attention be paid to the feedback, the recommendations and the concerns of school communities as expressed through the consultation, and that those concerns and recommendations inform further actions by the NCCA and the Department of Education.
Comhairliúchán

Glac páirt anois!

Tá an comhairliúchán poiblí ar dhréacht-sonraíochtaí Ghaeilge na hArdteiste T1 agus T2 ar oscailt anois.

ncca.ie/an-tsraith-shinsearach
You have a voice – take the opportunity to have it heard!

The NCCA is currently undertaking a process of public consultation on this issue. We strongly recommend that you participate in the consultation so that your opinions are heard. The deadlines mentioned below are under review by the NCCA at present but we are optimistic that they will be extended.

The following are the ways in which you can participate in the consultation:

- **Online survey** – current deadline 28th May 2021
- **Write a submission** and submit it to the NCCA before 31st August 2021
- **Email Gaeloideachas.** Express your opinions by email to Gaeloideachas at this email address eolas@gaeloideachas.ie

Any opinions expressed here tonight or by email will be taken into account by Gaeloideachas when drafting its own submission.

We appreciate your participation in this information and consultation session and hope it has been of value to you.

*Míle buíochas libh!*