



Background Paper

Home Economics

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1. Introduction

Home Economics will be introduced in September 2018 as a Phase Four subject in the new junior cycle. The curriculum and assessment specification for Home Economics will be published a year earlier, in September 2017. This paper provides a background for the development of a specification for Junior Cycle Home Economics.

The paper commences by presenting an outline of the evolution of Home Economics as a Junior Certificate subject leading to the development of the 1991 syllabus. It also comments on the development work on rebalancing the syllabus in 2008. It explores the purpose of Home Economics education for the 21st century and examines developments in second level Home Economics education in other countries. Finally, it sets out the brief for the development of the new Junior Cycle Home Economics specification.

2. Background

2.1 The Evolution of Home Economics as a second level school

subject

Prior to the 1991 Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus, home economics education in the junior cycle of post-primary schools did not have a common curriculum. There were two programmes of study—the Group Certificate Domestic Science and the Intermediate Certificate Home Economics. The primary focus of both programmes of study was on developing practical skills specifically in the areas of cooking, needlework and home management. The Group Certificate Domestic Science (Home Economics) was of two years duration and consisted of a number of learning areas including cookery; needlework, home management and laundry, with the majority of hours allocated to cookery (150 hours). It culminated in a practical examination in cookery, needlework, home management and laundry and a written examination in Domestic Science (Department of Education, 1982).

The purpose of the three-year Intermediate Certificate course was to *provide a well-balanced, general education suitable for pupils who leave full-time education at about 16 years of age or, alternatively, who wish to enter on more advanced courses of study* (Department of Education, 1984, p.21). The Home Economics syllabus was predominately skills based with some theoretical input. It comprised three areas of study—Food and Cookery, Home Management and Hygiene and Needlework (including Elementary Dressmaking) culminating in a written examination. The syllabus document was presented as a list of topics and did not include a discrete rationale, aims or objectives for the course (Department of Education, 1984).

The name Home Economics was not formally used in Irish education until 1968. Prior to this the subject was referred to as Domestic Science. The revision of the Leaving Certificate course and the introduction of the Home Economics (Social and Scientific) syllabus in 1969, which was offered alongside Home Economics (General), resulted in a renamed course at Intermediate Certificate—Home Economics. It was agreed, at the time, to adopt the universally accepted name for the discipline across Irish education.

2.2 Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus

The Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus was introduced in 1991 and first examined in 1994. The subject is offered at two levels, Higher level and Ordinary level. The Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus replaced both the Group Certificate Domestic Science and the Intermediate Certificate Home Economics.

The rationale for the subject outlines that *Home Economics has a direct relevance to the present and future life of every young person. Its purpose is to equip young people in certain important skills for living ... encompasses studies of many processes which are necessary for day to day living* (Department of Education, 1990, p.3).

The aims of the 1991 Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus are:

- *To provide pupils with knowledge and practical skills for application in the process of everyday life within the home and the community*
- *To ensure that pupils will be capable of wise decision making in areas related to management of their personal resources*
- *To develop in pupils competence in making wise consumer decisions*
- *To develop interest in vocational aspects of the subject* (Department of Education, 1990, p.3).

The 1991 syllabus comprised two sections:

- a) A common course of five areas of study. The five areas are listed below, together with the recommended percentage weighting of time allocation over the three year period:

Area of Study	% Weighting
Food Studies and Culinary Skills	40%
Consumer Studies	15%
Social and Health Studies	10%
Resource Management and Home Studies	10%
Textile Studies	10%

b) An optional area of study, from a choice of three areas.

Area of Study	% Weighting
Childcare	15%
Design & Craftwork	15%
Textile Skills	15%

The emphasis and importance placed on food studies and culinary skills within the course is reflected in the percentage weighting of time allocated. However, in the context of a new specification of 200 hours timetabled student engagement, the existing structure and percentage weighting of the areas of study in Home Economics may need to be considered.

2.3 The Junior Certificate Home Economics examination

The syllabus is offered at both Ordinary and Higher level. The Home Economics examination comprises three components reflecting the theoretical and practical nature of the subject. A summary table (Table 1) of the mark allocation is included below.

Table 1: Differentiation of marks allocated to each section of the Junior Certificate Home Economics Ordinary and Higher level examination.

Component	Ordinary Level		Higher Level	
	Marks	%	Marks	%
Written Examination	240	40	300	50
Food & Culinary Skills	270	45	210	35
Optional Study Project	90	15	90	15
Total	600	100	600	100

2.3.1 Written examination

The Higher level paper is two hours and thirty minutes duration. It has two sections. Section A (80 marks) comprises 24 short questions based on the five core areas of study. Candidates are required to answer 20 short questions. Section B (220 marks) comprises six long questions based on the five core areas of study. Candidates are required to answer four long questions with each question carrying equal marks.

The Ordinary level paper is two hours duration. Again two sections are presented to candidates. Section A (80 marks) comprises 20 short questions selected from the five core areas of study. Candidates are required to answer 16 short questions. Section B (160 marks) comprises six long questions and candidates are required to answer four.

The written examination paper is marked by State Examinations Commission appointed examiners. The significantly high proportion (82% in 2014) of students taking the subject at higher level is encouraging. At Higher and Ordinary level, the report of the Chief Examiner recommends that teachers should *emphasise an integrated approach to teaching and learning topics* (SEC, 2012, p.51).

2.3.2 Food and Culinary Skills examination

The format of the food and culinary skills exam (practical examination) is common for both levels; however, the mark allocation differs. The practical exam accounts for 35% of total marks at Higher level and 45% at Ordinary level. Candidates are marked out of 100 marks at the time of examination and marks are adjusted at a later point to reflect either Higher or Ordinary level taken by the student. The candidates are examined in schools by a State Examinations Commission appointed examiner and normally takes place during a two week period, before or after the Easter break. Students have achieved very high grades in this component with 83% achieving an A or B grade in 2012 (SEC, 2012). The Chief Examiner noted that *high quality teaching and learning was evident* (SEC, 2012, p. 15). However, they recommended that students should begin to familiarise themselves with the design brief model in first year with the process continuing through to third year.

2.3.3 Optional Study project work

Candidates choose one optional area of study from the list below:

- Childcare
- Design and Craftwork
- Textile Skills

This section of the assessment accounts for 15% of the total marks at both Higher and Ordinary level. Therefore, it is recommended that 15% of class time in Home Economics is allocated to the optional area of study. The project work is examined in schools by a State Examinations Commission appointed examiner normally at the same time as the food and culinary skills examination.

The Chief Examiner Reports for Junior Certificate Home Economics (2006 and 2012) highlight the uneven distribution of students in the breakdown of each of the optional areas (Table 2) with the overwhelming majority of students studying the Design and Craft optional area. Between 2006 and 2012 there was a noticeable increase in the take-up of the Design and Craft optional area of study and a corresponding decline in the Childcare and Textile Skills options.

Table 2: Distribution of students in each of the optional areas

	2006	2012
Childcare	26.6%	17%
Design and Craft	71%	81.3%
Textile Skills	2.4%	1.7%

Overall, students presented examination work for this optional component which was of a very high standard (SEC, 2006; SEC, 2012). The Chief Examiner (2006 and 2012) commented particularly on the excellence demonstrated by candidates in the areas of Design and Craft and Textile Skills. The Inspectorate Report *Looking at Home Economics* (DES, 2008) commended the high standard of project work across all three optional areas and noted that there was evidence of students being encouraged to develop their skills and foster creativity and originality.

Students' ability to demonstrate creativity in the Design and Craft option was evident in the variety of crafts, designs and products presented for examination. Nineteen different types of crafts were demonstrated across a variety of household and textile products. According to the Chief Examiner

(2012) students who *followed the design process to produce creative, original work and a craft item suited to their individual craft strengths and ability* achieved the highest results (p.24). The increasing popularity of this optional pathway is very evident. Consideration may be given in the new subject specification design as to how this interest would continue to be accommodated.

Although only 1.7% of candidates (382) presented work under the Textile Skills option, the Chief Examiner commented on the demonstration of skills in general as being very good to excellent. However, the number of students taking this option have declined over the years with no research evidence to suggest the reasons. In the design of the new subject specification the consequences of the decline in this area for students progressing to senior cycle Home Economics and wishing to choose the Textiles, Fashion and Design elective requires consideration.

The wide range of topics presented in the Childcare option demonstrates the scope and breadth of this particular optional area. Projects submitted for examination were categorised under twenty nine broad topics. Similar to Textile Studies, the number of students taking this particular option have declined over the years. The Chief Examiner (2012) noted that a significant number of the projects presented were too long and also exceeded the recommended time allocation of 15%, with the issue of direct transcription being evident in a small number of cases.

Despite the high standard of work presented by students for the optional area of study, maintaining these components as an optional area will need to be carefully considered in the context of the development of a new specification with a subject allocation of 200 timetabled student engagement hours and different assessment arrangements. The Chief Examiner noted in both the 2006 and 2012 Chief Examiner Reports that *very many candidates had exceeded the recommended 15% time allocation for this examination component* (SEC, 2012, p.30). This has consequences for student workload and time allocation for other components of the subject. Consequently, they recommended that students should select project work that can be completed within the 15% time allocation. In a revised curriculum elements of the optional pathways could be integrated into the curriculum but not necessarily require a separate assessment component.

However, in order to uphold the integrity of the discipline and maintain the practical orientation of the subject the assessment of the theoretical and practical elements of Home Economics will also need consideration in the design of the new specification.

2.4 Rebalancing the Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus

In 1999, *The Junior Cycle Review – Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development* reported that there was a perception of curriculum overload at junior cycle. Consequently, the NCCA undertook a rebalancing initiative in 2003. In 2008, Home Economics was one of a number of Junior Certificate subjects which underwent a rebalancing of the syllabus. The aim of the rebalancing of subjects was to reduce the perceived curriculum overload at junior cycle, remove unnecessary overlap and obsolescence in subject content, and to rebalance subjects to a common template. The Home Economics Course Committee was tasked with working within the existing 1991 syllabus as this was a rebalancing process as opposed to a full review. The consultation process generated a large response rate with 279 responses to the online survey. Written submissions were also received. There was a broad acceptance and endorsement of the rebalanced syllabus.

The rationale in the rebalanced syllabus outlined the relevance of the subject to the present and future needs of students by facilitating the empowerment of skills for living. It aimed to *enable students to acquire the knowledge and understanding necessary to live full, healthy lives as individuals and family members* (NCCA, 2008, p.1). The rebalancing of the syllabus maintained the two key concepts of the 1991 syllabus which were emphasised throughout the subject—personal management and consumer competence.

As a result of the rebalancing process, the Home Economics syllabus proposed some changes in structure from the 1991 syllabus. The structural changes relate mainly to section content and focus and are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Notable changes from the 1991 Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus to the draft rebalanced syllabus.

	Junior Certificate 1991 Home Economics syllabus	Draft Rebalanced 2008 Home Economics syllabus	Notable Changes
Core areas of study	Food Studies and Culinary Skills	Food Studies and Culinary Skills	There were a number of topics revised, reduced or removed within this section. However, the broad topic areas remained the same.
	Consumer Studies	Consumer Studies and Resource Management	The Resource Management section was removed from Home Studies and now amalgamated with Consumer Studies.
	Resource Management and Home Studies	Home Design and Management	The Home Design and Management section is a new section and includes elements of home studies in resource management and the home studies section of the 1991 syllabus.
	Social and Health Studies	Social and Health Studies	Elements of the 1991 Childcare optional area have now been transferred to this section.
	Textile Studies	Textile Studies	Removal of the requirement to do both a garment and a household item. Students could now choose either.
Optional Areas of study (renamed as Elective study areas in 2008 draft syllabus)	Childcare	Child Development (elective study)	The title of this elective study changed to Child Development. Some of the content e.g. family structure was moved to Social and Health Studies. Some reduction / revision in topic areas was suggested.
	Design and Craftwork	Design and Craftwork (elective study)	Emphasis to be placed on the stages and completion of the design brief process. Some minor reduction / revision in topic areas was suggested.
	Textile Skills	Textile Skills (elective study)	Some minor reduction / revision in topic areas was suggested.

In summary, from a structural perspective, the rebalancing process suggested mainly minor adjustments to the 1991 Home Economics syllabus with respect to content. In all of the areas of learning, topics were identified that could be removed, revised or reduced from the syllabus for various reasons including relevance, currency and duplication. From a Textile Studies perspective, the most significant change was the removal of the requirement to produce both a garment and a household item. All optional areas of study were re-named as elective study areas. The rebalancing initiative suggested a stronger emphasis on the design brief process. Reflecting the centrality of the family to the mission of Home Economics, Childcare was renamed as Child Development and aspects of the optional area were relocated to the core area of study under Social and Health Studies, thus ensuring that all students studied areas of childcare and child development regardless of which option they chose. The other significant suggested change was for Consumer Studies to be renamed as Consumer Studies and Resource Management. Consequently, Resource Management and Home Studies was renamed as Home Design and Management with appropriate amending of content.

The consultation on the rebalanced syllabus also addressed the issue of assessment. The proposed assessment remained the same as the 1991 syllabus and 82.9% of the respondents thought this assessment was effective in assessing students' learning. However, there was concern expressed as to the length of the written examination (2.5 hours) when there are two other components to the assessment and there was a suggestion for it be reduced to two hours. In addressing overload in the subject, 66% of questionnaire respondents *expressed satisfaction with the reduction in content, feeling that the proposed changes would give more time for differentiated teaching and learning and for covering important topics and concepts in greater detail* (NCCA, 2008, p.47). However, a substantial number of questionnaire respondents felt very strongly that the reduction would widen the perceived gap between Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Home Economics. The dichotomy between the necessity to reduce content overload whilst also preparing students for progression to Leaving Certificate Home Economics will be an issue for consideration in the development of the new subject specification.

At the time of completion of the rebalancing initiative, a broader process relating to junior cycle development became an educational priority. Consequently, the rebalanced Home Economics syllabus was developed but not introduced. Notwithstanding this the rebalanced Home Economics syllabus has relevance and significance to the development of the new subject specification for junior

cycle. Given the broad acceptance in the consultation process of the rebalanced syllabus due consideration may be given to the suggested changes when developing the new subject specification.

2.5 Leaving Certificate Home Economics

A revised syllabus for Leaving Certificate Home Economics was introduced in schools in 2002 and first examined in 2004. The Leaving Certificate Home Economics—Scientific and Social syllabus replaced the two former syllabi—Home Economics (General) and Home Economics (Social and Scientific). The decision to develop and adopt one syllabus followed detailed consultations with relevant stakeholders. The structure of the syllabus mirrors that of the Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus in having a core area of study and three electives, from which one should be chosen by students.

Prior to 2002, Home Economics (Social and Scientific) was by far the more popular of the two options. In 2001, only 74 candidates sat the Home Economics (General) examination in comparison to 19,404 candidates for the Home Economics (Social and Scientific) (Irish Times, 2001 cited in Rohan, 2007). Textiles was not an area of study in the former Home Economics (Social and Scientific) but was an area in the Home Economics (General). However, with the decision to have one syllabus for Leaving Certificate, the inclusion of Textiles, Fashion and Design as an area in the revised syllabus was seen as important (Rohan, 2007).

Table 4: Structure of Leaving Certificate Home Economics Syllabus

Core Areas of Study	% Weighting
Food Studies	45%
Resource Management and Consumer Studies	25%
Social Studies	10%
Electives (choose one area)	
Home Design and Management	20%
Textiles, Fashion and Design	20%
Social Studies	20%

The rationale, aims and objectives of the syllabus are clearly set out in the Home Economics—Scientific and Social syllabus which is aimed at all students, males and females. The rationale emphasises the multidisciplinary and applied nature of the discipline and the importance of promoting problem solving skills in students. *Home Economics—Scientific and Social is an applied subject combining theory with practice in order to develop understanding and solve problems. It is concerned with the way individuals and families manage their resources to meet physical, emotional, intellectual, social and economic needs* (Department of Education and Science, 2001, p. 2).

Section Summary

The Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus (1991) has evolved from two programmes of study—the Group Certificate Domestic Science and the Intermediate Certificate Home Economics. The 1991 syllabus comprised two sections—a common course of five areas of study and an optional area of study from a choice of three. Within the context of designing a subject specification for a revised allocation of 200 hours of timetabled student engagement in Home Economics this structure will need to be re-considered.

The Home Economics examination comprises three components reflecting the theoretical and practical nature of the subject and is assessed at both Ordinary and Higher levels. In the context of a new specification for Home Economics the assessment of the theoretical and practical elements will need consideration.

The 2008 rebalancing process suggested some structural changes to the 1991 Home Economics syllabus. Although the rebalanced Home Economics syllabus was developed, it was not introduced in light of wider junior cycle reform. Nevertheless, the rebalanced syllabus does present some important considerations in terms of structure and assessment and is therefore relevant to the development of the new subject specification for junior cycle. The dichotomy of the necessity to reduce the amount of specific content whilst also preparing students for progression to Leaving Certificate Home Economics may need to be considered in the development of the new subject specification.

A revised syllabus for Leaving Certificate Home Economics was introduced in schools in 2002 and first examined in 2004. Continuity in terms of subject aims and rationale from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle is an important consideration for the development of a new Junior Cycle specification.

3. Experiences of Home Economics in junior cycle

This section explores the experiences of Home Economics students and teachers and in doing so considers relevant research and evaluation reports including State Examinations Commission Chief Examiner’s Reports (2003, 2006, 2012), ESRI research (2003, 2006, 2007) and a Home Economics composite report by the Inspectorate (2008). Such analysis is an important component in the development of the new subject specification for Home Economics.

3.1 Current position of Home Economics

Statistics for the uptake of Junior Certificate Home Economics show that the number of students studying the subject increased in the years 2009 – 2013, with a slight decrease in 2014. However, as a proportion of the total number of students sitting the Junior Certificate the numbers have fluctuated over the years. Despite this, Home Economics remains a very popular subject at Junior Certificate.

In 2014 an overwhelming majority (82%) of Home Economics students studied it at Higher level.

Table 5: Junior Certificate Home Economics Candidates

Year	Total Junior Certificate Candidates	Home Economics Candidates	% of total cohort taking Home Economics
2009	55,557	19,324	34.78
2010	56,086	19,892	35.46
2011	56,930	20,726	36.40
2012	56,841	21,543	37.90
2013	59,823	21,702	36.27
2014	60,327	21,570	35.75

3.2 Gender imbalance in Home Economics

Despite the popularity of the subject a significant gender gap exists in the distribution of students studying Home Economics with it remaining a female dominated subject. In 2014, of the total cohort of Junior Certificate students studying Home Economics, only 15% were male. There is very little published research as to the reasons why male students do not choose to study Home Economics. However, one reason may be lack of access to the subject in their school. Of the statistics available from 2007, only 13% of single sex male post-primary schools offered Home Economics. However, according to O'Connor (2007) this number had increased from 8% in the ten years prior to 2007. The Inspectorate Report *Looking at Home Economics* (2008) noted that access to Home Economics was often restricted by gender and sometimes by ability. In some schools where there was evidence of gender imbalance, Home Economics was often timetabled against traditionally perceived male subjects such as Materials Technology (Wood) and Engineering. However, this was not exclusively identified as the cause to the gender imbalance. In its report, the Inspectorate recommended that *school management should aim to ensure equality of access to Home Economics for all students* (DES, 2008, p.42). In post-primary schools, anecdotally, it appears that the perception of the subject as female orientated can also deter males, even in contexts where the barrier of timetabled subject options referred to above is removed. Achieving an improved gender balance of students studying the subject is desirable.

3.3 Consultation with young people on the reform of the Junior Cycle

In November 2010 the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in association with the NCCA, Coexist and the Dáil na nÓg Council, held a consultation with young people on the reform of the junior cycle. A total of 88 young people participated in the consultation.

The findings from the Consultation Report (2011) provide an insight into what young people enjoy learning and what they find most useful, findings which will be of particular interest to Home Economics. Participants in the study identified subjects, including Home Economics, which had a practical element as being the easiest to learn at junior cycle. Learning lifeskills through the medium of Home Economics was cited as one area which young people most enjoy learning: *Home Economics because it is something I'll have my whole life* (Junior Cycle student, DOCYA, 2011, p.8). Lifeskills were also identified as one of two of the most essential skills young people should learn between first and third year. Learning to cook in Home Economics was noted as being one of the most useful things ever

learned by the young people consulted. When senior cycle students were asked as to what they most enjoy learning, Home Economics was identified as being *enjoyable because it is a practical, a lifeskill* (ibid, p.18).

Of particular note for the new specification for Home Economics is the response from senior cycle students when asked to identify the essential things young people need to learn in junior cycle. They outlined practical lifeskills, which are all elements of the Home Economics syllabus, including personal finance, household management, budgeting, cooking, personal hygiene and laundry (ibid, p.19).

3.4 ESRI research

In 2002 the NCCA commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to undertake a longitudinal study of students' experiences of curriculum in the first three years of post-primary schooling. This involved over 900 students in 12 schools. The findings from all three reports on the junior cycle years highlight some important considerations for the design of the new Home Economics specification.

The study on first year students in post-primary school was completed in 2003 with a report, *Moving Up: The experiences of first year students in post-primary education*, published in 2004. The findings highlight first year students' preferences for practical orientated subjects naming Home Economics as one of their preferences. In a commentary on the findings, the NCCA (2004) noted the necessity to strengthen, where appropriate, the practical, skill-based aspect of subjects and reflect this orientation in assessment methods.

In 2006 the ESRI published *Pathways through the Junior Cycle: The Experiences of Second Year Students*, offering insights into the experiences of second year students in post-primary schools. Access to school subjects was an issue of note here and a large proportion of students (58%) identified subjects that they would have liked to have taken but could not because they were not available or they did not have access to them. Home Economics was identified by 16% as a subject they would have liked to have taken. Home Economics was one of the subjects most frequently mentioned as being a favourite by students (33%) with females more likely to name it than males. The perceived

difficulty of subjects was explored by the research. Junior cycle Home Economics, similar to other practical orientated subjects, was identified as a subject that students did not consider difficult (23%). However, the vast majority (90%) regarded Home Economics as useful and 80% referred to as being interesting. Female students were most likely to identify Home Economics along with Art and languages as the most interesting subjects.

Research demonstrates that subject choice at junior cycle is likely to have an impact on subject selection for senior cycle (Smyth and Hannon, 2002). Encouraging more males to select the subject is an important consideration in the design of a new specification.

The third year report, entitled *Gearing up for the Exams*, was published in 2007 and explored the changes in students' attitudes as they moved into third year, their experience of the curriculum, and their view of the Junior Certificate Examination. When asked about the relative difficulty of subjects, Home Economics was identified as being one of the least difficult. Similar to second year students, Home Economics was reported as useful (82%) and interesting (70%). Similar to first and second year students, subjects with a practical orientation were more likely to be seen as interesting by students. The level of interest in such subjects was referred to as striking by the ESRI researchers. The potential contribution made by the practical orientated subjects to student motivation and engagement was regarded as considerable.

Section Summary

Statistics for the uptake of Junior Certificate Home Economics show that uptake has been consistent and it remains a very popular subject at Junior Cycle. Despite this a significant gender gap exists in the distribution of students studying Home Economics with it remaining a female dominated subject. Achieving a greater gender balance of students studying the subject is desirable.

The findings from the ESRI research demonstrates the positive attitude of junior cycle students towards practical orientated subjects. Home Economics was found to be interesting and useful by the majority of students. The experiential and practical nature of Home Economics' content and methodologies develops transferable lifeskills. In the design of the new specification the experiential and practical approach embodied in the underpinning philosophy of Home Economics will need to be considered.

4. Home Economics education in the 21st century

4.1 Philosophical underpinnings of Home Economics

Home Economics, as a discipline, started as a world-wide response to social challenges. The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), in its *Position Statement - Home Economics in the 21st Century*, outlines that

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences, that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities (IFHE, 2008, p.1).

Home Economics, internationally, is guided by this position statement and it serves to provide a platform for locating the discipline in the 21st century and beyond. The centrality of the family has been fundamental to the theoretical underpinnings and philosophy of Home Economics. Individual and family empowerment and well-being are core tenets of Home Economics.

The IFHE have identified three essential dimensions that all Home Economics subjects and courses of study should exhibit:

- *a focus on fundamental needs and practical concerns of individuals and family in everyday life and their importance both at the individual and near community levels, and also at societal and global levels so that wellbeing can be enhanced in an ever changing and ever challenging environment;*
- *the integration of knowledge, processes and practical skills from multiple disciplines synthesised through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry and pertinent paradigms; AND*
- *demonstrated capacity to take critical/ transformative/ emancipatory action to enhance wellbeing and to advocate for individuals, families and communities at all levels and sectors of society (IFHE, 2008, p.1).*

4.2 Practical perennial problems

Despite variances in Home Economics curricula internationally there is a unified theoretical and philosophical base. This is articulated by the IFHE whereby Home Economics, as a curriculum area, *facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life* (IFHE, 2008, p.1). Pendergast (2012) notes that it is the intention of Home Economics education to empower students to develop lifelong learning attributes and to optimise their well-being as individuals and as families.

The core emphasis of Home Economics is addressing practical, real world, perennial problems of families and individuals in a socially responsible way. Practical perennial problems are concerns endured from generation to generation by families, both locally and globally, which require thoughtful action and reflective, critical decision-making skills to resolve.

Home Economics, using a systemic approach, provides individuals with the mechanisms to develop the reflective, critical decision-making skills they require to deal with practical perennial problems. Through the curricular subject Home Economics, students are facilitated to be empowered with the knowledge and skills to address these real world, practical concerns or situations in a number of daily contexts within the home, family and community. Such practical everyday contexts impact on individual and family wellbeing and include concerns relating to food and culinary practices; nutrition, diet and health; physical and mental health and wellbeing; family, childcare and social concerns; adolescence; parenthood; consumer issues; resource management; textiles and clothing; home management; design and craftwork. In addressing practical problems or situations, Home Economics draws on diverse disciplines integrating social, physical and human sciences. The multidisciplinary content is taught to students *through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry* (IFHE, 2008) which effectively solves problems using a blend of knowledge and skills acquired from multiple disciplines. Through this approach Home Economics can respond to the systemic needs of the family.

4.3 Systemic thinking in action

Home Economics is often regarded as a practical skills-based subject. However, in developing a new subject specification it is important to move from thinking about the term 'practical' as in the sense of technical skills, to thinking about 'practical' as being about the development of pragmatic problem solving and reflective, critical thinking skills. There is no doubt that critical thinking and the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge is of paramount importance in the development of a Home Economics curriculum.

When addressing practical perennial problems in Home Economics, three systems of knowledge and action have been identified, and a brief background to these may be useful to outline. The three systems of action approach, founded on the work of Habermas (1971), are:

- an instrumental or technical system which is based on empirical research;
- an interpretive or communicative system which fosters understanding and uncovers values, beliefs and attitudes and;
- a critical or emancipatory system which encourages reflective choices and freedom to act with responsibility (Brown & Paolucci, 1978; Engberg, 1996).

The integration of these systems of action, in order to solve such problems, is built on a critical theory base and is referred to as Baldwin's (1991) integrative paradigm per se. Critical theory embraces a holistic view of society and encourages critical reflective practice and contextualisation (McGregor, 1996). Critical and reflective thinking skills and metacognition are skills developed in Home Economics. These are essential skills necessary for young people to live in the 21st Century in order to address practical perennial problems or concerns.

Systems thinking enables us to meet this challenge of thinking within a contextual paradigm. It invites us to consider the multiple contexts affecting the complexities of family life in the 21st Century in order that we may engage with, and manage, the demands it makes of us. A systemic perspective not only maps the contexts, but also prioritises the interrelatedness of each context, considering and reflecting on the impacts and dynamics involved. From a Home Economics perspective this might refer to, for example, the impact of gender roles on family decision making and therefore, resource management

etc. In addition, rather than taking a linear (scientific cause and effect) view of family life, a systemic approach takes a circular causality view. This means that a practical problem or concern can only be responded to effectively if we see it within the context of all its relationships (systems), as an individual cannot be understood in isolation from the multiple systems within which they live. This is the 'ripple effect'. Taking this circular causality view therefore promotes sustainable change, rather than 'quick-fix' linear solutions. A systems perspective helps students to see the 'bigger picture' and seek out the relationships between what is happening, what is needed and how to respond applying the knowledge and practical skills of Home Economics.

Given the ever changing pace and increasing complexity of society, the discipline, Home Economics, is required to be responsive to change and evolve as it addresses new and emergent issues and concerns facing individuals and families. Such change can require new ways of thinking, and in particular, critical reflective thinking, decision making and metacognition.

4.4 Pedagogies underpinning Home Economics education

Home Economics education is underpinned by a constructivist approach to teaching and learning where students are facilitated to contextualise and consolidate learning. Home Economics education, through an integrated approach, focuses on maximising potential from experiential learning by facilitating students to *reach the more challenging cognitive and affective levels of Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1979)* (Home Economics Department, St Angela's College, 2010, p.7). Consequently, students develop an ability to become adaptive and transfer their knowledge and skills to address practical perennial problems in everyday life situations. According to Pendergast (2003) Home Economics does not *teach a skill for the sake of that skill, it teaches for application, it teaches for informed decision making in endless scenarios, it teaches evaluative and critical thinking skills, it empowers individuals no matter what their context* (p.8).

The systemic nature and relevancy of Home Economics was espoused by the Chief Inspector of the Department of Education, Mr. E. Stack, when he described the subject as

an applied, multidisciplinary subject that provides students with a wide range of learning experiences and the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for living as individuals and as members of a family. The integration and application of theoretical knowledge combined with the development of practical skills are at the core of Home Economics (Department of Education and Science, 2008, p.iii).

A problem based learning approach is advocated in Home Economics education in order to solve practical perennial problems. According to Barrows and Kelson (1993), problem based learning can be described as both a curriculum and a process. Students are guided through a design brief process in food studies, design and craft, textile skills and consumer studies in order to develop transferable skills of research, critical analysis, synthesis, planning, implementation, creativity and evaluation. The process is emphasised over the product where students are encouraged to use problem solving skills as a means to developing critical thinking. The process *replicates the commonly used systemic approach to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life* (Barrows & Kelson 1993, p.1).

The Design and Craftwork; Textile Skills and Textile Studies components of the Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus implement a problem based learning approach through the application of the design brief process. Maguire (2010) proposed that the *devising, agreeing and disseminating of a model of the design process is necessary and overdue as a tool for improving awareness and pedagogical practice* among both teachers and students in Home Economics (p.160).

In Food Studies, an emphasis on a problem based learning approach ensures that the content and approach of a lesson would move away from having a 'skills or production' focus to a multifaceted approach which encompasses planning, preparing and critically evaluating meals and products.

4.5 The name 'Home Economics'

Over a century ago, the name 'Home Economics' was selected at the Lake Placid Conferences (1899 – 1909) as the internationally recognised name for the discipline. Anecdotally, the name 'Home Economics' has perceived negative stereotyped connotations and is often cited as a reason for low take-up among male students. Thus, in examining the future of the subject, it is important to give consideration to the issue of terminology. Although this has never been formally documented with regard to the Irish curriculum, it appears that from an Irish curriculum perspective, the subject was initially called Domestic Economy which then evolved in the 1900's to Domestic Science. The name 'Home Economics' was first formally used in 1968 with the introduction of the Home Economics (Social and Scientific) syllabus which was offered alongside Home Economics (General).

The Home Economics profession has been repeatedly engaged in contentious discussions around the name (McGregor, 2010). Dewhurst and Pendergast (2008) refer to some critics who believe a name change is necessary in order for Home Economics to shed its *historical shackles and encapsulate its radically changed content and lessening focus on the home* (p. 7). Any discussion around a name change will inevitably raise concerns that give rise to worries that deeply held personal and professional meanings and beliefs, developed over a number of years, are being challenged (Peterat, 2001).

Internationally, although the name has changed in a number of regions/countries, including some states in the US (Family and Consumer Sciences); the UK (Consumer Sciences); Sweden (Home and Consumer Studies), it should be noted that the internationally recognised name of Home Economics is still in widespread use in second level curricula in Asia, Australia, Central and South America, Canada, Caribbean and most European countries (McGregor, 2010). Notably, whilst the name on the school curriculum remains Home Economics, in the same jurisdiction some University faculties/departments/programmes have adopted an alternative name, apparently to reflect the breadth of the discipline as well as to respond to misunderstandings of the discipline. One such example is Malta where the curriculum subject at second level remains Home Economics, however, at tertiary level the University programme was renamed Nutrition, Family and Consumer Studies.

Research suggests that name changing can lead to a vulnerability of the discipline and a fragmentation of curriculum (Pendergast, 2015; Giddings et al. 1996). The adoption of the word 'consumer' in the renaming of Home Economics, for example, Family and Consumer Sciences (US) and Consumer Sciences (UK) has drawn some criticism. The word consumer is synonymous with a world view of 'economy' rather than the social view of 'society'. According to Hira (2013), the use of 'consumer' in the title can lead to a narrow definition and focus and consequently, does not reflect the richness of the field of Home Economics. She further notes that the use of multiple names has led to confusion and loss of identity for the profession and has resulted in fragmentation and weakening of its status (Hira, 2013). In its 2008 position paper, *Home Economics in the 21st Century*, the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) clearly articulated a desire for retention of the name Home Economics for the discipline and committed to *re-branding and repositioning, not renaming* (2008).

4.6 Home Economics and Wellbeing

Wellbeing is one of the principles that underpins the new Framework for Junior Cycle education. It is reflected in numerous statements of learning and incorporated within a number of the key skills. Wellbeing, in junior cycle education, refers to *young people feeling confident, happy, healthy and connected* (NCCA, 2015, p.22). This new area of learning will incorporate learning traditionally included in PE, SPHE and CSPE. It will provide *learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience of students* (NCCA, 2015, p.22). Home Economics has a vital role to play in supporting the wellbeing of students as individuals and as family members. Home Economics education aims to facilitate the empowerment of students to take responsibility for their own physical, mental, emotional and social well-being by developing key lifeskills.

Section Summary

The core emphasis of Home Economics is addressing practical, real world, perennial problems of families and individuals in socially responsible ways. Home Economics uses a systemic approach to empower individuals and families with the know-how to address these real life problems or concerns in a number of daily contexts. It achieves this through the integration of social, physical and human sciences. In the design of a new specification this underpinning philosophy may be considered and reflected in the aim and rationale for the subject.

Home Economics education exemplifies constructivism where students are facilitated to contextualise and consolidate learning, drawing from a range of disciplines. Home Economics education, through an integrated approach, focuses on maximising potential from experiential learning. A problem based learning approach is espoused in Home Economics education in order to solve practical perennial problems in the areas of craft and design; textile skills; consumer and food studies. Consideration may be given, in the subject specification, as to how the skills of critical reflective thinking, problem solving and metacognition will be developed.

The internationally recognised and accepted name for the discipline is 'Home Economics'. In countries where the name has been amended it has resulted in fragmentation and a loss of identity. The IFHE recommend a re-branding and not a re-naming. This may be reflected on in the design of the new subject specification.

Home Economics has a vital role to play in supporting the wellbeing of students as individuals and as family members. How the subject can further enhance the new area of learning in Junior Cycle entitled Wellbeing may be considered in the development of the new specification.

5. Influences on Home Economics education in the 21st century

There are several interconnected societal trends or factors which suggest an ongoing requirement for Home Economics education. Some of these are directly related to the curriculum and others are of a more systemic nature. It is important that these are considered within the context of ensuring currency and relevancy for the subject to the lives of individuals, families, communities and society. Home Economics in the 21st Century, with over a hundred years of global history, has been described by Pendergast (2009) as being at a 'convergent moment'. It is argued that societal factors, occurring simultaneously, provide an opportune time or convergent moment to re-vision Home Economics (Pendergast, 2009).

This section of the paper highlights some of these interconnected societal factors namely:

- Changes to the family and social systems
- Education for sustainable development and responsible living
- Food and health literacy
- Home and resource management

Home Economics can play a pivotal role in addressing these interconnected societal trends, through a systemic approach, to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and societies.

5.1 Changes to the family and social systems

The centrality of the family has been fundamental to the theoretical underpinnings of Home Economics. It is the only curriculum subject that is concerned with facilitating family empowerment and wellbeing. Family life and societal contexts have changed significantly over the last twenty years and trends in family structure and composition reaffirm these changes (TUSLA, 2013). However, the family unit does not exist in isolation as behaviours and practices in the home environment influence, and are influenced by, their surrounding environment within the social system. Systems thinking, as a

skill set, is widely accepted to be critical in order to deal with the complex and interdependent problems facing society (Arnold and Wade, 2015). A systemic approach to Home Economics has, traditionally, been implicit in the theoretical underpinnings but not always articulated. A systems theory approach to the discipline facilitates a comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing practical perennial problems facing families. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1979) presents an accessible way to develop students' understanding of themselves within the systems around them - from the family system at the micro level to the macro level of global systems. Given its systemic grounding, Home Economics prioritises the goal of strengthening the relationships between each of these systems.

5.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and responsible living

The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014-2020, *Education for Sustainability*, provides a framework to support the contribution of the education sector to a more sustainable future. The National Strategy aims to

ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future (DES, 2014, p. 3).

Home Economics education, nationally and internationally, has situated ESD as a core value within all programmes of study. The Home Economics Institute of Australia (HEIA) notes that students of Home Economics can cultivate an understanding of the interdependence of their everyday lives with the wider environment and with that of other human beings which are related to ethical and ecological sustainability (HEIA, 2002). The DES (2014) regard ESD as being proactive, transformational and an agent for positive change. Subjects on the curriculum are encouraged to embrace and integrate the values and principles underpinning ESD.

The systemic nature of Home Economics education, encompassing the core areas of food studies, textiles, fashion and design and family resource management, ensures that the subject is ideally placed to integrate a wide range of sustainable development principles (Tormey et al., 2008). Home Economics can play an important role in engaging students to think and act globally. This eco-centric approach to Home Economics, as espoused by Eleanor Vaines (1988), stresses the importance of thinking and acting globally and engages students in critical and reflective thinking, social responsibility and participatory action. Echoing a systemic approach, the eco-centric view of critical theory, according to Badir (1991), *challenges us to recognise that all things are related to all other things. It is a moral vision of the world, conceptualising the world as a living organism, and requires that we think holistically and act ethically* (p. 61).

5.3 Food and health literacy

The health and wellbeing of the Irish population continues to be of concern. According to the Department of Health (2013) *the current health status of people living in Ireland and their lifestyle trends are leading us toward a costly and unhealthy future* (p. 9). Specifically looking at diet related issues, the prevalence of overweight and obesity continues to be a major public health concern in Ireland. According to the National Adult Nutrition Survey (2011) 37% of adults (aged 18-64) are overweight and 24% are obese. The Healthy Ireland Survey (2015) found that 25% of 3 year olds are overweight or obese and 26% of 9 year olds have a BMI outside the healthy range. Furthermore, many children are not meeting the current dietary recommendations for fruit and vegetable intake or saturated fat and sugar consumption (Safefood, 2014). Globally, the WHO has declared that by 2025, obesity will be a more serious problem than malnutrition.

The term 'food literacy' has emerged recently, linking literacy to food skills, and is now widely used in policy, practice and research. According to Vidgen and Gallegos (2014) food literacy can be defined as

scaffolding that empowers individuals, households, communities or nations to protect diet quality through change and strengthen dietary resilience over time. It is composed of a collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet needs and determine intake (2014, p. 54).

Food Literacy is essentially the skills needed to sustain a healthy lifelong relationship with food. Research suggests that schools are an effective setting for food education interventions as it has the potential to target, simultaneously, large numbers of children over a long period of time (Johnson et al., 2003; BNF, 2004; Lowe et al., 2004). Furthermore, from a public health perspective it is argued that an ability to cook has a positive impact on an individuals' competency to exercise control over their diet and make informed decisions with regard to food choices (Caraher et al, 1999; Lang and Caraher, 2001). The importance of integrating knowledge, confidence, practical culinary and food skills with psychological components such as attitudes are essential elements of any programme which aims to impact dietary quality (McGowan et al. 2015).

Home Economics is the only subject on the curriculum that teaches food literacy from a holistic perspective by facilitating students to learn nutritional knowledge and apply this knowledge in practical food preparation and culinary skills sessions. Home Economics encourages students to develop a healthy attitude to and relationship with food. The 1991 Junior Certificate Home Economics syllabus apportions a 40% weighting of the total time to Food Studies and Culinary Skills. However, due to the strength of the integrative nature of the syllabus the time allocated is, in reality, greater as aspects of diet and health are considered within other areas of study including Social and Health Studies; Resource Management and Home Studies; and Consumer Studies. Consequently, in the development of a new subject specification for Home Economics due consideration may be given to maintaining, at a minimum, the existing time allocation alongside a strengthening of the integrative nature and approach to teaching the subject from a food literacy perspective.

Food and health issues are an example of practical perennial problems facing individuals and families. Through the mechanism of Home Economics, students can be facilitated to develop the key competencies to be food literate. Due consideration may be given as to how students are facilitated to develop a healthy attitude and positive relationship to food through practical experiential learning. Therefore, in the design of a new specification food literacy may be considered as a key contextual strand or area of learning.

5.4 Home and resource management

Global consumer trends indicate lavish, unsustainable and unhealthy consumption patterns. Trends in resource energy use in the home; household waste; food consumption (packaging, food miles, processed food, food adulteration); and materials consumption (fast fashion, environmentally damaging and unethical materials, fabrics, clothing production and care) demonstrate increased unsustainable household and personal practices. Consequently, consumer empowerment and the ability to make informed and discerning choices are important requisites for the well-being of individuals and families in contemporary society.

Through consumer education citizens are empowered to become consumer literate and socially responsible. According to McGregor (2011) a citizenship framework to consumer education would facilitate consumers to behave responsibly toward the wider community, understand the impact of their behaviour locally and globally, and analyse the consequences of their choices on the environment and the social context (p.5). Home Economics provides a mechanism for the development of students' self-efficacy and critical reflection on consumer behaviour; discernment in the choice and use of resources in the home; technological change; environmental issues and the impact of these on resource management in the home and personal consumption for everyday living.

The recent financial crisis and the ever-changing, complex array of financial products and services indicate an evidential need for personal and family financial education. The Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority (IFSRA) indicated the importance of *personal finance education and financial capability for the well-being of individuals and their families and the wider economy* (2009, p.13). IFSRA, in a curriculum mapping exercise, identified Home Economics as one of two subjects that presented the strongest links with personal finance education. They noted that developing financial capabilities *was one of the most important life skills that any person will ever need* (Ibid, p.24). Financial literacy, according to Hira (2013), is the ability to *discern financial choices, discuss financial issues comfortably, and plan and respond to life events that affect every day financial decisions* (p.115). Home Economics facilitates the development of consumers who are financially literate. Students are empowered with the skills, knowledge and values to make informed decisions and responsibly manage their financial resources for the betterment and well-being of the individual and the family.

Section Summary

There are several interconnected societal factors such as changes to family systems; education for sustainable development and responsible living; food and health literacy; and home and resource management which have an influence on Home Economics education. It is important that these are considered within the context of ensuring currency and relevancy for the subject to the lives of individuals, families, communities and society.

In the design of the new specification for Home Economics consideration may be given to how systemic thinking will be facilitated in order to develop students who are critical, analytical thinkers with an ability to deal effectively with practical perennial problems in the family and social context. Given the centrality of the family systems to the philosophical underpinning of Home Economics, systemic thinking within the family and social context may be considered as a key element underpinning all of the contextual strands or areas of learning in the subject specification.

Attention may be given, in the new specification, as to how Home Economics can facilitate the development of students who are future oriented thinkers and environmentally conscious citizens, dedicated to a sustainable and responsible way of life. Sustainable and responsible living may be considered as a key element integrated across all of the contextual strands or areas of learning in the subject specification.

Due consideration may be given as to how students are facilitated to develop a healthy attitude and positive relationship to food through practical experiential learning. In designing the new specification, food literacy may be considered as a key contextual strand or area of learning.

Home and resource management may be considered as a key contextual strand or area of learning in the development of the subject specification for Home Economics. Facilitating the empowerment of students, as consumers, who are financially literate and have an ability to make informed, discerning choices could be regarded as a key element integrated across all contextual strands or areas of learning.

6. Home Economics – An international perspective

6.1 Aim of Home Economics education: International summary

Table six presents the aim of Home Economics education in Ireland, Malta, Japan, Finland and Northern Ireland, the formal name and the status of the subject on the curriculum.

Table 6: Home Economics curricula internationally

Country	Name		Aim of Home Economics Education
Ireland	Home Economics	Optional	<i>Home Economics has a direct relevance to the present and future life of every young person. Its purpose is to equip young people in certain important skills for living ... encompasses studies of many processes which are necessary for day to day living</i> (Department of Education, 1990, p.3)
Malta	Home Economics	Optional	According to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (2012), the approach for teaching and learning in Home Economics is <i>a nurturing of skills that develop an inquiring mind</i> (pg.10). Critical social theory is applied to the teaching and learning in Home Economics in order to develop reflective critical citizens in society who have an emancipatory approach to problem solving (Piscopo and Mugliett, 2014)
Japan	Home Economics	Compulsory in junior high school	The aim of the Junior High School Home Economics programme in Japan is to <i>enable students to acquire basic and fundamental knowledge and skills necessary for and independent life through practical and hands-on activities relating to food, clothing and housing; to deepen understanding of the functions of a family, and to look towards their future lives and to develop skills and attitude towards a better life with recognition of challenges</i> (Japan Association of Home Economics Education, 2012, p.18).

Country	Name		Aim of Home Economics Education
Finland	Home Economics	Compulsory to Grade 7	<i>The purpose of instruction in Home Economics is to develop cooperative aptitudes, information acquisition and practical working skills required to manage day-to-day life, as well as the application of these factors in everyday situations ...Instruction in Home Economics must be based on practical activity ... In Home Economics the pupil becomes very familiar with many issues important from the standpoint of personal wellbeing and good living – issues that deal with the young people themselves, the home, the family, and the connections between these elements and a changing society and environment (Finish National Board of Education, 2004, p.250)</i>
Northern Ireland	Home Economics	Compulsory (Key stage 3)	<i>Home Economics provides pupils with opportunities to explore real issues explicitly relevant to real-life contexts. These experiences lead to the development of a wide range of transferable skills. Of particular value is the contribution of the subject to the development of skills such as decision making and working with others (CCEA, 2007, p.2).</i>

Although the design and structure of curricula internationally can vary, the core aim and mission is unified. Internationally, the IFHE has attempted to guide the discipline by providing a framework for the subject (IFHE Position Statement, 2008) which has been discussed in Section 4 and 5 of this paper. The above aims and mission reflect the philosophy of the discipline as outlined in Section 4 of this paper.

6.2 Structure of Home Economics curriculum: an international summary

Table seven summarises the areas of learning in junior cycle and at lower secondary home economics curricula in a number of countries. In Finland and Sweden the subject Crafts is included in the table. Although this is not 'Home Economics' per se in these countries, the subject is mainly taught by Home Economics teachers.

From the summary presented it is apparent that Junior Certificate Home Economics in Ireland is unique in so far as offering students five core areas of study and an optional pathway. The majority of countries offer three or four areas of learning to students and no optional pathway. The broad titles assigned to the areas of study reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the discipline and the focus on developing transferable life skills.

Table 7: Areas of Learning in Home Economics curricula internationally

Areas of Learning						
Country						
Ireland (Home Economics)	1. Food Studies & Culinary Skills	2. Consumer Studies	3. Social & Health Studies	4. Resource Management & Home Studies	5. Textile Studies	6. Optional Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare • Design & Craftwork • Textile Skills
Malta (Home Economics)	1. Food, Nutrition & Health <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Food, Health & Energy Balance II. Sustainable Resource Management III. Safety & Risk Management IV. Practical Interventions 	2. Home & Family Well-Being	3. Choice & Management of Resources			
Japan (Home Economics)	1. Family, Home & Child Growth	2. Food, Cooking & Independent Life	3. Clothing, Housing & Independent Life	4. Daily Consumption & the Environment		
Canada (Manitoba) Human Ecology	1. Food & Nutrition	2. Human Development	3. Clothing & Textiles			

N Ireland (Home Economics)	1. Healthy Eating	2. Home & Family Life	3. Independent Living	
Finland (Home Economics)	1. Family & living together	2. Nutrition & the culture of food	3. The consumer & changing society	4. Home & the environment
Crafts	1. General contents of crafts construction	2. Contents: Technical work	3. Contents: Textile work	
Sweden (Home & Consumer Studies)	1. Food, Meals & Health	2. Consumption & Personal Finance	3. Environment & Lifestyle	
Crafts	1. Materials, tools & techniques used in crafts	2. Working processes in crafts	3. Aesthetic & cultural expressions of crafts	4. Crafts in society

Section Summary

The aims of Junior Certificate Home Economics in Ireland is comparable to similar curricula in other countries. Consideration may be given to the IFHE Position Paper (2008) in the writing of the aims and rationale for the new Junior Cycle Home Economics subject specification.

Junior Certificate Home Economics in Ireland is out of sync with other countries in offering students an optional pathway and five areas of learning/study. The majority of Home Economics curricula analysed offer a maximum of three or four areas of learning. The titles assigned to areas of learning vary between countries; however, all reflect the core mission of Home Economics. In the design of a new subject specification for Home Economics the structure, in the context of offering an optional area of study, may be considered. As explored in Sections 2, 4 and 5 of this paper, consideration may be given to revisiting the areas of learning with a view to potentially integrating existing optional areas of study within the revised areas of learning. Those currently included are the core areas of food and culinary skills; consumer studies; social and health studies; resource management and home studies; textiles and the optional areas of childcare; design and craftwork and textile skills. Additionally, consideration may be given in the design of the new specification to underpinning all of the areas of learning with contemporary key elements.

7. Home Economics specification in the new Junior

Cycle

While some may have distinct characteristics, arising from the area of learning involved, all junior cycle specifications, for subjects and short courses, have a number of features in common. They:

- are outcome based
- reflect a continuum of learning with a focus on learner progression
- set out clear expectations for learning
- provide examples of those expectations
- include a focus on eight key skills
- strive for clarity in language and for consistency in terminology.

To improve the connection with learning and teaching in primary school, these features are shared with the Primary Curriculum. The specification for each junior cycle subject and short course will include:

1	Introduction to junior cycle	This will be common to all specifications and will summarise the main features of the Framework for Junior Cycle.
2	Rationale	This will describe the nature and purpose of the subjects as well as the general demands and capacities that it will place on, and require of, students. The text will, as appropriate, aim to draw attention to challenges and any access issues associated with study of the subjects for students with specific needs or disabilities.
3	Aim	A concise aim for the subject will be presented.

4	Links with: Statements of Learning Key Skills	How the subject is linked to central features of learning and teaching at junior cycle will be highlighted and explained.
5	Overview: Strands Learning Outcomes	An overview of the subject will illustrate how it is organised and will set out the learning involved in strands and learning outcomes.
6	Expectations for students	These will be linked with groups of learning outcomes and will related to examples of students work. The examples will be annotated, explaining whether the work is in line with, ahead of, or behind expectations for students.
7	Assessment and certification	<p>This section refers to both formative and summative assessment. It outlines the assessment component/s through which students will present evidence of learning on an ongoing basis, and for the purposes of recording achievement for the Junior Cycle profile of Achievement (JCPA)¹</p> <p>This description of assessment is supplemented by separate assessment guidelines for use in second and third years.</p>

¹The JCPA is the new award for all junior cycle students. It will replace the current award, the Junior Certificate.

8. Brief for the review of Junior Cycle Home

Economics

The review of Home Economics will lead to the production of a specification in line with the template in section 7.

The specification will be at a common level. It will be designed to be taught and assessed in a minimum of 200 hours and structured around strands and learning outcomes. The specification will be developed in alignment with the statements of learning, including that the student:

- has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainability
- understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices
- understands the origins and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him
- makes informed financial decisions and develops good consumer skills
- takes initiative, is innovative and develops entrepreneurial skills
- brings an idea from conception to realisation
- takes actions to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others.

The key skills of junior cycle will be embedded in the learning outcomes of the specification, as appropriate.

The specification will be completed for autumn 2017 and its development will take account of current research and developments in the discipline Home Economics. It will also reflect emerging understanding of the content and nature of Home Economics education, and the need for alignment with the ongoing development of the numeracy and literacy strategy.

The development of the new specification will address continuity and progression.

It will be developed with cognisance of the connections and synergies with other subjects.

More specifically, the development of the new specification will address:

- The aims of Junior Cycle Home Economics, making them transparent and evident to students, teachers and parents in the specification
- How the underpinning philosophy of Home Economics will be reflected in the specification with specific reference to a systemic approach to practical perennial problems
- How the course will be organised; whether it will continue to be structured around core areas of study and an optional area of study
- Which contextual strands or areas of learning will be included and whether other thematic strands can be added or existing ones renamed. Those currently included are the core areas of food and culinary skills; consumer studies; social and health studies; resource management and home studies; textiles and the optional areas of childcare; design and craftwork and textile skills
- Which key elements will underpin Junior Cycle Home Economics
- How the assessment of the theoretical and practical elements of Home Economics will be structured in order to maintain the practical orientation of the subject
- The issues of breadth and currency of content of the course
- How practical, inquiry-based teaching and learning will be promoted
- How the course can develop the key skills of junior cycle
- How the course can develop students' practical Home Economics skills
- How the course can develop students' creativity, innovation and collaborative skills
- The issue of gender inclusivity of the specification in its presentation and language register
- How the specification, in its presentation and language register, can be strongly student-centred and in recognising student voice have a clear focus on what the students can do to develop and demonstrate their skills, capabilities and achievements

- Continuity and progression: how to connect with and build on related learning at primary level as well as provide a platform for the study of Home Economics at senior cycle; how home economics connects with other learning in junior cycle, particularly Wellbeing
- The ongoing assessment of student learning as well as the Classroom-Based Assessments and final examination.

The work of the Home Economics Subject Development Group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. In the course of its work and discussion, elaborations of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.

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