NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Leaving Certificate Politics and Society

Report on the consultation process

March 2010

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1. Introduction

In 2005 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) presented proposals for the future development of senior cycle education in Ireland. Arising from these proposals and from the response of the Minister for Education and Science to them, the process of developing a new subject in 'Social and Political Education' was put in place. The process involved:

- the development and publication of a background paper on *Social and Political Education in Senior Cycle* in 2006
- a consultation process on that background paper, leading to a consultation report, published in 2007
- research with young people on their areas of interest in Politics and Society, published in 2008
- the development of a draft Leaving Certificate syllabus for Politics and Society.

The Leaving Certificate Politics and Society draft syllabus was approved for consultation by Council on 30th April 2008. The consultation process for the draft syllabus was developed over late 2008 and was envisaged as having a number of different elements:

- an on-line questionnaire and opportunity for written submissions
- focus groups with practicing teachers who may be interested in teaching Politics and Society
- a consultation meeting with relevant subject associations
- focus groups with higher education students of social scientific subjects
- a civil society forum for NGOs and other interested bodies (hosted by the Citizenship Education Network [CEN]).

These elements of the consultation were to be complemented by research being carried out by other bodies, notably the Citizenship Studies project of the Curriculum Development Unit and Trócaire which carried out research, in conjunction with the Student Council Support, with post-primary students.

The NCCA's consultation process began in spring 2009 and concluded in November 2009.

1.1 Online questionnaire and invitation to make written submissions

The online questionnaire was live from March 2009 to November 2009. In total 59 respondents completed the survey. Following a review of survey responses in July, the survey was shortened in order to make it more user-friendly.

In addition to the online questionnaire, the public was also invited to make written submissions. In total, 38 written submissions were received (these are listed in Appendix 1). They ranged in length from a single paragraph to 109 pages. Typically they were between three and ten pages in length. While some submissions focussed on broad issues, others contained detailed comments and suggestions for textual amendments to the draft syllabus. Some reflected the view of individuals; others reflected the position of institutions or organisations. A number came from government departments and from statutory bodies. One (the combined submission from Student Council Support and the Citizenship Project of the Curriculum Development Unit and Trócaire) reflected the views of 211 post-primary school students who had taken part in their research.

1.2 Consultation meeting with subject associations and post-primary teacher education colleges and education departments

All post-primary teacher education departments and colleges were invited to attend this meeting on 27 March 2009, as were the Association of CSPE Teachers, the Irish Philosophical Society, the Irish Anthropological Association, the Sociological Association of Ireland and the Political Studies Association of Ireland. A number of teacher education colleges and departments sent representatives (Dublin City University; National University of Ireland, Galway; St. Angela's College, Sligo) as did the Association of CSPE Teachers, the Irish Philosophical Society and the Irish Anthropological Association. Other teacher education departments and colleges and subject association representatives attended the Civil Society forum, as is described below.

1.3 Focus group with teachers with an interest in Politics and Society

Through the Association of CSPE Teachers, teachers with an interest in teaching Politics and Society were invited to register their interest in participating in focus groups. Those who registered an interest were invited to attend focus group meetings in Dublin on 25 April 2009, 23 May 2009 and 7 November 2009. Each workshop was attended by about a dozen teachers. They looked, in turn, at:

(a) the proposed changes to senior cycle education (new syllabus format, key skills, use of learning outcomes) and their impact upon draft Politics and Society (April)

(b) the content of the draft syllabus (May)

(c) potential assessment approached for the subject (November).

The participants' responses during the focus groups were recorded and participants were also invited to complete the survey and send in a written response.

1.4 Focus Group with higher education students

Four focus groups with higher education students were completed. These were:

- undergraduate and postgraduate anthropology and sociology students' focus group, NUI Maynooth, 8 May 2009
- undergraduate and postgraduate philosophy students, Mary Immaculate College Limerick, 7 November 2009
- undergraduate politics and social science students, University of Limerick, 17 November 2009
- undergraduate and postgraduate applied social studies students, Waterford Institute of Technology,4 December 2009.

1.5 Civil Society Forum for NGOs and other interested bodies

This Forum was hosted by the Curriculum Development Unit's Citizenship Education Network (CEN) on 13 March 2009. This was attended by members of the Citizenship Education Network. The attendance included representatives from development education and human rights education non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It also included a number of participants from the higher and further education sector, including, among others, the chairperson of the Political Studies Association of Ireland,

and faculty members from the Education Departments in Church of Ireland College of Education, Trinity College, Dublin, University College, Dublin, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and University of Limerick.

1.6 Development of learning activities

In parallel with the consultation process the NCCA worked with a group of experienced teachers and citizenship educators on developing teaching materials relevant to Politics and Society. The consultation process is also informed by the discussions of this group regarding the opportunities and difficulties arising in the draft syllabus.

1.7 Issues emerging from the consultation

This report outlines the major issues which have emerged from the consultation process. These issues include:

- a broad welcome for the draft syllabus
- the name of the draft syllabus
- the complexity/ abstractness of the draft syllabus
- the 'Irishness' or distinctiveness of the draft syllabus
- the 'correctness', scope of the content of the draft syllabus and significant omissions from it
- the assessment, particularly the weighting of the Active Citizenship Project Report
- the implementation of the draft syllabus, particularly the teacher qualification and teacher education elements of the implementation.

This report will deal with these issues in turn.

2. Issues emerging from the consultation

2.1 A broad welcome for the draft syllabus

The draft syllabus has been broadly welcomed by participants in the consultation process. These included the NGOs involved in the CEN forum, subject associations, undergraduate students, teacher educators and teachers. This welcome is also reflected in the survey results and in written submissions. This is not to say there were no criticisms or suggestions for change in relation to the draft syllabus—these will be dealt with in later sections of this report.

> *The Irish Human Rights Commission welcomes the development of the new Leaving Certificate syllabus subject,* Politics and Society… *The IHRC believes that* Politics and Society *is a positive and necessary addition to Irish senior cycle education whose full implementation in secondary schools should be fully supported and resourced in line with the State's legal obligations… Human rights education is not only a vital part of education; it is a requirement under Ireland's international obligations.* (Written submission by the Irish Human Rights Commission)

> *We would like to congratulate the NCCA on the draft Senior Cycle syllabus for* Politics and Society. *The Senior Cycle plays a crucial role in preparing learners for entry into the fast-changing worlds of further education and employment. It is our view that this syllabus has the potential to make an enormous contribution to learner preparation.* Politics and Society *aims to train students to think in sophisticated ways, it opens up the methodological toolbox of the social sciences, and it is a clear-sighted view of many of the challenges in today's world.* Politics and Society *is a rich introduction to the core activities of social scientists. The syllabus is comprehensive and yet is user-friendly; it is specific and detailed while leaving room for students' own exploration of knowledge.* (Written submission by Dr Mark Maguire Department of Anthropology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Anthropological Association of Ireland)

> *I feel that it is a fantastic idea that is much needed in Irish society…it is necessary, in an increasingly globalised and multi-cultural society and economy that we understand such concepts. It would also serve to give an educational forum for those with natural interest, who often have to pursue such interests merely in debating, or other extra-curricular activities, which are highly beneficial, but take from their study time, or alternatively, are not pursued for fear of not having enough time to study. It would create a seamless flow from junior cycle CSPE, into third level subjects such as History, Politics and Social Studies, or any variations thereof…* (Questionnaire response from a recently graduated third-level student of Law and European Studies)

> *It is a great balance of philosophy, sociological theory and political thought made accessible and focused on the lives of young people.* (Questionnaire Response from a Post-primary Teacher)

> *The School of Education at NUI Galway views the potential introduction of* Politics and Society *into the senior cycle curriculum as an important, timely and exciting development…We would like to acknowledge the very significant, and impressive, work that has been invested in the development of this draft syllabus.* (Written submission by School of Education, NUI Galway)

The consultation process highlighted a number of reasons for welcoming the syllabus:

- Ireland has legal obligations in the field of human rights education under several international human rights conventions and instruments to which Ireland is a party. The proposed syllabus in Politics and Society would enable Ireland to partially fulfil these obligations. This issue was particularly emphasised by the Irish Human Rights Commission, by Amnesty International, the Irish Red Cross and the Ombudsman for Children.

- A number of submissions described Irish education as having a strong focus on contributing to the development of workers and employers but less of a focus on contributing to the development of active citizens in a democratic state. The draft Politics and Society syllabus would provide an opportunity to address this balance.

- There is an existing gap in senior cycle education in the area of social and political sciences and in the area of philosophy. The proposed draft syllabus would also help to address this gap.

- The Politics and Society draft syllabus would provide an effective link for student of Junior Cycle Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and could play a role in strengthening the institutional base for CSPE in schools.

Respondents broadly welcomed the way in which social and political sciences and philosophy are integrated, the way in which the subject is conceived as contributing to active citizenship, the range of issues covered in the syllabus, the methodologies proposed and the underlying focus on engaging with different perspectives.

The research with post-primary school students carried out by the Citizenship Studies Project/Student Council Support found that 77.25% of the students who participated in their study felt the subject was important and 70.14% indicated that they would choose

it if it was offered. It should be noted that this group of students was drawn from those involved in student councils and as such was not intended to be representative of post-primary students more generally.

> **The broad consensus from the consultation process suggests that the NCCA should continue to develop Politics and Society as a Leaving Certificate subject.**

2.2 The title of the subject

Questions regarding the title of the subject were raised a number of times in the consultation process. These were raised in teacher and student focus groups and in a significant minority of written submissions.

In particular the use of the term 'politics' and its prominence in the title was questioned. The fact that this word appears first in the title *Politics and Society* and the fact that it is the only academic discipline directly referenced in the title (i.e., the draft is not entitled *Politics and Sociology* or *Politics, Sociology and Anthropology'* are all seen as factors which push the 'Political' focus of subject to the fore. This is seen as problematic by some respondents, who argue that young people can regard the term 'Politics' as referring to issues which are outside their area of interest. One submission highlighted the view of some young people on the title; they included the following:

> *It wouldn't be important because it sounds boring and not very interesting.*

> *The word politics in the title might instantly mean boring to people and put them off.*

These views are broadly supported by the NCCA's research into young people's areas of interest in Politics and Society which also found that many of the young people who participated in the research were initially turned off by the use of the word 'Politics' in the title[1].

Other participants in the process who questioned the title did so because it seemed to them to give primacy to academic concerns (i.e., by referencing the academic

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[1] A student consultation on Politics and Society was conducted in March and April 2007. The consultation set out to identify a range of topics and concepts related to the study of politics and society which are seen by young people to be relevant to them. The report on the consultation with young people can be downloaded at www.ncca.ie

discipline of Politics rather than the lived practice of citizenship). This reflects an underlying tension within the consultation between those who saw the syllabus as primarily focused on citizenship and those who saw the syllabus as being a social scientific subject which would contribute to citizenship.

No alternative title has broad support among those suggesting a change in title. A range of alternative possible titles were suggested in submissions and consultations, including:

- Active Citizenship
- Citizenship Studies
- Civic Social and Political Studies
- Culture Studies
- Political and Social Education
- Political and Social Studies
- Political and Social Science
- Politics and Sociology
- Social and Political Science
- Social Science
- Social Studies
- Society Studies
- Society and Politics
- World Studies.

There is no broad consensus about the preferred name for the subject, however concerns about the use of the world 'politics' were expressed by a significant minority.

2.3 The complexity/abstractness of the draft syllabus

Questions regarding the complexity or abstractness of the draft syllabus were raised a number of times in the consultation process. In this, a number of issues arose, sometimes separately, but often tied in together:

- whether or not the content is too complex or abstract for post-primary schools
- the place assigned to 'thinkers' or 'theorists' in the draft syllabus

▪ the language which is used in the draft syllabus.

For some, the draft syllabus is too complex and more appropriate for higher education than for second-level. Responses variously described the draft in the following terms: *the bar is set very high in terms of content* (Association of CSPE Teachers); *felt to be full and quite theoretical in approach* (Ubuntu Network); *too academic and too passive* (Senator Mark Daly and Keriann Hopkins); *aimed at an undergraduate student population rather than a post-CSPE cohort* (An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta); *the content is, overall, unnecessarily complicated and overly ambitious* (School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway). This was not the unanimous view of the participants in the consultation. For example, in addition to comments quoted above, other written submissions described the draft in the following terms: *we commend the document for the breadth of imagination shown and the comprehensive scope of the proposed offerings* (Department of Sociology, NUI Maynooth); *a good heavyweight syllabus… [that] is well grounded in theory and provides students with a framework for understanding politics in its widest sense of power relations in society* (Nora Shovelin).

A number of those who saw the syllabus as overly academic contrasted this with a focus on active participation in civic, social and political life. Some suggested a greater focus on volunteering and a reduced focus on 'academic' elements. Others identified that the 'dominance' of certain thinkers *gives a strong focus on theory and thinkers* and a consequent lack of opportunity to *explore activism and activists* (Trócaire). It is worth noting that it was not intended that the theorists be seen as being in a dominant position in the draft syllabus. It was intended that the syllabus be seen as centred on key ideas rather than on key thinkers and that students would first engage in active exploration of concrete, local case studies or issues and, from that engagement, build inductively to an understanding of ideas and their application to the learner's context and world. A number of responses suggest that this emphasis was not communicated effectively in the syllabus to all respondents.

A number of submissions argued that the issue was not so much one of the intention of the syllabus but rather of the effect of the language of the draft. While over 70% of the 31 survey respondents who answered the relevant questions described the language

used in the titles and learning outcomes as clear, a number of the written submissions challenged this view. For example, one noted that the language *in which it is written as a huge challenge for many people working in education… we propose that the NCCA produces a reader friendly version of the syllabus* (Irish Development Education Association); while another noted that, *we recognise that a syllabus is not, and cannot be, the full articulation of how any subject will play out in reality in the classroom. To this effect, we would strongly encourage that other supporting documentation such as Teacher Guidelines, resources and more be developed in tandem with the syllabus* (Trócaire). Indeed, the idea of a 'reader-friendly version' and of Teacher Guidelines and other support material was put forward by a number of submissions.

The experience of the teacher focus groups and the higher education focus groups is worth noting in this respect. Within the focus groups the issue of the technical language used within the syllabus was discussed. It was noted in both the teacher and the higher education student focus groups that the language used in the syllabus may be too difficult as *a starting point* for students. While the methodologies proposed for use in the subject do not suggest that students would start by engaging in abstract or technical social scientific terms, it is evident that this was not clear to those who commented on this issue. It has been noted that the syllabus presents challenges for the teacher in *translating* the language of the syllabus (as well as the concepts) into the language (and the experience) of the learners. It was also suggested that some teachers—particularly those who do not have background in social sciences—may find the language daunting and will need time to *get [their head] around it*. This is linked to the issue of in-career training for teachers, which is discussed below.

At the same time, others said that the language and concepts were very accessible to those who have studied social science subjects. Within the teacher focus groups it was noted that as a Leaving Certificate subject to be offered at Higher Level as well as Ordinary Level and being used for calculating CAO points, the subject needs to be sufficiently robust and with an appropriate level of specialist knowledge. As such, it should not be expected that anyone would be able to understand all the technical language without some effort.

Associated with the question of translating the technical language of the syllabus is the methodological question of applying the social scientific concepts of the syllabus to everyday life. Within the teacher focus groups, we asked participants about the core methodology proposed in the draft syllabus. This methodology requires finding local or familiar contexts within which issues and concepts can be discussed, applied and understood before then engaging with wider world case studies, theorists' ideas and the technical language of the social sciences. There was not agreement among the teachers on this issue in their focus group as the following exchange shows:

Respondent 1: *It reads like a Master's course, too much information. It should have options like in History.*

Respondent 2: *No it's easier than that because you study the ideas not the theorists, the students just need to be able to string a coherent argument around ideas. I do not agree that this is too difficult; it is all about how the teacher pitches the learning.*

Respondent 3: *In economics there are theorists. I think they are more difficult than in this case as the student has no real life application [for economic theorists] in some cases.*

Respondent 4: *Students needs to get a deep understanding from the syllabus, to be able to learn through case studies. There is a danger of getting stuck in the terminology. Teachers will need to concentrate on the ideas.*

Respondent 5: *I do hope those studying at Ordinary Level will not get caught up in the terminology*

Respondent 6: *I think that some people underestimate students. I was amazed at how students could link the ideas to their experience. For example when talking about 'cultural norms' students came up with the example that when they come into a room they would not walk over tables to come in and sit down!*

This exchange highlights the challenges in communicating the social scientific language and concepts in schools. Furthermore it highlights the central role of the teacher in bringing the syllabus to life in a way that is meaningful and accessible to students. Some teachers identify this as a considerable challenge while others see it as something that can readily be done. Finally, the exchange highlights the need to

teachers to have time to talk through and think through the syllabus and its methodologies in order to come to terms with their implications for their practice.

It is interesting to note that the social science students who took part in the focus group did not see any difficulty in 'translating' the language and concepts of social sciences into everyday life. This broadly held true across focus groups with students of sociology, anthropology, politics, philosophy and applied social studies.

In general, the consultation process seems to show that there is some concern about the level of complexity in the syllabus, although the degree of concern is less among many of those with subject discipline knowledge. It also seems to show that the way in which the draft syllabus is presented gives a distorted picture of the intention of the syllabus. The perception that the syllabus is centred on 'theorists' and on 'abstract ideas', and the struggle for some in finding ways of relating the ideas in the syllabus to every day life suggests that the syllabus does not adequately communicate its intentions in its current form. A number of submissions highlighted that the technical language of the syllabus may put off on those who have literacy difficulties or who come from disadvantaged contexts. While it is notable that, given subject content knowledge and an opportunity to engage with the syllabus in depth, potential teachers show a capacity to make clear sense of the syllabus, it is also clear that the language and framing of the learning outcomes makes it difficult for some readers to understand the syllabus' intention.

There is no broad consensus as to whether the subject is too complex.

The broad consensus from the consultation process suggests that the language of the learning outcomes in the draft syllabus be re-framed in such as way as to emphasise active exploration of civic, social and political life in a way that is informed by social scientific concepts and evidence.

The broad consensus from the consultation process suggests that more user-friendly means of communicating – such as support materials for teachers and students – be developed.

2.4 The 'Irishness', localness or distinctiveness of the draft syllabus

The issue of the 'Irishness' of the syllabus was raised in the consultation process, primarily in the written submissions. Essentially, a number of submissions suggested—in different ways—that the framing of the syllabus around concepts that are drawn from 'western' political theory and social science meant that the syllabus lacked a distinctively Irish flavour. Submissions noted that *while the international dimension of the curriculum is welcome, we suggest that locating inquiry more substantially in an Irish context … would make concepts/institutions and processes more accessible and meaningful for students* (School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway); *there seems to be no requirement to understand the structure and functions of major national, European and International organisations or political structures* (Association of CSPE Teachers); *The focus on the theoretical leads to a minimisation of the distinctively 'Irish' elements in the course* (An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta). A number of submissions suggested Irish writers and researchers that could be referenced in the syllabus (Prof. Pat O'Connor's work was identified by a number of submissions and the work of Prof. Pat Clancy and Prof. Kathleen Lynch was also mentioned).

One issue that was raised in the consultations and in some of the written submissions was the absence of overt references in the syllabus to Northern Ireland and to the different identities that are found on the island of Ireland.

Similar points were raised in relation to the structures, processes and impacts of the European Union (particularly in the submission from the Department of Foreign Affairs, European Union Division).

Such suggestions did not typically imply that there should be less of a focus on wider world examples or issues. Many submissions welcomed the focus on wider world and on development issues, and indeed, some of those suggesting a more 'Irish' focus also suggested more attention should be paid to non-western writers and thinkers.

In the draft syllabus it is proposed that students would explore the issues raised in local contexts (by definition Irish contexts) and again at national, European and wider world

levels. This was intended to allow maximum flexibility for teachers and students to pick cases and examples which were of interest to students. However, it may be that this openness and flexibility may also be seen as a lack of specificity that could lead to distinctively Irish and European dimensions being lost. Indeed, as one submission noted, the lack of specificity in relation to the cases to be addressed would tend to mean that the assessment would have to be framed in more abstract or theoretical terms: *The concrete engagements that students and teachers pursue could be unfamiliar to assessors, leading to too much focus on the core, conceptual material of the syllabus* (Dr. Grahan Finlay).

> **The broad consensus from the consultation process suggests that the learning outcomes be reframed in such a way as to make explicit reference to both jurisdictions in Ireland and to the European Union. This should not lead to a diminution of the focus on wider world examples and issues.**

A number of those involved in the consultation suggested that the school and the education system should be a site of analysis and a source of case studies for the learners. This fits with the methodology of critical autobiography proposed in one submission, and with the suggestion that Politics and Society should play a role in the broader democratisation of school life. It also fits with the inductive learning methodology which is central to the draft syllabus. As one submission put it: *this would allow the teacher to put the student at the heart of the syllabus rather than the theories, as they could relate this empirical research to their own lives as well as to grand theories* (DIT Community Links Programme).

> **The consultation process suggests that the use of cases from and studies of school life and young peoples' lives be given greater prominence in the syllabus.**

2.5 The 'correctness', scope of the content of the draft syllabus and significant omissions from it

2.5.1 Balance of the syllabus: Politics/Sociology/Philosophy/Anthropology

Broadly speaking, there was a welcome for the integrated way in which political, social, anthropological and philosophical issues were addressed in the draft syllabus. Some

written submissions questioned whether the syllabus was unbalanced in favour of sociological thinking. However, this view tended not to be reflected in the submissions more generally:

> *On behalf of the Irish Philosophical Society, I would formally like to welcome the development of the Politics and Society syllabus and in particular, its emphasis on philosophical theory and thinking* (Irish Philosophical Society);

> *As a political theorist, I am heartened by the emphasis on political theory in the syllabus* (Dr. Graham Finlay);

> *Anthropological knowledge is already implicit in much of the Politics and Society syllabus, from discussion of cultural diversity and 'race' to examples from non-Western societies* (Dr. Mark Maguire, Anthropological Association of Ireland).

Within the focus groups with students, philosophy students were those who questioned to the greatest degree the extent to which the ideas, approaches and language of the syllabus matched their own discipline. In particular, some in this group suggested that the syllabus would benefit from a section on the philosophical study of ethics in order to enable students to clarify and understand values. Although supportive of the approach taken in the syllabus, the focus group with anthropology students did identify that the way in which the concept of culture was addressed in the syllabus should be changed to reflect a more anthropological sense of the term. This issue is addressed in more detail in a later section. At the same time, both groups, in common with other focus groups, did identify that the syllabus provided a framework within which their discipline could be reflected.

2.5.2 An instrumental or a critical syllabus?

A small number of submissions identified what they saw as a contradiction between the aims of developing *critical* perspectives while at the same time *promoting* a particular set of values. It was noted that in some topics there is an uncritical acceptance of certain ideas (such as human rights) while in others the same concept is open for exploration and critique. This issue was also evident in the tension between different submissions, with some arguing for a more instrumental focus (i.e. a focus on a syllabus *for* citizenship) and others arguing for a greater focus on social scientific and critical thinking *on* citizenship. Some submissions argued, for example, for changing the aim of the syllabus to give it a more instrumental aim. Other submissions saw a concern with critical engagement with human rights and citizenship as compatible with

developing the independent thinking skills that were necessary for citizenship. Within the focus group with philosophy students this tension was also raised. In that context it was suggested that a unit or topic on ethics should be included in order to allow the students to evaluate the basis of ethical or values claims.

The consultation process suggests that, for some, there is an underlying tension in how people perceive Politics and Society, and that a focus on ethical analysis and on critical thinking on citizenship may help to reconcile this tension.

2.5.3 Use of left-right conceptual model

A number of written submissions questioned aspects of the conceptualisation of the syllabus. A small number suggested that the underpinning conceptual framework, particularly that which informed the choice of key concepts and thinkers, could be made more explicit.

One aspect of the syllabus that was questioned by a minority of written submissions was the use of the terms 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' (these terms appear in the images on pages 23 and 37 and in topic seven on page 35). A number of submissions regarded these terms as outdated, as inadequately reflecting the diversity of perspectives and positions dealt with in the syllabus and as misleading. Within the syllabus, the left-right continuum is used primarily as device for graphically organising the key concepts. Of course, the use of any analytical model, which is intended to simplify in order to aid understanding, always does some violence to the perspectives that are fitted within it. However the question is whether the simplification involved clarifies or obscures. A number of submissions suggest, as one put it, that *the use of the left-right spectrum tends to render the theoretical debates less intelligible in general and to obscure the stakes in particular debates* (Dr. Graham Finlay).

The consultation process suggests that the analytical model based on a left-right spectrum not be used in the syllabus.

2.5.4 Size of the syllabus, specificity of learning outcomes

As was noted above, there was broad support for a number of elements of the syllabus such as its focus on integrating sociological, political, anthropological and philosophical perspectives around key concepts and its focus on the use of multiple perspectives and contestation between perspectives as a means to developing critical and independent thinking. As such, any changes to the syllabus should be made within the context of protecting these dimensions of the syllabus.

Throughout the consultation process it was noted that it was difficult to assess if the amount of content addressed in the syllabus was too large or too small in the absence of significant amounts of exemplification. For most, however, it appears that the initial reaction is that the syllabus is too broad and the amount of content needs to be reduced. However, it was notable from the focus group with teachers that when teachers were given an opportunity to become familiar with the syllabus, this view tended to be tempered by the recognition that part of the reason for the length (in words and pages) of the syllabus, was that the syllabus included highly specific learning outcomes rather than more general ones. While such specific learning outcomes are longer in words and pages, they can actually imply less content to be studied. For example, a study of three specific points in relation to the ideas of Thomas Hobbes is considerably more focussed than a general statement that students should be familiar with the key ideas of Thomas Hobbes. While this did become evident to those who had the opportunity to work through the syllabus over a period of time, the first impression created by the syllabus was that it was long and contained too much content.

The specificity of the learning outcomes was also not without its difficulties. For example, it became evident during the process of developing exemplars that the specificity of the learning outcomes made it difficult to find case studies which would allow issues to be addressed in concrete ways. As such, the high degree of specificity in some learning outcomes could make it more difficult for teachers to use local case studies and examples from students' own lives. In relation to the amount covered in the syllabus, the work on exemplars did suggest that the amount of content specified in the syllabus was too much.

> **The broad consensus from the consultation process is that amount of content knowledge addressed in the syllabus should be reduced.**

> **The consultation process also suggests that the learning outcomes should be written with a view to the ease of selecting appropriate case studies and examples.**

Notwithstanding the view that the syllabus already contained too much content knowledge, many submissions suggested additions should be made to the syllabus. Additions which were identified by a number of submissions included:

- identifying power as the key concept in the syllabus
- giving increased prominence to human rights and international humanitarian law, such as through making these issues topics in their own right
- giving greater prominence to gender and debates within feminism
- giving greater prominence to activism, civil society and grassroots movements
- giving greater prominence to the media and ICT
- making explicit the social scientific skills which students are expected to learn (including skills around qualitative and quantitative data interpretation and analysis, skills in using data to come to judgements, skills in comparison etc.)
- additional thinkers to be referenced including: a number of European thinkers such as Rosa Luxembourg, Jean Monet, Johan Galtung, Kant, Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu, Piaget; some American thinkers, notably Rawls, Richard Florida and Dewey; and a number of non-western thinkers including Freire (who was regularly mentioned during the consultation process), Kwame Anthony Appiah, Amayrta Sen, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Manisha Desai
- additional major concepts suggested include 'Justice', 'Law', 'Participatory Democracy', 'Supranationalism', 'Peace', 'Belonging' and 'Cosmopolitanism'.

These issues will be dealt with in turn.

Concept of power
A significant number of submissions note that the concept of power seems to run right throughout the syllabus. It is an underlying element which runs through concepts like security, legitimacy of governance, social class, gender, ethnicity, ideology, human

rights and development. However, it was also noted that the concept is never explicitly named in the syllabus. As such, it was suggested that it may be appropriate to deal with the concept more explicitly.

> **The consultation process suggests that the concept of power be given greater prominence.**

Concept of human rights

A number of submissions focused on the role which the syllabus could play in relation Irelands' international legal obligations with respect to human rights education. Typically they suggested enhancing the focus on human rights in the syllabus. This could be done, a number suggested, though both creating a topic on human rights and through referencing human rights more continuously throughout other topics in the syllabus.   The Amnesty International submission, for example, suggested that additional human rights concepts that needed to be addressed include:

- rights holder and duty bearer
- classification of rights as absolute, limited or qualified
- respect, protection and fulfilment of rights
- immediate obligation versus progressive realisation.

There were also related suggestions about enhancing the focus on international humanitarian law.

> **The consultation process suggests that concepts related to human rights be given greater prominence.**

Concept of gender

It was noted that the syllabus contains a number of references to gender as a concept, particularly in relation to conflict-based accounts of society, in relation to equality legislation and concepts and in relation to sustainable development. Some submissions questioned whether the concept of gender could not be strengthened throughout the syllabus rather than appearing as a concept intermittently. One noted that gender should be referenced in sections relating to small group practices and a number noted that CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) was not

included in the human rights instruments discussed and that this was a significant omission.

A number of submissions questioned the use of the ideas of Kate Millet as the primary entry point into an understanding of feminist critiques of contemporary society. It was suggested that Millet's work is too dated, too American and is neither sociological nor a major contribution to political philosophy. Alternatives suggested include the work of Sylvia Walby, Arlie Hoschschild, Catherine McKinnon, Eva Kittay and Joan Tronto and, in an Irish context, Prof. Pat O'Connor. One also suggested that a number of feminist thinkers needed to be referenced in order to highlight the diversity within feminist perspectives.

> **The consultation process suggests that the work of thinkers and researchers other than Kate Millett be used as the primary entry point into feminist critiques of contemporary society and that gender issues be more effectively integrated across the syllabus.**

Activism, civil society and grassroots movements

As was noted above, it was suggested through the consultation process that structuring the syllabus around key concepts may appear to give the syllabus a passive quality rather than a focus on active citizenship. A number of submissions identified that, in order to enable students to gain an appreciation of active citizenship, there should be a focus on studies of social change which came about as a result of what is variously described as activism or grassroots movements. One submission suggests the use of studies on the suffragette movement, the US civil rights movement, the Irish gay rights movement, disability activists and the Irish anti-apartheid movement. Another suggested that there should be a section on the role of social movements and the community and voluntary sector as examples of participatory democracy.

> **The consultation process suggests that greater prominence be given to studies of active and participative social change.**

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Media and Information Communication Technology

The *Background Paper on Social and Political Education at Senior Cycle* published by the NCCA in 2006 noted:

> *Increased communication and increased speed of communication are fundamental to globalisation. Today Ireland has very open broadcasting and media environments …with information and entertainment from a wide variety of countries being readily available to people. The use of ICT has also increased access to diverse sources of information while driving down the cost. This creates opportunities for new sources of information and communication such as blogs, personal webpages, and on-line encyclopaedias. It also increases the capacity for knowledge to be shared between scientists and researchers, which in turn can increase the rate at which new discoveries are made. This can contribute to human health and welfare. It also, however, affects the extent to which knowledge can come to be regarded as being provisional in nature* (Tormey, 2006: 6).

The draft syllabus contains little that addresses the media or the use of ICT in a way that would enable some of these issues to be explored. This issue was reflected in some of the written submissions. For example, the Press Council submission noted that there was a need to enlarge the focus on the media in topic 3.4 to include the concepts of the power of the press; accountability of the press; and new media. This issue was raised in a number of submissions: *I would favour some media mapping/ tracking exercises… that would assist students identify relevant issues… The role the media plays in highlighting/ignoring/ distorting the same issues of interdependence, conflict, sustainable development, equality and diversity is, I believe, a critical issue* (Dr. Gerry Jeffers). The use of the media as a potential methodological tool was also highlighted in the Irish Film Institute submission.

The consultation process suggests that greater prominence be given to studies of traditional and new media.

Changing the concept of culture

It was noted by the Anthropological Association and by the focus group with anthropology students that culture is a central concept in the syllabus. They felt that, because culture was dealt with first within the context of accounts of social order, it might tend to be seen primarily as an uncontested or agreed set of values, norms and beliefs. It was felt that the use of the work of Anthony Giddens was likely to further this

perception. They suggested replacing the references to Giddens with references to more anthropological thinkers such as Mary Douglas (see for example http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/srb/cyber/cyber.html), Clifford Geertz or Thomas Hyland Eriksen (see http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/).

> **The consultation process suggests that a more anthropological perspective on the concept of culture should be included.**

Social scientific skills

It was noted a number of times in the consultation process that a number of social scientific skills are referenced in either the syllabus objectives or in the assessment but are left implicit and un-stated in the learning outcomes. These include reading, interpreting, manipulating and analysing data, quantitative and qualitative; engaging with contrary argument in coming to judgement; using data in coming to judgement; being cautious in articulating the claims that can be made based on data; and the application of abstract concepts and theories to the particular instances of everyday life. It was argued that these skills should be explicitly identified in the learning outcomes, in addition to the skills that are currently identified there.

> **The consultation process suggests that the range of social scientific skills to be learned should be specified in the learning outcomes.**

Additional concepts and thinkers

Throughout the consultation process, participants identified that they would like to see other concepts given prominence. In some cases they suggested removing some of the existing content in order to make space; in other cases they were simply suggested as additional concepts. In some cases it was suggested that concepts (like citizenship) need to be approached in a more critical way while in other submissions it was suggested that the concepts proposed are already too difficult for post-primary school learners and that there should be less of a critical focus and more of a descriptive focus in the syllabus. In one case it was suggested that existing concepts such as 'separation of powers' could not be understood adequately without the addition of a number of further concepts such as 'representation' and 'legitimacy'.

Other reasons suggested for additions included:

- The addition of some concepts (like 'Law') would bring the syllabus closer to CSPE.
- the current draft was variously described as western or Anglo-American in orientation and so the addition of a number of European or non-western thinkers was suggested.

There is no broad consensus as to other additional major concepts or 'thinkers' to be referenced.

The consultation process suggests that the ideas and thinkers included in the syllabus should be reviewed in order to ensure a balance of western and non-western perspectives.

2.5.5. Teaching and learning approaches

There was a broad basis of support for the focus on active and participatory learning approaches described in the syllabus (even if there was frequently also a view that the weighting of assessment will encourage more didactic teaching and learning).

At the same time there were some questions raised about the central place of a comparative methodology in the syllabus. One submission highlighted that comparative studies embody a set of skills that would need to be named and taught. A second argued that comparative study presupposed a knowledge which would allow people to choose appropriate comparisons, and that this knowledge may not exist. A third argued that the binary nature of comparison (with two cases chosen for comparison) created a dualistic worldview, when a multi-perspective approach is what is needed. A number of other submissions welcomed the comparative approach as appropriate and valuable.

A number of submissions suggested a focus on other methodologies:

- The use of film, media and television both as a means of engaging young people in issues and as a focus for analysis in its own right was suggested a number of times.

- One submission made a strong case for debate to be included as a key methodology which could be layered throughout the syllabus through to the assessment questions.
- A case was made for the use of critical autobiography as a learning tool.
- The 'through other eyes' methodology was highlighted.

> **The consultation process suggests that a range of teaching methodologies should be identified including, at least, critical autobiography, data collection and analysis, media analysis, debate and comparative study.**

2.6 Assessment and the weighting of the Active Citizenship Project Report

Although a small number of submissions identified the 20% weighting for the Active Citizenship Project as appropriate, most of the submissions that addressed this question suggested that, in the context of a subject that sought to teach skills as much as content knowledge, the 20% weighting for the project was too low: *20% may be too little to support and encourage real activism and engagement in the community. With 80% of marks allotted to the terminal exam… it is likely that teachers will teach to the exam* (Young Social Innovators); *Our organisation would be of the opinion that more than a 20% allocation would be appropriate for this aspect of assessment* (Association of CSPE Teachers); *The OCO would recommend highly… that the weight allocated to the active citizenship project should be increased from 20% to 40%* (Children's Obmudsman); *we feel that the 20:80 divide that is proposed in the syllabus is in contradiction with the claims made about teaching and learning in both the syllabus itself and in the NCCA document Towards Learning.* (Irish Development Education Association); *We recommend that the majority of the assessment be based on the assessment of project and practical work carried out on a continuous assessment basis… 20% is a fair percentage of the Active Citizenship element but other continuous assessment elements need to be introduced* (European Anti-Poverty Network); *where 80% of the marks is allocated to the terminal written examination, it is highly likely that learning and teaching processes will be didactic in nature* (School of Education, NUI Galway); *the percentage of the grade assigned to the project report needs to be raised to reward students' commitment and time invested… [and] to reflect the importance of*

active citizenship work as core to the subject (Ubuntu Network); *I would suggest that it should be possible to allocate perhaps an additional 10% to the Active Citizenship Project bringing it up to 30%* (Conor Harrison); *The IHRC recommends that… the proportion of the final marks allocated for the Active Citizenship project be increased from 20% to 40% of the overall assessment to comply more closely with the objectives of human rights education* (Irish Human Rights Commission); *Trócaire suggests that the subject should aim for a 70:30 approach, with the action area of the subject making up 70%* (Trócaire); *This weighting [20%] does not adequately reflect the importance of project work in the curriculum in our view* (Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid); *My greatest concern about the whole syllabus is that a 20% weighting for the written report on an active citizenship project is insufficient… Why not 50% for each component?* (Dr.Gerry Jeffers).   There is almost no other issue addressed in the consultation process about which there appears to be such agreement.

> **The broad consensus from the consultation process is that the percentage of marks allocated to the Active Citizenship Project Report be increased.**

A number of submissions highlighted that both aspects of the assessment were written in form, and that a significant percentage of post-primary students—perhaps particularly those from disadvantaged contexts—have severe to moderate literacy difficulties. A range of alternative assessments that were not literacy based, from video reports to oral and aural examinations were suggested. One submission noted that while the syllabus document made reference to the possibility of the Active Citizenship Project Report being submitted in a variety of formats, this needs to be further developed into practice.

> **The consultation process suggests that, as proposals for assessment are developed, attention be paid to the variety of formats in which Active Citizenship Project Report can be presented.**

2.7 Implementation of the draft syllabus

2.7.1 Teacher education and teacher qualification issues

Two issues emerge from the consultation process in relation to teacher education and qualifications for teaching Politics and Society. These were:

- what qualifications should be recognised for teaching Politics and Society?
- the process of training existing teachers who do not have appropriate qualifications for teaching the subject.

It was clear from the focus group work with both teachers and higher education students that teacher content knowledge was crucial. In light of this there was broad agreement within the focus groups and within the written submissions that degree subjects such as sociology, political studies, applied social studies and anthropology should be recognised for the purposes of registering as a teacher of Politics and Society. Generally it does not seem necessary for graduates of these disciplines to have studied all of the theorists identified in the syllabus as part of their degree subject; those who participated in focus groups typically appeared to have a broad grasp of the organisation of social and political ideas such as would allow them to locate the thinker in question within an appropriate context with relative ease. However, given focus on the use of qualitative and quantitative research in the syllabus, consideration should be given to requiring that qualifying degrees should contain an adequate level of training in social research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.

> **The consultation process suggests that degrees in sociology, political studies, applied social studies and anthropology should be recognised for the purposes as recognition as a teacher of Politics and Society, providing the degree contains an adequate level of training in social research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.**

The teacher focus group felt that the Higher Diploma in CSPE which was offered by a number of universities a decade or so ago should also be recognised as a qualification for teaching Politics and Society. This issue could be addressed through a study of the equivalence of the content of the Higher Diploma to the content of an appropriate degree. A number of respondents (including a representative from the Irish Philosophical Society) also felt that a philosophy degree should also be recognised,

though a number of participants in the philosophy student focus group felt that the degree should have a course in social or political philosophy as one of its components, otherwise they would lack an understanding of the organisation of social and political ideas that underpin the syllabus.

The consultation process suggests that degrees in philosophy should be recognised for the purposes as recognition as a teacher of Politics and Society, providing the degree contains a relevant course in social or political philosophy and an adequate level of training in social research methods, both qualitative and quantitative.

Arguments were also made by one respondent in favour of a wider range of subjects, including Classical Civilisation/ Greek and Roman Studies being recognised.

With respect to the need to provide training for existing teachers who do not have a degree in a social science subject, it was felt by the teacher focus group and by the consultation meeting with teacher education colleges and departments that:

- collaboration between the Second Level Support Service and the teacher education colleges and education departments should be explored
- that courses could have an on-line as well as a face-to-face element
- that they should include training in dealing with controversial issues and learners' emotional processes.

Concerns were raised about the funding of such in-career development in the currently constrained financial environment.

2.7.2 Support for the implementation of Politics and Society
Many of the submissions identified that the groups or organisations concerned already had existing learning resources which could be used to support the implementation of Politics and Society. Some identified that they would also seek to create new resources in the context of such an implementation.

3. Progressing the issues raised in the consultation

The consultation process has raised a number of issues with respect to the draft syllabus and its implementation. This section of the report will address some ways in which progress can be made on the issues raised in the consultation.

3.1 Title of the subject

The t of the syllabus was raised by a number of submissions with a view expressed that students may find the term 'politics' to be off-putting. No clear suggestion emerged as to an alternative name. Some of the suggestions for an alternative name seemed motivated by a desire to re-orient the syllabus in a more instrumentalist way.

It should be noted that the name *Politics and Society* is one that is now gathering a degree of recognition within schools and within broader society. As such, and given the high degree of consideration that went into choosing the name in the first place, it would be counterproductive to recommend a change.

At the same time, the concerns raised—particularly those raised by post-primary students—should be taken seriously and further support materials should make clear to students the range of issues and methodologies that are central to the subject.

3.2 Size and scope of the syllabus

The competing wishes identified by different participants in the consultation process are most evident in relation to the size and scope of the syllabus. The consultation process does seem to suggest that there is too much in the syllabus, and, as such, the amount of content in the syllabus should be reduced.

However, in addition to removing content and to specifying the skill set of the social sciences, the consultation suggests adding new content in a number of areas:
- concept of power
- human rights and international humanitarian law
- traditional and new media

- active and participative social change.

It also suggested refocusing content in some areas:
- the work of thinkers and researchers other than Kate Millett be used as the primary entry point into feminist critiques of contemporary society and that gender issues be more effectively integrated throughout
- a more anthropological perspective on the concept of culture should be included
- the left-right spectrum not be used as an analytical model.

The consultation also suggests that there might be greater specificity to the contexts and examples to be studied, with reference to:
- use of cases from and studies of school life and young peoples' lives
- exploring key ideas and social/ political structures with reference to both jurisdictions in Ireland and with reference to the European Union (while not leading to a diminution of the focus on wider world examples and issues).

Reducing the content in the syllabus, while at the same time bringing a new focus to certain key issues, will require significantly rethinking the syllabus concepts and organisation. It will also mean removing some aspects of the syllabus that met with approval during the consultation process. Nonetheless, a reduction in content and a refocusing of the syllabus seems merited.

While a series of additional thinkers and concepts have been suggested, the addition of other major concepts seems not to be compatible with the aim of reducing the amount of content in the syllabus. At the same time, the syllabus could be reviewed with a view to ensuring that there is a balance between male and female and between western and non-western.

3.3 Communicating effectively

It is evident from the consultation process that the syllabus did not communicate effectively to everyone the proposed focus on active and participative learning, on inductive learning which is grounded in the student's own experience, and on the exploration of ideas rather than the study of theorists.

In order to communicate these intentions more effectively the language of the learning outcomes in the draft syllabus should be revisited with a view to de-emphasising the focus on theorists and instead emphasising the exploration of civic, social and political life in a way that is informed by social scientific concepts and evidence.

Support materials for both teachers and students and lesson exemplars for the subject would also play an important role in effectively communicating the syllabuses intentions.

3.4 The nature of the syllabus as both instrumental and critical

The syllabus was conceived as one which brought the critical skills of social and political science to bear, and, through this, enhanced the capacity of the learner to be a reflective, active citizen. There is a tension evident in the consultation process between those that would argue for a more instrumental aim focused on active citizenship and those that would argue more for a social scientific focus in the syllabus.

Arising from the consultation process it may make sense to enhance the capacity of the syllabus to deliver on its aim though putting a greater emphasis in the learning outcomes on the skills of social science and on a critical exploration of the values dimension of the syllabus. This could be achieved through greater prominence be given to some introductory aspects of the study of ethics. It could also be achieved through making explicit the social scientific skills which students are expected to learn in more explicit terms, including skills around qualitative and quantitative data interpretation and analysis, skills in using data to come to judgements, skills in comparison etc.

3.5 Learning methodologies

While the syllabus highlighted the use of a number of active methodologies, the structure of the learning outcomes placed a primacy on a comparative method. A number of submissions highlighted that a number of keystone teaching methodologies

should be identified including, at least, critical autobiography, data collection and analysis, media analysis, debate and comparative study.

3.6 Assessment

There was a degree of consensus in the consultation process that the percentage of marks awarded to the Active Citizenship Project Report be increased from 20% of the marks. It should be noted that this recommendation was made on the basis of the assessment information contained in the syllabus—in other words, the participants in the consultation process were not aware of the assessment approaches being considered by the Course Committee and the Board of Studies. It is possible that these assessment approaches—which place a focus on the analysis of social scientific skills in the written exam—would have addressed some of the concerns about the assessment of skills raised in the consultation. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to reconsider if an additional component of the marks could be allocated to the Active Citizenship Project Report, perhaps through the inclusion of a question on the written exam paper in addition to the project report.

It is possible that some of the comments regarding the weighting of marks for the Active Citizenship Project Report arose from participants in the consultation process equating this report with the Action Project Report in junior cycle Civic, Social and Political Education. In order to highlight and clarify the differences between these two assessment approaches it is appropriate to reconsider the title of the Active Citizenship Project Report in Politics and Society.

The consultation process highlighted that means of presentation other than a written report should continue to be included as options for the assessment.

3.7 Teacher qualifications and teacher education

The consultation process, and in particular the teacher focus groups and focus groups with higher education students, suggested that degrees in sociology, political studies, applied social studies and anthropology should be recognised for the purposes of recognition as a teacher of Politics and Society, providing the degree contains an adequate level of training in social research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. It also suggests that degrees in philosophy should be recognised for the purposes of recognition as a teacher of Politics and Society, providing the degree contains a

relevant course in social or political philosophy and an adequate level of training in social research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. The NCCA can raise these issues with the Teaching Council as part of the on-going communication between the two bodies.

With respect to the need to provide training for existing teachers who do not have a degree in a social science subject, it was felt by the teacher focus group and by the consultation meeting with teacher education colleges and departments that:

- collaboration between the Second Level Support Service and the teacher education colleges and education departments should be explored
- that courses could have an on-line as well as a face-to-face element
- that they should include training in dealing with controversial issues and learners' emotional processes.

Appendix 1: Written submissions

Amnesty International
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta
Association of C.S.P.E. Teachers
Citizenship Studies Project (Curriculum Development Unit and Trócaire)/Student Council Support, on behalf of the young people who participated in their research
Citizenship Studies Project (Curriculum Development Unit and Trócaire), on behalf of student and practicing teachers who participated in a consultation process
Conor Harrison, National Co-ordinator – Cultural and Environmental Education
Curriculum Development Unit
Department of Foreign Affairs, European Union Division
Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid
Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick, Dr. Brid Quinn
Department of Social and Family Affairs, Social Inclusion Division, incorporating the Combat Poverty Agency
Department of Sociology, NUI Maynooth Prof. Sean O'Riain, Prof. Mary Corcoran, Dr. John O'Brennan
Dr Gerry Jeffers, Education Department, NUI, Maynooth
Dr. Graham Finlay, School of Politics and International Relations, UCD
Dr Mark Maguire, NUI Maynooth and Anthropological Association of Ireland
Dr. Laurence Davis, NUI Maynooth
Dr. Pat O'Mahony and Dr. Cara Nine, Sociology and Philosophy, University College Cork
Dublin Institute of Technology, Community Links Programme
Equality Authority
European Anti-Poverty Network
Frank Bredin, Wesley College
Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
Irish Development Education Association
Irish Film Institute
Irish Human Rights Commission
Irish Philosophical Society, Sarah Otten
Irish Red Cross
Mary Geraldine Shevlin
Nora Shovelin, Loreto College, Swords
Ombudsman for Children
Press Council of Ireland
Rosalind Duke, Consultant Development Educator
School of Education, NUI Galway
School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway
Senator Mark Daly and Keriann Hopkins, Seanad Éireann
Trócaire
Ubuntu Network: Teacher Education for Sustainable Development
Young Social Innovators

Submissions were received from individuals and from organisations. Where individuals provided an institutional affiliation, this has been included in the list. Where the submission was from an organisation or a group it is the organisation, rather than an

individual, who are named. As it was not always clear whether the submission was from an individual or a group/organisation, some misattribution may occur in this list.

Participants

Ms. Sarah Allen
Ms. Oonagh Bennett
Ms. Sara Bradshaw
Ms. Bernadette Brennan
M.F. Burns-Solan
Ms. Michelle Byrne
Ms. Catherine Byrne
Ms Eileen Coleman
Ms. Oonagh Comerford
Ms. Sile Comiskey
Ms. Áine Cowley
Ms. Mella Cusack
Mr. Bill Doherty

Appendix 2: Politics and Society Teacher Focus Groups

Ms. Yvonne Doherty
Ms. Mary Forrestal
Ms. Eileen Gray
Mr. Conor Harrison
Ms. Annette Keane
Ms. Marie Lenehan
Ms. Valerie Lewis
Ms. Evelyn McAuliffe
Ms. Kathryn Moore
Mr. Brendan O'Brien
Ms. Deirdre Phelan
Ms. Siobhan Reynolds
Ms. Rosemary Rogers
Mr. Kieran Shanahan
Ms. Mary Geraldine Shelvin
Ms. Nora Shovelin
Ms. Mary-Elaine Tynan

Appendix 3: Consultation meeting with subject associations and post-primary teacher education colleges and education departments

Participants

Mr. Sean Bracken, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3

Dr. Marie Clarke, Education Department UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4

Mr. Tom Geary, Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick, Limerick

Dr. Majella McSharry, Education Department, Dublin City University, Dublin 9

Ms. Marie Campbell, St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo, Co. Sligo

Ms. Patricia Eaton, Education Department, National University of Ireland Galway, Galway

Ms. Sarah Otten, Carlow College, College St, Carlow

Professor Kathy Hall, Department of Education, University College Cork,Leeholme, Donovan's Road, Cork, Ireland

Dr. Gerry Jeffers, Education Department, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Co.Kildare

Dr. Michael Shevlin, Department of Education, Trinity College, College Green, Dublin 2

Fergus Hogan,Waterford Institute of Technology, Cork Road, Waterford

Professor Neil Collins, College of Business and Law, University College Cork, Cork

Dr Andrew Finlay, Anthropological Association of Ireland, Sociology Department, Trinity College, College Green, Dublin 2

Dr. Mark McGuire, Department of Anthropology, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

1. Introduction

As part of its ongoing review of senior cycle, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)has been involved in a process of revising existing subjects and developing a number of new subjects. This process aims to allow for choice and flexibility, an appropriate balance between knowledge and skills, and the promotion of learning strategies that equip learners to participate in and contribute to a changing world; a wider range of subjects with which students can engage; and an enhanced focus on the learning experience of the student.

As a result of this process, this draft Politics and Society syllabus is now the subject of a consultation process.

This questionnaire seeks your views on the draft Politics and Society syllabus,which can be viewed and downloaded from www.ncca.ie/seniorcycle.

1. I am responding as a

- Teacher
- School Principal/Deputy Principal
- Second level student
- Third level student
- Parent/Guardian

Other (please specify)

2. If you are a teacher or Principal, what is your school type?

- Community college
- Community school
- Comprehensive School
- Vocational School
- Voluntary secondary school
- Other (please specify)

3. If you are a teacher, what are your (two) main teaching subjects?

	Subject 1	Subject 2
Subjects		

4. If you are a teacher or third level student, have you studied Sociology, Politics, Anthropology or Philosophy to degree level?

- Sociology
- Politics
- Anthropology

Philosophy

5. If you are a teacher, do you hold a postgraduate qualification in CSPE teaching?

Yes

No

If yes please list the qualification and the awarding body

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Philosophy

5. If you are a teacher, do you hold a postgraduate qualification in CSPE teaching?

Yes

No

If yes please list the qualification and the awarding body

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

2. Syllabus layout, design and readability

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The rationale for the inclusion of Politics and Society in senior cycle as laid out on pages 10 and 11 is clear.	○	○	○	○	○
The layout of the syllabus is clear.	○	○	○	○	○
The structure of the syllabus is easy to follow.	○	○	○	○	○
Although there is some technical language, the syllabus is readable and understandable.	○	○	○	○	○
The introduction, aim and objectives give me an accurate understanding of what the syllabus sets out to achieve.	○	○	○	○	○
The overview of the syllabus provides a useful summary of what will be studied in the subject.	○	○	○	○	○
Links and complementarity with other senior cycle subjects is clear.	○	○	○	○	○

Comments on layout design and readability

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

3. Learning outcomes

The topics in new and revised senior cycle syllabuses are presented in learning outcomes. Learning outcomes describe what the student should be able to know and do as a result of studying the subject.

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The topic titles and explanations are clear	○	○	○	○	○
The learning outcomes describe clearly what the student should be able to know and do as a result of studying Politics and Society	○	○	○	○	○
The learning outcomes will be useful to teachers in planning for teaching and learning in the subject	○	○	○	○	○
The learning outcomes make clear the links between learning and assessment	○	○	○	○	○
The learning outcomes will help guide students in managing their own learning	○	○	○	○	○
The learning outcomes will help teachers to plan for mixed ability settings	○	○	○	○	○

Any further comments on learning outcomes

8. Are there any learning outcomes which are inappropriately assigned to higher/ ordinary level?

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, please specify which learning outcomes and why.

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

4. Teaching and Learning in Politics and Society

The draft syllabus recommends that the core teaching and learning approach for Politics and Society is (a) the study of local case studies which illustrate a key concept or idea, and (b) its comparison to a case study drawn from a national, European or wider world context.

Another key element of the teaching and learning approach for Politics and Society is an Active Citizenship project, which is completed by the student.

This section asks questions regarding these core teaching and learning approaches.

9. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. This approach to teaching and learning will:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ensure young people are faced with content which they find engaging	○	○	○	○	○
promote active learning	○	○	○	○	○
promote the development of key skills for active participation in social and political life	○	○	○	○	○
pose challenges in finding/ researching case studies relevant to students lives	○	○	○	○	○
pose challenges in finding a balance of national, European and wider world case studies	○	○	○	○	○

Any further comments

10. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. The Active Citizenship project will:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
promote active learning	○	○	○	○	○
give life skills for active participation in social and political life	○	○	○	○	○
pose major challenges for teachers/ schools in supporting these projects	○	○	○	○	○
pose major challenges for organisations in the community in hosting the active citizenship	○	○	○	○	○

projects

Any further comments

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

5. The content of Politics and Society

11. Does the Politics and Society syllabus provide a broad introduction to key ideas in social and political education?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

12. Unit 1: Interdependence and conflict is presented in the following seven topics. Please indicate your level of agreement with the appropriateness on each of these topics for senior cycle.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Active citizenship					
Origins of social solidarity					
Democratic governance					
Democratic practices in small groups					
Cultural and normative accounts of social order					
Divisions in society					
Comparing perspectives on interdependence and divisions in society					

Any further comments

13. Unit 2: Globalisation and Localisation is presented in the following four topics. Please indicate your level of agreement with the appropriateness on each of these topics for senior cycle.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Diversity in contemporary societies					
Understanding the relationship between equality and diversity					
Perspectives on development					
Understanding sustainable development					

Any further comments

14. Are there any major areas of social and political education which should be included in a senior cycle syllabus and are not included in Politics and Society?

- Yes

◯ No

◯ Don't know

If 'yes' please specify what areas

15. Is there anything currently in the draft Politics and Society syllabus that should be reduced or removed?

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Don't know

If 'yes' please specify what and why

16. Do you have any further comments you would like to make regarding the draft Politics and Society syllabus?

Senior Cycle Politics and Society Consultation

6. Assessment

Two components of assessment are proposed for Politics and Society as outlined on pages 46 and 47 of the syllabus; a report on an Active Citizenship Project and a written examination.

17. The Active Citizenship Project as described in Unit 1, page 24, enables the student to evaluate different opportunities for taking action, to justify the activity they choose and to evaluate their experience of being an active participant in civic, social and political life. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the active citizenship project.
The active citizenship project will

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
assess students' ability to sustain a cogent argument	○	○	○	○	○
allow students to show evidence of learning gained from the course	○	○	○	○	○
enable students to apply learning to real world contexts	○	○	○	○	○
allow students demonstrate how they are being personally effective in active citizenship contexts	○	○	○	○	○
afford students the opportunity to engage in extended reflection, research and analysis	○	○	○	○	○

Any further comments

18. The range of question types proposed for the written examination are outlined on page 46 of the syllabus.Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. The written paper will assess the student's

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
knowledge and understanding	○	○	○	○	○
ability to analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative social and political data	○	○	○	○	○
ability to form reasonable and logical argument	○	○	○	○	○

Any further comments