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

Report on the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Construction Technology specification

June 2025

Contents

Introduction

The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report (NCCA 2022) was published in March 2022 following the response from the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, TD. Actions outlined in the Advisory Report include a review of existing curriculum components - subjects, modules, and programmes. In March 2022, the Minister for Education requested that NCCA undertake a series of actions to support the realisation of her vision for a redeveloped senior cycle as set out in Equity and Excellence for All (Department of Education, 2022.) One key action set out in this plan was that a schedule of senior cycle subjects and modules for redevelopment be prepared for approval by the Minister.

NCCA subsequently prepared a schedule of subjects for review, which was organised into a number of tranches. The redevelopment of Tranche 2 subjects will be completed in 2025 for introduction to schools in 2026. The redevelopment of the specification for Leaving Certificate Construction Technology is included in Tranche 2.

The draft Leaving Certificate Construction Technology specification was made available for public consultation from March 3 until May 2 2025. The aim of the consultation was to elicit a wide range of perspectives from the public and a wide range of stakeholders in relation to the curriculum and assessment arrangements in the draft specification for Leaving Certificate Construction Technology. The feedback from the consultation supports the development group to finalise the specification.

The key areas of focus within the consultation were:

- Rationale and Aims
- Key competencies
- Course structure, strands, and learning outcomes
- Additional assessment components
- Supports needed for successful enactment
- Subject name.

The feedback received during the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Construction Technology specification was mostly positive. Most respondents welcomed the redevelopment of the subject, particularly with its updated focus on sustainability, modern methods of construction, and its relevance to industry. Other respondents called for student learning outlined in the specification to be more closely aligned with Passive House standards. The Rationale and Aims, and examples of key competencies were affirmed, though some respondents suggested some minor edits to language to improve clarity and coherence.

The four strands of study were viewed as relevant, clearly defined, and well organised. However, concerns were raised about the manageability of teaching and learning, particularly regarding the breadth and depth of the subject, and how theory and practical work would be integrated across 5th and 6th year. The assessment components were broadly supported, with a strong welcome

for the focus on assessing practical learning. However, some respondents called for manageable timelines and greater clarity around tasks and expectations.
Resourcing and teacher professional learning emerged as critical supports for the successful enactment of the specification. While the proposed subject name 'Construction Technology' received divided opinions, the feedback often reflected broader initiatives that could enhance the subject's identity and appeal.

The following sections of this report will elaborate in more detail on aspects of these general findings. Section One provides an overview of the consultation process. Section Two provides insights into the consultation findings while Section Three presents key considerations and conclusions.

Section 1: Consultation Process

Consultation is a key aspect of NCCA's work, where advice is shaped by feedback from the public, schools, settings, education interests and others. The following section presents an overview of the approach employed during this consultation which is underpinned by the principles set out in NCCA's Research Strategy (2023a) and provides a summary of engagement during the consultation.

Approach to consultation

The consultation for the review of Construction Technology included multiple modes of engagement during the eight-week consultation process:

- An online survey
- Written submissions
- A public consultation event
- School visits with focus groups conducted in a cross section of schools to capture the insights from teachers, students and school leaders.

Participants self-selected to respond to the online survey, make a written submission and attend the public consultation event. In terms of the school-based focus groups, a cross-section of schools was selected from the thirty-five schools that expressed an interest in becoming involved in Leaving Certificate Construction Technology developments. The eight schools were selected using criteria relating to DEIS status, gender, school size and type. Visits to these schools took place between March 12 and April 4 2025 and involved focus group meetings with students and teachers of Leaving Certificate Construction Studies and with school leaders, as detailed in Table 1. Students aged 18 years and over consented to their participation in the focus groups, while parental consent and student assent was sought for school visit participants under the age of 18. A written record of all discussions was made during focus groups and school visits. The privacy of all contributors to the consultation has been maintained through anonymisation, except where an organisation or individual has given explicit permission to be identified as contributing to the consultation. All data from the consultation has been stored as digital files in line with NCCA's Data Protection Policy (2023b). In accordance with the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), any data from this consultation will be anonymised and aggregated and made available alongside the report on the website www.ncca.ie.

The online survey was provided in both English and Irish allowing each participant to select their preferred language and was distributed through Microsoft Forms on the ncca.ie website. The survey was framed around the key areas of focus outlined in the introduction.

The public consultation event and the school visits concentrated on the same areas of focus as the online survey and provided opportunities to further explore and probe those areas through conversation. The school-based focus groups helped to gain deeper insights on the draft specification from students and teachers and to gain insights into the perspectives of school leaders.

The written submissions were guided by the same areas of focus as the online survey, school visits and focus groups, and allowed for the exploration of areas of particular interest to organisations and interested parties.

Consultation responses

Responses were collected across the various modes of engagement which provided multiple opportunities for public engagement. Table 1 below provides an overview of levels of engagement across the consultation.

Mode of consultation	Overview of participants	Numbers
Online survey	Contributors including • Teachers • School leaders • Further/higher educators • Further/higher students • Construction professionals/architects	52
Written submissions	Contributors including • Teacher • Teachers Union • Subject Association • Statutory/Public bodies • Various organisations and groups working in the area of the built environment	10
Public consultation event	Attendees including • Teachers • Parents • Educators from Further and Higher Education	21
School based focus groups	Student focus groups	62
	Teacher focus groups	15
	School leaders focus groups	17

Section 2: Feedback from the Consultation

This section presents an overview of the feedback received during the consultation. The consultation focused on gathering the open and honest views of the public in relation to the curriculum and assessment arrangements in the redeveloped draft specification for Leaving Certificate Construction Technology and the findings can be grouped under the following headings/themes:

- Overall impressions of the draft specification
- Clarity and manageability of the learning set out within the draft specification
- Assessment
- Supports for successful enactment
- Subject name.

The information gathered in response to the questions posed throughout the consultation has been used in the commentary on each theme in this section.

Other areas which were not directly consulted upon, but which were considered relevant to the development of Leaving Certificate Construction Technology by those participating in the consultation, are also presented in this section of the report.

Overall impressions of the draft specification

Overall, the responses to the consultation indicated a mostly positive perspective on the draft Leaving Certificate Construction Technology specification, with many respondents including teachers and students welcoming the direction and intent of the proposed changes. There was strong support for the updated specification to reflect current trends and practices in the construction industry. Respondents commended its relevance, particularly the emphasis on sustainability, environmental responsibility, and its focus on modern methods of construction. Some respondents recommended strengthening the focus on sustainability. Others suggested aligning student learning in the specification more closely with Passive House standards and enhancing the building science content to make the learning experience more relevant.

Many respondents affirmed that the subject's stated Rationale, Aims, and the learning set out in the draft specification are appropriate and align well with developments in the broader construction industry and the needs of students. However, a few respondents noted that the Aims could place greater emphasis on the development of handcraft skills. Some respondents suggested refining some elements of language to clarify and strengthen the rationale and aims. The links to STEM and apprenticeships were also seen as progressive and beneficial, reinforcing the subject’s value in preparing students for Further and Higher Education, as well as future careers.

The specification's structure organised around four strands of study was well received. Teachers appreciated the clarity and progression embedded in the four strands, noting that this structure provides a solid framework for both teaching and learning.

While many respondents acknowledged that the learning set out in the draft specification is relevant, concerns were also raised about the manageability of teaching and learning. Some respondents also raised concerns about the continuity of learning between fifth and sixth year. Respondents suggested developing pedagogical supports to help ensure a more balanced and integrated approach to both theory and project work across the two years.

Respondents noted that the practical nature of the subject is important, and its emphasis in the draft specification was strongly welcomed. They also highlighted the value of hands-on learning, particularly for students who enjoy the practical application of the subject. There was a strong desire to maintain a central focus on traditional handcraft skills within the subject.

Assessment was generally viewed positively, particularly in relation to Additional Assessment Component 1: Exploring the Constructed Environment. Some respondents highlighted the need to provide greater clarity in relation to both Additional Assessment Components (AACs). Opinions varied on the inclusion of the second AAC. While a majority of teachers and students welcomed it, others feared it could increase pressure and reduce the appeal of the subject. They highlighted the importance of carefully considering the overall assessment load of both AACs to ensure it remains manageable.

Clarity and manageability of the learning set out within the draft specification

Many respondents expressed the view that the learning outcomes and strands are generally clear and well-structured. The visual layout, including the strand graphic, was positively received.

Respondents acknowledged that the areas of learning outlined within the strands of study were important and essential for student learning. However, concerns were raised about the manageability of teaching and learning due to the broad nature of the subject. There was no clear consensus on which areas of learning should be removed from the specification. While some respondents proposed removing or reducing the focus of certain areas, others suggested that those same areas should be expanded and given greater emphasis.

Many respondents welcomed the details provided relating to the Senior Cycle Key Competencies. Some suggestions were made to clarify and strengthen the examples. Other respondents were unsure how the competency *Participating in society* could be supported in the classroom.

Strand 1: The Built Environment

The areas of learning outlined in Strand 1: The Built Environment have been generally well received by respondents. They broadly welcome the strong emphasis on key themes such as sustainability, safety, universal design, and heritage.

While many respondents were satisfied with Strand 1, some respondents recommended reducing the number of learning outcomes and clarifying what the students will learn about to make the

curriculum more manageable, particularly for students studying at ordinary level and those with additional needs.

Strand 2: Design, Craft Skills, and Materials

The responses to the consultation indicated a positive overall perspective on Strand 2: Design, Craft Skills, and Materials. Respondents particularly appreciated its focus on practical learning, with many highlighting the importance of giving students the opportunity to work directly with materials and develop their craft skills.

Most respondents felt that the learning outcomes in Strand 2 are generally clear and well-structured. However, some suggested that further clarity could be provided in areas such as design skills, project management, and craft skills. The introduction of building information modelling (BIM) is seen as a positive move towards aligning with industry standards. However, some concerns were raised around the volume of learning required for BIM and Computer Aided-Design (CAD). Some respondents also expressed concerns about the time required to teach scaled drawings and suggested reducing the number of drawings to be completed by students.

Strand 3: Building Fabric

The responses to the consultation indicated a mixed perspective on Strand 3: Building Fabric. Teachers and students strongly supported the inclusion of modern and relevant topics like sustainability, passive design, and wellness. They expressed the view that these areas of learning align well with the Rationale and Aims of the subject. Respondents highlighted the importance of these themes in preparing students for current and emerging practices in the construction industry. Some respondents suggested that the specification would be strengthened by aligning to Passive House standards.

Some concerns were raised around the volume of learning required for students, and a need to clarify some areas of learning. Some respondents also raised concerns about the expectations regarding scaled drawings. Respondents also highlighted the need for access to physical models or virtual reality (VR) tools to effectively engage students with the fabric of a modern building.

Strand 4: Services and Control Technology

The responses to the consultation indicated a generally positive perspective on Strand 4, with strong approval for its emphasis on modern technologies and sustainability. Respondents found the learning outcomes to be clear and well-structured, providing effective support for planning teaching and learning. The stated Rationale and Aims of the subject were affirmed by many, particularly their focus on sustainability and energy efficiency, which are seen as essential in modern construction practices.

There was strong support for the inclusion of new and emerging technologies. At the same time, respondents highlighted the importance of keeping the curriculum flexible so it can adapt to future changes in technology. Some concerns were raised by teachers about the overall volume of learning in this strand. It was also noted that some of the learning should only be expected of students following Higher Level. Some respondents also felt that the strand should place greater emphasis on building science, while others noted challenges in determining the extent to which technical topics such as U-values and heat transfer were to be taught.

Assessment

Additional assessment component 1: Exploring the Constructed Environment

The responses to the consultation indicated a generally positive perspective on Additional Assessment Component 1: Exploring the Constructed Environment. Many respondents welcomed the thematic, open-ended, and student-centred approach envisaged in this component. There was strong support for allowing flexibility in project choice, enabling students to pursue areas such as model making, heritage, or modern technologies reflecting diverse interests and strengths. Some students noted that a narrow, prescribed brief would limit creativity and engagement, particularly for those drawn to practical, hands-on work. Some respondents suggested providing multiple briefs so that students can choose one based on their strengths, interests, and context, but also noted that this approach could present challenges. Many teachers and students also expressed a preference to respond to the AAC through the medium of wood.

The 30% weighting of the AAC received broad approval from respondents, as they felt it accurately reflects the significant time, effort, and learning involved. However, concerns were raised about the proposed 35-hour time allocation, which many considered unrealistic. Respondents suggested beginning the project earlier, ideally in 5th year, to give students more time and flexibility. Improved scheduling of the AACs was also recommended to avoid conflicts with deadlines in other subjects.

Many students and teachers favoured an assessment arrangement that places greater emphasis on the practical solution, suggesting that the hands-on work is the more significant aspect of the project. In this context, respondents also recommended reducing the workload associated with the accompanying portfolio.

Additional assessment component 2: Craft Skills Assessment

The responses to the consultation indicated a broadly positive perspective on Additional Assessment Component 2: Craft Skills Assessment, particularly appreciating the opportunity it gives students to demonstrate their practical competencies. There was strong endorsement of a continued focus on hands-on, skills-based learning within the subject.

There was strong approval for the inclusion of craft skills, such as interpreting drawings, working with precision, and solving problems within a set timeframe. Several respondents welcomed the use of machinery and modern tools in AAC2 where feasible, highlighting their relevance to industry and potential to boost student engagement. Some also suggested strengthening the task to include more problem-solving and design elements, allowing for greater creativity and decision-making.

The proposed three-hour format was generally accepted, though some preferred four or even five hours. Many respondents highlighted the importance of the task being designed with due consideration of the time afforded to students. Concerns were raised about health and safety, access to machinery, and differences in teacher expertise and capacity.

Some respondents questioned the necessity of having two separate AACs, given the demands of the new specification. There were concerns this could deter students from choosing the subject if it appears more demanding compared to other subjects.

Some respondents called for further clarity relating to this AAC and suggested broadening its scope beyond a focus on wood. They proposed offering differentiated tasks in areas such as engaging with elements of the building fabric, plumbing, or electrical work, and allowing part of the task to be completed in advance. There was general approval for the weighting of 20% of this AAC, however others recommended increasing it to 25% to reflect the importance of craft skills.

Written examination

Many respondents highlighted the importance of students having choice in the written examination.

Supports for successful enactment

Respondents identified several key areas to support the successful implementation of the revised Construction Technology specification. Professional development emerged as a central theme with a strong emphasis on the need for a practical, hands-on Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) programme. Respondents requested support in various areas of learning outlined in the draft specification, including modern methods of construction, passive design principles, BIM, air tightness, and sustainable technologies. Teachers emphasised the need for TPL that offers practical supports, such as sample units of learning, and strategies that promote integrated teaching and learning. They requested that TPL is responsive to the specific needs of different schools, teaching contexts, and levels of teacher experience.

Resources and infrastructure were also highlighted as critical enablers. Some teachers advocated for a centralised resource bank of digital construction models and editable planning tools to promote collaboration and reduce workload. Respondents welcomed the modernisation of the subject and recognised the need for well-equipped classrooms, investment in tools and equipment, and access to digital teaching resources and visual supports. Some respondents highlighted a need for access to technician support and maintenance of existing workshop equipment. Respondents highlighted the importance of taking an equitable approach that considers the unique context of each school, ensuring every student has a fair opportunity to succeed in the subject.

In relation to assessment, respondents noted the importance of careful scheduling of the AACs and setting realistic timelines to support effective implementation. Many respondents highlighted the need for assessment supports, including sample briefs, marking schemes, and guidance for supporting students. There was a strong view that AAC1 should not require students to stay after school or complete significant portions at home. Such expectations could create inequities, particularly for students with limited home support or access to resources. Many respondents highlighted logistical challenges in relation to AAC2 in under-resourced settings, where access to equipment, or adequate workspace may be limited.

Other challenges to successful enactment identified by respondents include securing supports for students with additional needs and managing the high number of assessments students will be completing across senior cycle. School leaders raised concerns about having enough teachers, pointing to challenges with hiring and keeping staff.

Additional areas identified by respondents included the need for greater clarity around health and safety and appropriate storage for student work, especially in the context of practical assessments. Respondents also highlighted the importance of ongoing communication and

collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure the successful enactment of the specification in classrooms.

Subject name

The proposed name ‘Construction Technology’ divided opinion amongst respondents. While many viewed the name change positively, seeing it as modern and reflective of technological developments such as BIM and VR, others felt it reinforced gender stereotypes. Alternative names such as 'Architectural Technology,' 'Construction and Design,' and 'The Built Environment' were suggested, but there was no clear consensus on these options.

Respondents noted that factors other than the subject name should also be considered to broaden the subject's appeal. These include the presence of female role models, offering opportunities for subject sampling during Transition Year, and ensuring that both parents and students are well informed about the subject's content and relevance.

Section 3: Considerations and Conclusion

Considerations

Overall, the draft specification for Leaving Certificate Construction Technology received largely positive feedback, and the consultation fulfilled its objective of initiating discussion and debate on key aspects of the design of the redeveloped subject. The consultation feedback was considered by the development group when finalising the specification for Construction Technology.

Issues raised for consideration in this context included:

- Strengthening and building on learning across the strands to enhance relevance, clarity, and alignment with the subject's rationale and aims.
- Reviewing the overall breadth and depth of the specification to ensure teaching, learning, and assessment are manageable within the allocated 180 hours.
- Consideration of how the descriptions of the AACs can address perceptions about their focus and manageability, while maintaining the intended design of the components
- Consideration of the types of supports needed to ensure the successful enactment of the specifications, including actions required to broaden appeal.

Conclusion

The consultation process was very informative. The engagement of those who participated in the consultation is acknowledged and NCCA is grateful for the feedback received. Consultation feedback indicates there are positive views on the draft specification, while acknowledging that there are concerns around breadth and depth of learning. Respondents noted that the provision of professional learning, supports and resources are fundamental to successful implementation. The high level of teacher input to the consultation is gratefully acknowledged and the positive response from teachers indicates a sense of optimism about the opportunity to revitalise the subject.

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Appendix One: List of Contributors

The following is a list of individuals and/or organisations who responded to the consultation, that wished to be listed in this report.

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