



NCCA

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

Report on the consultation on the draft specification for Leaving Certificate Life, Community and Work

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SECTION 1: CONSULTATION PROCESS	4
Approach to consultation.....	4
Consultation responses:	6
SECTION 2: FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSULTATION	7
Overall impressions of the draft specification	7
Clarity and manageability of the learning set out within the draft specification	8
Assessment and the Additional Assessment Component	11
Supports for successful enactment	12
Other areas of feedback.....	13
SECTION 3: CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	14
Considerations.....	14
Conclusion	14
REFERENCES.....	15
APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	16

Introduction

The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022a) 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 Community, Life and Work Studies (formerly known as Leaving Certificate Link Modules) is included in Tranche 2.

The draft Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies specification was made available for national public consultation from February 24 to April 25, 2025. The aim of this 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 Community, Life and Work Studies. 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, including clarity and coherence
- Additional Assessment Component (AAC)
- Supports needed for successful enactment.

The responses to the consultation indicated a positive perspective on the draft specification overall. The rationale and aims for Community, Life and Work Studies were affirmed with a broad welcome for the cross-cutting elements and the role they play in supporting students to develop the key competencies in an authentic and meaningful manner. There was a broad welcome for the increased clarity associated with the 120 hour time allocation, however there were some concerns in connection to the timetabling of the modules. The current recommended allocation is three class periods in 5th year and two class periods in 6th year but this is not reflective of the difference in class duration, e.g., 40 minutes versus one hour classes. There was a strong level of approval for the redeveloped approach to the development of a portfolio, and although many welcomed the opportunities associated with the Additional Assessment Component, many concerns around clarity and coherence were raised.

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 feedback from the consultation, 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 (NCCA, 2023a) and provides a summary of engagement during the consultation.

Approach to consultation

The consultation for the review of Community, Life and Work Studies 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 28 schools that expressed an interest in becoming involved in Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies developments. The eight schools were selected using criteria relating to DEIS status, gender, school size and type. Visits to these schools took place between February 24 and April 25 2025 and involved focus group meetings with students and teachers of Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work 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 (NCCA, 2023b). In accordance with the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (NCCA, 2022b), 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 MS 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	Teachers, Examiner of Leaving Certificate Link Modules	20
Student focus groups	Students in fifth and sixth year studying the current Leaving Certificate Link Modules	46
Teacher focus groups	Teachers teaching the current Leaving Certificate Link Modules	25
School leader focus groups	Principals and Deputy Principals in schools offering Leaving Certificate Link Modules	15
Consultation event	Teachers, Programme Co-Ordinators, School Leader, Examiner, Author, Further and Higher Education Educator	9
Written submission	Higher Education and special interest organisations	5

Table 1: Levels of engagement across the consultation

The next section explores the feedback gathered throughout the consultation across the various modes of consultation.

Section 2: Feedback from the Consultation

This section presents an overview of the feedback received during the consultation. The consultation focused on the draft specification for Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies and the findings can be grouped under the following headings:

- Overall impressions of the draft specification
- Clarity and manageability of the learning set out within the draft specification
- Assessment and the Additional Assessment Component (AAC)
- Supports for successful enactment.

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 Community, Life and Work Studies by those participating in the consultation, are also presented in this section of the report.

Overarching impressions of the draft specification

Rationale and Aims

The rationale and aims of Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies were broadly welcomed and considered an appropriate and modern way to frame the learning within the specification. Discussions in focus groups in particular, positively highlighted the evolution and modernisation in the approach to the learning. There was a strong and positive welcome for learning that supports students to understand and navigate their role in different aspects of life, through the lens of personal development, with recognition of the rich and practical opportunities for the development of transferable skills and key competencies within the specification.

Although a minority noted that the focus on personal development might negatively impact students and could be difficult to assess, the majority of participants recognised the rich opportunities afforded to students in this regard. Some participants identified the potential to strengthen the rationale and aims further by explicitly referencing the abundant opportunities that the specification provides to develop a range of transferable skills and competencies, necessary for engagement with life and the future workplace, which was noted as being in alignment with broader trends and research internationally in this area. A minority of participants shared a view that the current course was appropriately framed and they did not support the redeveloped rationale and aims.

Participants across the consultation recognised opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that support students to better understand themselves and navigate their immediate and future lives. To capitalise on this unique aspect of the specification, it was suggested that the modules should be marketed to prospective students on what they can offer to support their immediate and future lives and to see opportunities beyond the CAO points. Some participants suggested that Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies should be core learning for all students. Schools who participated in the consultation who offer the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme, noted the opportunity to remove ringfencing and

provide access to these modules for students in both the Leaving Certificate Established and LCA programmes. School leaders and teachers in these schools, noted the potential that Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies had to be more appealing and relevant for students in LCA, perhaps more so, it was noted, than Ordinary Level Maths or Modern Foreign Languages. There was a broad welcome for a common level specification, however, some concerns were raised in ensuring all students had the potential to achieve and experience success.

Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies team

Much discussion on who would be most suitable to plan for and teach Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies occurred during consultation. Many participants noted an explicit link between the learning in module one and guidance. While this was broadly welcomed and noted as having the potential to support guidance for all, some participants called for a more explicit link to the Government's National Strategic Framework for Lifelong Guidance (Government of Ireland, 2023) in the specification. The meaningful involvement of the Guidance Counsellor was noted as being critical to the success of the enactment of the specification. Some participants identified a role for the Guidance Counsellor in supporting teachers to plan for and deliver the modules, ensuring the learning in this specification complemented, rather than replicated the approach to career guidance in the school. Others discussed the Guidance Counsellor teaching aspects of module one of the specification, noting the importance of qualified personnel in the delivery of careers-related education. Many participants continued to associate Community, Life and Work Studies with the suite of business teachers in the school. It was expressed during focus group discussions, that the role of enterprise was implicit within the strands of study and that teachers of business would continue to be very well suited to teaching this specification, in addition to a broader cohort of teachers from a variety of subject areas. Participants welcomed the modern and practical approach to enterprise-related learning set out in the draft specification and in most cases, saw this as more beneficial and relevant than replicating links to the 1997 Business syllabus as had been the case in the LCVP Link Modules. A small number of participants shared views that enterprise-related learning should be more explicit and should mirror how it is approached in the current course of study.

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

Overview structure and key competencies

There was a broad welcome for the structure of the specification and the clarity within the course overview and the interconnected strands of study. Significant differences in perceptions of clarity were observed between survey responses and focus group discussions, with participants in the latter observing an increased sense of clarity within the specification. There were some suggestions on how to improve the structure, which were associated with a linear or sequential understanding of the specification, or from those who wished for the current structure to remain. In general, participants tended to recognise a high level of coherence between the proposed rationale, aims and strands of study, with a lower level of coherence between the strands of study and the proposed AAC. The cross-cutting elements of Participating, Reflecting and Applying, also known as the experiential learning cycle, were generally welcomed, with opportunities within the specification for meaningful and active learning experiences positively acknowledged by many.

Concerns around ensuring all students could engage and experience success at the various levels of the experiential learning cycle were shared. Reflection was noted as a difficult but crucial skill and one that should be prioritised, with many participants welcoming the use of reflection frameworks to support the incremental development of this skill throughout the course. Although the framing of key competencies was well received by the majority of participants, a minority noted an overemphasis on problem-solving and an underemphasis on digital skills and digital literacy within the specification, with suggestions to increase opportunities to be creative and to specify the creation and development of a digital portfolio to ameliorate these concerns.

Manageability

Teachers across the consultation noted the increased numbers of students in classes as a result of the removal of the Vocational Subject Groupings, and in some cases, reflected on how this has impacted on manageability in areas such as the organisation of work experience and the development of the individual portfolio items. However, it was suggested that the proposed shift to a digital portfolio that is developed as students engage with the specification and used to engage with the AAC was welcomed, in addition to the proposed 120 hours as the time allocation. School leaders and teachers welcomed the explicit reference to teaching hours rather than class periods, providing clarity in this regard, however many schools noted significant challenges in providing 120 hours' provision for the modules in what was termed an already packed senior cycle. Current provision for the Link Modules across the consultation ranged from 40 minutes to three hours per week. Some schools timetabled students with an exemption for Irish for the Link Modules, in lieu at times, or in addition to, career guidance. In other schools career guidance was offered within the Link Modules for students engaged with the course, with a separate offering of career guidance to those not engaged with the course. In other schools, the Link Modules was considered core learning for all students in LCE.

Some participants called for the modules to be recognised as a full 180 hour subject, however, this was not a consensus perspective. Teachers and students expressed a view that the type of learning in Community, Life and Work Studies needs to have parity in value with other curriculum components. Face to face consultation with school leaders highlighted challenges faced in timetabling, with many schools increasing the contact time for core subjects such as English, Irish and Maths. This was often seen as responding to student needs, although many school leaders noted learning in Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies had the potential to be more meaningful and perhaps relevant for all students.

Learning within the strands of study

Overall response to learning across the strands of study

Participants from across the consultation generally welcomed the learning as outlined within the strands of study, and offered suggestions for refinement and improvement, which included the addition of a Glossary of Terms, edits to the 'Students learn about' column and action verbs used, and the reframing, reordering and removing of some learning outcomes. Some participants identified concerns that the learning outcomes in Module One, Strand One were too personal in nature. Although participants acknowledged the benefits of supporting students to explore their values and skillsets, concern was raised on the exploration of self-concept and the external and internal factors that influence it. Feedback from some participants identified missed opportunities

to highlight transferable skills more within the strands of study, suggesting a reframing of the terminology associated with hard and soft skills.

The role of the Curriculum Vitae and personal statement

There was significant recognition of the role that a Curriculum Vitae (CV) plays in supporting students to gain part-time employment, however there were mixed perspectives on its place within the specification. Some participants called for an explicit reference to the CV within the personal statement, while others recognised its place within the workplace. There was a broad welcome for the approach to the development of a personal statement that supports students to tailor their unique values, skillsets and experiences to a variety of job applications and roles. Students welcomed the opportunities in the specification to learn about and engage with what was termed professional jobs and application processes.

Exploration of pathways and community

Participants across the consultation strongly welcomed the learning associated with the exploration of diverse careers, with the alignment back to a student's personal statement and progression on to a competency-based application form. In general, participants welcomed the learning associated with community, noting the importance of helping all students to understand what community means to them, recognising challenges some students may face in this regard. A minority of participants questioned the appropriateness of community in the specification. Many participants recognised the opportunities that learning experiences in the community provides by supporting students to develop a broad range of transferable skills, useful in all aspects of their lives, including the workplace. Suggested refinements to the collaborative, problem-solving task and Applied Learning Task (ALT) 3, includes an explicit reference to the development of a broad range of transferable skills, including critical thinking, creativity and communication as well as collaboration and problem-solving. Some participants identified challenges associated with potential replication of learning experiences in Transition Year (TY), which depended on the nature of the TY programme offered in the school. While others identified challenges that students may face as they engage with the entire design thinking process, such as finding appropriate issues in communities and testing a pilot solution.

Enhanced engagement with the world of work

Learning associated with engaging with workplaces was generally welcomed, as was school autonomy in facilitating meaningful work experiences, although participants acknowledged the need for further guidance for schools on how to plan for and facilitate work experience. Examples of how to broaden engagement with the workplace were shared, such as engaging with role models from business and industry, visits to workplaces, work shadowing, mock interviews and interviewing people in a workplace of interest. The expansion of experiences within the workplace was considered an opportunity to build on learning experiences both in TY and those gained during part-time jobs. It could also support students who may not be in a position, for multiple reasons, to secure a meaningful work experience aligned to their career progression plans. There was significant support for the focus on reflection on feedback received from others during an engagement with the workplace, with some considering feedback that was explicitly linked to personal goals a more appropriate lens.

The Portfolio and the Applied Learning Tasks

The majority of participants supported the proposed approach to the creation and development of the portfolio, with a significant welcome for the move away from templated portfolio items to a portfolio that had the potential to reflect a student's unique engagement with the course. Some noted the opportunities for students to personalise their own learning, with students in particular welcoming the creativity the portfolio offered, supporting them to make the most of their own talents and interests.

The Applied Learning Tasks (ALTs) were acknowledged positively for providing an opportunity for students to apply their learning from their unique engagement with a number of learning outcomes to a piece of work that could be added to and further developed over time, which was noted as limited practice in the current Link Modules. This viewpoint was particularly evident during focus group discussions, when the purpose and nature of ALTs was explored. However, even though many participants could see an explicit link between the development of the ALTs and engagement with the AAC, they continued to share concerns on how teachers and students may approach and engage with the ALTs if they are not submitted to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for assessment. When participants compared the ALTs with current Link Modules portfolio items, they were often noted as being vague, with calls for exemplars of ALTs, marking schemes, specific word counts and associated templates.

Some participants also identified potential challenges for students with literacy and comprehension difficulties when engaging with, what was termed, higher ordered thinking within the ALTs, with a need to recognise all levels of achievement. The variety of formats for the development of the ALTs, such as the use of audio, photographs and videos, in addition to text, was noted as an opportunity to ameliorate some of these concerns, as was additional clarification on the relationship between the portfolio, the ALTs and the AAC. The majority of participants welcomed the sharing of the portfolio between students and teachers, which was considered to support student engagement with the portfolio and teacher authentication of the AAC.

Assessment and the Additional Assessment Component

The proposed Additional Assessment Component, My Learning in Practice, was noted as a worthwhile endeavour and one that had the potential to be meaningful for all students in both their immediate and future lives. There was a broad welcome for an annual brief that could provide a fresh context to engage with the AAC; however, scepticism was noted in terms of how the brief might support all students to engage meaningfully with what was perceived as a broad and open AAC.

Many participants could identify an explicit connection between the brief and a student's critical response to a topical issue. However, the development of a student personal profile was considered, by many, as something that could be engaged with without a brief and therefore had the potential to become formulaic and static in nature. The nature of the brief, if too narrow, was also noted as having the potential to lead to pre-defined responses instead of providing students with an explicit opportunity to draw upon and demonstrate the work of their portfolio, including the ALTs. There was consensus that students need be confident that the work they put into the development of their portfolio will pay off and support them to engage with AAC. There was a perception by some, that a large body of work within the portfolio had the potential to not be

assessed through the AAC. To address these concerns, some participants suggested the reframing of the brief to explicitly capture the work of the ALTs or uploading the ALTs to the SEC for noting and/or assessment alongside their submission document. Others though recognised the opportunities that the AAC could provide in incentivising students to develop their portfolio and ALTs which, in turn, would support their engagement with the AAC through the reframed brief.

Participants across the consultation recognised challenges associated with the proposed timing of the brief. The brief, it was noted, should motivate and incentivise students to develop their portfolio authentically as they engage with the learning outcomes of the course, supporting them to engage with the AAC, rather than potentially gaming the system and responding only to the brief, which was noted as a significant concern by some participants.

There was strong support for the submission of a single multi-modal digital document in 6th year, that provides students with an opportunity to present aspects of their portfolio in a refined and synthesised manner. Although there was a welcome for the 60% weighting, some teachers and students shared concerns that the submission document might not be substantial enough to warrant a 60% weighting, reflective of all of the work students may have engaged with in their portfolio. Students in particular, welcomed opportunities to supplement text with audio files, pictures and posters, reflective of their portfolio, recognising choice in format as supporting students to play to their strengths, interests and needs. A variety of formats was also considered, by some, to circumvent some of the challenges associated with AI, providing opportunities to present evidence of engagement with the learning outcomes of the course and of reflection on same. The use of AI in the completion of the AAC was considered counterintuitive by some students in an AAC that focuses on the development of a personal profile.

Supports for successful enactment

All participants referred to the need for a range of supports for the successful enactment of the specification. Participants suggested a variety of Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) formats such as in person events, webinars, in-school supports and communities of practices that could support the successful enactment of the specification within a variety of school contexts, although challenges were identified by some school leaders in providing appropriate cover for teachers to attend. Specific TPL supports for teachers, school leaders and Guidance Counsellors were considered necessary. There was a request from school leaders for further guidance on the provision of 120 hours across the two years of senior cycle for Leaving Certificate C Community, Life and Work Studies.

Teachers noted that TPL should support them to understand the key messages of the specification including the updated approach to the development of a digital portfolio, the AAC, and on the newer aspects of the course such as design thinking, AI and reflection frameworks. Supporting all students to engage successfully with the specification through the experiential learning cycle, as well as resources such as websites and self-assessment exercises, to support the successful engagement with the learning outcomes were also suggested. It was noted that TPL for school leaders and Guidance Counsellors should help schools to understand the changes in the specification and how it could support guidance for all within their Whole School Guidance Plan. TPL to support schools plan and timetable the modules, as well as support to communicate the redeveloped specification to students and parents was considered essential.

Assessment documentation, such as assessment guidelines, sample briefs, sample exam papers and marking schemes, was noted as a necessary support and was requested to be made available in advance of September 2026. In terms of broader resourcing issues, increased digital funding, capitation, teacher and Guidance allocation and the retention of the Co-Ordinator Post associated with the current programme in senior cycle were suggested as necessary for successful enactment. Some participants noted challenges associated with access to digital devices and Wi-Fi, in light of restrictions on student phones, while others noted concerns associated with equity and digital provision in schools. Others suggested funding to support a Teacher Professional Network specific to Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies would support the enactment of the modules.

Other areas of feedback

The new name for the Link Modules was welcomed, as were the aspirations to rebrand the modules. Some participants shared suggestions on how the name may be refined such as removing the reference to studies, which was considered dated and academically focused. Others suggested the name should include a reference to the student and their future. There was some concern that community in the title might encourage false perceptions on what this might entail, with suggestions to remove it or place it later in the title. A minority of participants wanted to retain the current name of the Link Modules and to put the word 'programme' in the title. Some participants compared the specification to the current programme statement with confusion between the two evident across the consultation.

Some participants suggested there should be an explicit reference to the roles and responsibilities of the core teaching team, Guidance Counsellor and Programme Co-Ordinator as per the current programme statement, in addition to the status of the modules in terms of core or optional learning, CAO points and the Whole School Guidance Framework. In addition, guidance on the planning and facilitation of work experience for all students, including those with Additional Educational Needs (AEN), was suggested to be explicitly referenced in the specification, as was the planning and facilitation of visits in and out of the classroom. School leaders called for guidance and support to reimagine Community, Life and Work Studies on their timetable and within their team of teachers, the Programme Co-Ordinator and Guidance Counsellors in advance of the 2026/27 school year. Flexibility for schools and their unique context in this regard was also noted as a supportive factor.

There was broad consensus that the written exam in May of 6th year should be retained, with many citing it as a unique selling point of the modules. There were mixed perspectives on the different components of the current written exam, with opportunities and challenges identified with both the Audio-Visual and Case Study. There was strong support for questions in the written exam paper that supported a personal response and ones that linked to a learning experience engaged with and developed through a student's portfolio. In terms of broader senior cycle redevelopment, participants highlighted potential pinch points within the calendar for all AACs and that the submission date for the AAC in Community, Life and Work Studies would need to be considered within this broader context. There were some calls to slow down senior cycle redevelopment and concerns of potential assessment overload. Within the broader educational context, a minority of participants suggested the Teaching Council should create a specific set of criteria for those who can teach the modules, while others considered the current open and

flexible approach more appropriate. There was a suggestion that Higher Education Institutions should recognise the modules for matriculation purposes to increase the value associated with them, with some calling for additional CAO points in line with current senior cycle subjects.

Section 3: Considerations and Conclusion

Considerations

Overall, the draft specification for Community, Life and Work Studies was very well received and the consultation fulfilled its objective of initiating discussion and debate on key aspects of the design of the redeveloped modules.

The consultation feedback was considered by the development group when finalising the specification for Leaving Certificate Community, Life and Work Studies. Issues raised for consideration in this context included:

- Consideration of how best to refine, reframe, reorder and remove learning outcomes in response to consultation feedback, including a rebalancing of higher and lower order action verbs and the use of a Glossary of Terms
- Consideration of how transferable skills are framed within the strands of study to ensure continuity with appropriate linkage between the community and workplace
- How to respond to feedback on the perceived personal nature of some learning outcomes in Module One, Strand One, Understanding Myself
- How best to reframe the approach to the collaborative, problem-solving task in response to consultation feedback to ensure students have opportunities to actively engage and develop a broad range of transferable skills
- How to best edit learning outcomes to better reflect a student's broad engagement with the workplace
- How best to respond to calls for additional clarity on the purpose and role of the portfolio, ALTs, personal profile and AAC
- Consideration of an explicit reference to a digital portfolio to support the development of digital skills
- Consideration of the structure, format and timing of the brief to ensure it addresses concerns about the potentially segregated approach to the AAC, while providing opportunities to demonstrate the work of the portfolio
- How to address feedback on the AAC and the need for additional clarity on the process
- Consideration of consultation feedback on the proposed new name.

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 very positive views on the draft specification, while acknowledging that provision of professional learning, supports and resources are fundamental to successful enactment. 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 modules given that they have not undergone any meaningful changes in over two decades.

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