



NCCA

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

Report on the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Accounting specification

August 2025

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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 Accounting is included in Tranche 2.

The draft Leaving Certificate Accounting specification was made available for national public consultation from 25 February to 25 April 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 Accounting. 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
- Supports needed for successful enactment.

The responses to the consultation indicated a welcome for the specification overall. The stated rationale and aim of the subject were affirmed, with participants welcoming the focus on digital accounting skills, ethics, and sustainability. There was strong endorsement of the approach to double-entry bookkeeping, with participants noting that it will allow students to begin the subject *ab initio* and help bridge the gap between Junior Cycle Business Studies and Leaving Certificate Accounting. A high level of approval was expressed for the specification's manageability within the 180-hour timeframe. The potential benefits of an Additional Assessment Component (AAC) were also broadly welcomed; however, participants raised a range of concerns regarding its timing and access to necessary resources. The clarity provided by the new template for developing Senior Cycle subjects and modules was generally appreciated.

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 (2023) and provides a summary of engagement during the consultation.

Approach to consultation

The consultation for the review of Leaving Certificate Accounting 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 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 twenty schools that expressed an interest in becoming involved in Leaving Certificate Accounting 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 and April 2025 and involved focus group meetings with students and teachers of Leaving Certificate Accounting 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 (2023). 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 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 of interest to organisations and interested parties.

Consultation responses

Mode of consultation	Overview of participants	Numbers
Online survey	Teachers, parents/guardians, Higher/Further Education, PME student, business practitioner	32
Public Consultation Event	Teachers, 3 rd level educators, professional body and business community representative	24
Student Focus Groups	5 th and 6 th year students of the current Leaving Certificate Accounting syllabus	50
School Leader Focus Groups	Principals and deputy principals in schools currently offering Leaving Certificate Accounting	22
Teacher Focus Groups	Teachers currently teaching Leaving Certificate Accounting syllabus	11
Written Submissions	Teacher Professional Networks, Professional Bodies, Government Organisations, Individuals	8

Table 1 Levels of engagement across the consultation

Section 2: Feedback from the Consultation

This section presents an overview of the feedback received during the consultation. The consultation focused on manageability, clarity and coherence, rationale, aims, key competencies, the cross-cutting themes, the Additional Assessment Component and supports needed for enactment. The findings from the consultation are grouped under the following themes:

- Overall impressions of the draft specification
- Coherence and clarity to support planning for teaching and learning
- Manageability
- The Additional Assessment Component
- Supports required 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 Accounting by those participating in the consultation, are also presented in this section of the report.

Overall impressions of the draft specification

Rationale and Aims

The rationale was viewed as clearly outlining the purpose and value of Leaving Certificate Accounting, emphasising its contribution to students' holistic development. It was seen as effectively highlighting the role of accounting in financial communication, ethical decision-making, and sustainability. The focus on enhancing students' financial literacy was particularly well received, noting that the subject contributes to the holistic development of the student and allows students to become confident financial decision makers. Respondents welcomed the addition of personal taxation as it allows students to develop knowledge and skills that will be relevant in their personal lives now and in the future.

However, there were suggestions to revise the language to make it more student-friendly and concise. Some participants raised concerns about the emphasis on the accounting profession and financial regulation, noting that many students who choose Leaving Certificate Accounting do not necessarily intend to pursue a career as accountants and that financial regulation may be beyond the scope of a senior cycle student.

The aims set out were broadly seen as reflecting the potential learning for students in studying Leaving Certificate Accounting and as capturing the most important themes in the specification and in Leaving Certificate Accounting more generally. It was noted that the aim justifies the subject's place within the senior cycle curriculum by demonstrating its real-world applicability and relevance to contemporary issues. It was seen as effectively highlighting Accounting's role in financial communication and the importance of ethical decision-making and sustainability.

Course Overview and Strands of Study

There was broad support for the interconnected nature of the strands, with many noting that the course overview diagram effectively illustrates these links. The structure of the specification was generally viewed as clear and user-friendly, although some respondents perceived it as somewhat linear in nature. This would suggest the need for enhancing the overview and highlighting this as an area of emphasis in professional development. The specification is not designed in a linear manner and the fundamentals are intended to be integrated across the two years of study.

The cross-cutting theme of Ethics and Sustainability was positively received. There was a call for clearer guidance within the learning outcomes on how and when this content should be addressed. It was also noted that the learning outlined should look at the consequences for not acting in an ethical and sustainable way.

The Digital Technology in Accounting cross-cutting theme, while welcomed in principle, was met with some apprehension. It was noted that this theme helped to bring accounting at senior cycle up to date with what is happening in the world of accounting. It was welcomed that students would look at how technology has transformed accounting. The absence of artificial intelligence was questioned especially in student focus groups. Respondents expressed concerns regarding the availability of continuing professional development and school resources in this respect, and this is explored further under the section on supports for enactment.

The use of the term *prescribed software* application was the subject of much discussion. Participants emphasised the need for this to be made clear for teachers in advance of the specification being introduced. This was seen as essential in supporting effective professional learning and preparation/planning for teaching, learning and assessment. The clarity provided through the list of functions in each of the digital skills learning outcomes was welcomed.

There was a strong emphasis in the consultation on ensuring that the software application proposed was appropriate for the age and stage of students. The overwhelming preference was for the use of spreadsheets, which were seen as more accessible, flexible, and relevant for future learning and employment contexts, with only a very small number of respondents favouring a dedicated accounting software package. Many students expressed a preference for spreadsheets as it provided an opportunity to gain transferable digital skills that could be applied in broader contexts, particularly if they did not pursue accounting at third level. It was noted by teachers and others, such as lecturers in third level, that skills developed through the use of proprietary accounting packages may be bespoke and limited in value outside of specific workplaces that use the same system and as such, a spreadsheet application was the preferred option. Some concern was also expressed regarding the potential of a software package to dilute skills development as the focus would be mainly on data entry. Teacher focus groups and the public consultation event allowed for deeper exploration of this issue and revealed very limited support for the use of accounting software packages, with concerns about students' lack of access to such tools outside the classroom and the non-transferable nature of the skills acquired.

Apprehension was evident in the online survey responses regarding the introduction of the “*Demonstrating My Digital Skills*” learning outcome. While the importance of developing digital competence was acknowledged, respondents again highlighted the need for significant investment in school infrastructure and resources to enable its effective implementation.

Key Competencies

The key competencies were widely welcomed, with most respondents agreeing that the competencies identified are appropriate for development in Leaving Certificate Accounting. In particular, the emphasis on numeracy and financial literacy was positively received, especially in the context of the recently published National Financial Literacy Strategy 2025 – 2029 (Department of Finance, 2025). The focus on problem-solving and communication as central elements of accounting practice was also appreciated.

Coherence and clarity to support planning for teaching and learning

Perspectives on clarity and coherence in the specification were explored throughout the consultation through the lens of the strands and learning outcomes. A summary of the feedback on the strands and learning outcomes is explored below before concluding with some broader observations on clarity across the specification and the format used in the specification template.

Strand One – The Fundamentals of Accounting

The emphasis on double-entry bookkeeping within this strand was welcomed, as it supports the transition from Junior Cycle Business Studies and enables students to begin the subject *ab initio*.

However, several queries were raised regarding the definition of the "double-entry system," with calls for greater information in this area. It was noted that it was unclear if students need to learn about T accounts, Journal entries or Tabular Statements and that this would require further clarity. Concerns were also expressed about the volume of theoretical content within the strand. Additional clarification was sought on the role of software in the preparation of accounts. It was further noted that Artificial Intelligence was omitted from the learning outcome titled *The Role of Technology*.

Some respondents suggested that the learning outcome concerned with The Conceptual Framework of Accounting requires redrafting, as the nature and intent of the learning were seen as unclear. Within the learning outcome which focuses on forms of business structures, several respondents questioned the appropriateness of including the different types of private limited companies, given that the accounting treatment for these entities is largely the same. It was suggested that, as this is an accounting specification, the focus would be better placed on the specific reporting requirements set out by the Companies Registration Office, rather than addressing the full range of legal obligations placed on companies more broadly.

The learning outcome which looks at dealing with taxation was well received by most respondents. However, there was a request to separate business and personal taxation within the list of taxes to be studied, in order to provide clearer focus and structure. Some respondents questioned the age and stage appropriateness of including the Revenue Online System (ROS) in the specification, suggesting that further consideration may be needed regarding its suitability for this cohort of student while others welcomed this aspect of learning. The nature of the learning related to the components of payroll was also questioned by many respondents. It was noted that payroll processing is now a highly automated and specialised task in most organisations. As such,

several participants suggested shifting the focus toward understanding the components of a payslip, rather than the broader payroll system.

Strand Two - Preparation and Analysis of Financial Statements of a Sole Trader

There was broad support for the learning outlined in this strand. However, concerns were again raised about the volume of theoretical content. Many respondents sought clarification on the learning outcome dealing with incomplete records, with some questioning its relevance in the context of modern accounting practices and others uncertain about the method students would be expected to use to complete questions in this area.

There was strong support for the inclusion of financial ratios across all consultation modes. This was seen as a positive shift away from rote learning towards deeper understanding. However, it was noted that the integration of the cross-cutting theme of Ethics and Sustainability within this strand was unclear, and further guidance was requested on how this should be addressed.

The shift toward understanding accounting policies and broader business-related issues was widely discussed, particularly in relation to Strands Two and Three. Many participants welcomed this move towards a deeper conceptual understanding, while others expressed concern that external assessment might demand detailed knowledge of specific accounting standards.

Face-to-face engagement during the consultation allowed for deeper exploration of these concerns. In these discussions, the majority of teachers noted that this approach is broadly in line with the current syllabus. However, they also pointed out that the two-column structure, while offering greater clarity, can make the theoretical components appear more substantial and time-consuming than they may be in practice and that this might need to be reviewed post-consultation.

It was generally accepted that not all learning outcomes will require equal time allocation and that practical learning will occupy a larger proportion of classroom time. To support effective planning, a review of the action verbs used in the learning outcomes was recommended to ensure greater clarity regarding the detail and nature of the learning expected.

Strand Three - Preparation and Analysis of Financial Statements of a Company

There was broad support for the learning outlined in this strand, however, concerns were raised regarding both the volume and nature of the theoretical content. Some respondents suggested renaming the strand to *Preparation and Analysis of Financial Statements of a Limited Company* to better emphasise its focus on limited companies and to reflect the shift away from dealing with listed companies.

Concerns were also expressed about the learning outcome looking at key notes to accounts. Respondents questioned the rationale behind the selection of specific notes and raised issues regarding the age and stage appropriateness of the content for students.

The inclusion of a glossary of terms was welcomed by teachers, who found it helpful in clarifying the language of the specification. However, there were requests to expand the glossary to include additional terms, particularly those relevant to the theoretical components of the course. There were some calls for more extensive use of the left-hand column in the learning outcomes to provide greater clarity regarding the integration of theory and the cross-cutting theme of ethics and sustainability. A review of the action verbs was also recommended by some to address these issues.

A number of respondents also raised queries about the use of the phrase *given ratios* specifically questioning whether this indicated that students would be provided with a list of ratios during examinations. This approach was broadly welcomed, with many participants noting that it would encourage a shift towards deeper understanding. However, a small number of participants in face-to-face engagements questioned the necessity of listing all ratios both within the learning outcomes and again in the appendix, suggesting this may be redundant.

Additionally, there were concerns about the correct layouts for financial statements and how teachers would be able to keep the course content current in light of changes to legislation and accounting standards.

Strand Four - Informed Decision Making

There was broad support for the learning outlined in this strand, with respondents noting its familiarity to the previous course. It was highlighted that this strand presents a valuable opportunity to integrate learning on ethics and sustainability in a cohesive and meaningful way.

However, concerns were raised about the technical nature of the learning related to budgeting. Respondents emphasised that students would need a strong theoretical foundation in budgeting concepts to fully understand and engage with the practical elements of this strand. Many also highlighted the importance of ensuring that students are equipped not only to prepare budgets but also to analyse and interpret them, viewing this as an essential skill for meaningful financial literacy.

There were some calls to improve the clarity of the learning outcomes related to costing. While this learning was seen as familiar from the previous syllabus, several respondents felt that it appeared overly complicated in its current presentation within the learning outcomes. Additionally, questions were raised regarding the age and stage appropriateness of the inclusion

of sensitivity analysis, with some participants suggesting that this concept may be too advanced for the intended cohort of students.

The Demonstrating my Digital Skills learning outcome prompted some discussion. While its inclusion was broadly welcomed, there was apprehension about certain tasks, such as preparing break-even analysis digitally, which some respondents felt could be overly complex for students. It was noted that professional development and training for teachers would be important in this respect.

Specifying learning using the two-column approach

The approach to presenting student learning through the use of two columns was broadly welcomed, with the majority of teacher participants noting that it provided greater clarity and structure. Many teachers highlighted that the level of detail was significantly greater than in the current syllabus, and that this was further supported by the terminology outlined in the glossary.

During face-to-face consultation sessions, some teachers indicated that they would need time to become familiar with the two-column format and recommended that this be addressed through professional learning. In a few cases, further detail was seen as necessary, including areas such as the conceptual framework of accounting, double-entry bookkeeping, the role of technology in accounting, accounting for incomplete records, comparing a sole trader and a company, key for company accounts and costing particularly in the left-hand column. It was noted that the left-hand column could be used to address these concerns.

Manageability

There was general consensus among participants that the learning outlined in the specification is manageable within the allocated 180 hours. However, concerns were raised that some students may require additional time to develop the digital skills required by the specification. It was noted that time will need to be specifically allocated to support the development of these skills.

The face-to-face consultation opportunities provided valuable opportunities to explore this area in greater depth. Through these discussions, it was underlined that the specification envisages students working simultaneously in both manual and digital formats. With this understanding, many participants felt reassured that—provided appropriate resources and professional learning are made available—the specification is manageable within the 180-hour timeframe. The simultaneous development of manual and digital skills was seen as both realistic and beneficial, especially when supported by well-designed Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and adequate school infrastructure.

The omission of accounts from the service industry and the voluntary sector, specifically club accounts, was noted by many participants. However, during face-to-face engagements, it was acknowledged that the current course content is manageable, and participants were unable to identify existing learning that could be removed to accommodate this content. It was also accepted that the skills developed through the current specification would be transferable to the preparation of accounts in the voluntary sector.

The Additional Assessment Component

The introduction of the Additional Assessment Component (AAC) in Leaving Certificate Accounting was cautiously welcomed.

It was felt that the specification does not clearly define the nature of the AAC and that further clarity would be required. Some respondents initially interpreted it as a project to be completed over an extended period. However, face-to-face consultations clarified that the AAC is intended as a one-day event, a format that was broadly welcomed. These discussions also noted that the inclusion of the descriptors of quality are useful and that these could be used to provide greater clarity for teachers and students. Most participants agreed that the model used in other subjects, would not suit the nature of Leaving Certificate Accounting.

There was no consensus on the most appropriate timing for the AAC. While much of the feedback indicated that fifth year is not suitable, alternative suggestions included October to Christmas of Sixth Year, January of sixth year, and May of sixth year. The timing and nature of the assessment brief remain a concern, particularly among teachers, who require greater clarity on when the brief will be issued. The 40% weighting was queried across all platforms, noting student wellbeing when there is a component in every subject. In terms of Leaving Certificate Accounting, it was felt that students will have to be very competent in their digital accounting skills in order to succeed in the AAC.

Supports for Enactment

All participants emphasised the need for significant support to ensure the successful enactment of the new specification. These supports can be broadly categorised into three areas: IT resources in schools, Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and additional resources such as sample papers and assessment briefs.

The primary area of concern was access to IT resources. It became clear that schools had varying levels of access to devices, depending on their individual IT policies and their ability to invest in and maintain devices and internet connectivity. In many cases, teachers noted the need for specific devices in the accounting classroom to effectively integrate both manual and digital skills as envisaged in the specification.

Regarding TPL support, it was noted that most teachers would require standalone upskilling in IT to fully engage with the digital aspects of the specification. Engagement across the consultation highlighted the need for ongoing support in mapping the learning outcomes from the Fundamentals of Accounting strand to the other strands of the course, integrating digital and manual accounting skills and the incorporation of the key competencies when planning for learning and teaching. It was noted by respondents that the availability of sample papers in advance of teaching the Tranche 1 specifications was very welcome and it was hoped that this practice would be continued for subsequent tranches.

Some teachers highlighted the need for dedicated professional time within subject departments to engage thoroughly with the new specifications. It was noted that many teachers of Leaving Certificate Accounting are the only one in their school and that the opportunity as part of professional learning to engage with other colleagues teaching Accounting would be important.

This time was viewed as essential for collaborative planning of teaching and learning and for full, effective implementation of all new senior cycle specifications.

Other areas of feedback

Participants in the consultation raised concerns not only about the redevelopment of Leaving Certificate Accounting but also about the broader senior cycle redevelopment and its potential impact on student wellbeing. There were significant concerns that, once all subjects include an AAC, the overall student workload could increase substantially, leading to heightened stress across both fifth and sixth year.

In addition, respondents highlighted the potential impact on school timetabling, particularly in relation to access to IT facilities, participation in extra-curricular activities, and the overall resourcing required to support the new assessment structures. Students, teachers and school leaders raised concerns about student wellbeing, particularly regarding the challenge of fostering these competencies while students are preparing for Additional Assessment Components (AACs) across seven subjects.

Section 3: Considerations and Conclusion

Considerations

Overall, the draft specification for Leaving Certificate Accounting was very well received 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 Accounting.

Issues raised for consideration in this context included:

- A request for further clarity on a small number of learning outcomes in the specification, where it was felt that the parameters in the left-hand column could be more clearly defined.
- A review of action verbs is recommended to provide clearer insights into the nature of the learning required. Additionally, it would be beneficial to review the glossary of action verbs to ensure that the definitions align closely with the subject matter of the specification.
- Reexamine each strand overview to ensure clarity and to provide a rationale for the learning contained within each of the strands.
- The need to carefully consider the balance between theoretical and practical learning, while recognising the inherently practical nature of the subject.
- While the Ethics and Sustainability cross-cutting theme was broadly welcomed, it was felt to be somewhat underdeveloped. Opportunities were identified to further embed and expand the cross-cutting themes across the specification.
- The provision of greater clarity around the Additional Assessment Component (AAC), including the environment and timing envisaged for its administration, the timing of the release of the brief, and the format and structure of the component.
- The need for the software application intended for use as part of teaching and learning to be clarified in advance of the specification being introduced.

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 Leaving Certificate Accounting 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 subject, given that it has not undergone any meaningful changes in several decades.

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