



St. Patrick's
Cathedral
Grammar School

SUBJECT CHOICE INFORMATION

BOOKLET

Leaving Certificate 2028



“May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears”.

Dear Student,

You are about to make a very important decision about the subjects that you will study for the Leaving Certificate. You will be asked to give your preferences for the three optional subjects that you will study along with the four core subjects (Irish, English, Math's and French/Spanish). To help you make an informed decision about subject choice, you can avail of the following:

- Careers classes on Subject Choice
- Group appointments with Guidance Counsellor
- University of Limerick Careers Programme and Reports
- Presentations from individual subject departments.
- Parents Information night - **February 24th from 6.15-8.15pm. (We encourage one parent and student to attend)**

We would also recommend that you:

- study this booklet.
- identify your aptitudes.
- do research (e.g. www.qualifax.ie and [University of Limerick Report](#))
- consult textbooks and past papers of subjects you are interested in.
- talk to students who have been, or are presently, studying the subjects which interest you.
- discuss Subject Choice with your teachers, parents/guardians.

Choose a 'package' of subjects to satisfy your interests and to keep open as many career options as possible. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Ensure that you have the ***essential subjects for your job/course*** (check essential subject charts, Qualifax and college websites for minimum entry requirements and specific course requirements)
- Select your remaining subjects to maximize your results. Look back over previous school reports to see what subjects you did well in. (If you like a subject, you are more likely to do well in it).
- Check college prospectuses and www.qualifax.ie
- Choose subjects you have a genuine interest in, and an aptitude in-refer to your scores.

[Your subject preferences will be recorded through your student profile on VSware and must be submitted by Friday 27th February.](#)

Please note that while every effort is made to offer each student their top three preferences this is not always possible because of timetabling restrictions.

Best of luck,

Tim Gill, Principal.
Patricia Harrington, Guidance Counsellor.

Senior Cycle Subjects 2026

The following core subjects are compulsory:

Irish (unless exempt*), English, Maths and French/Spanish.

In addition to the core subjects, students will study **three** subjects from the following list:

1. Art
2. Biology
3. Business
4. Chemistry
5. Geography
6. History
7. Home Economics
8. Music
9. Physics
10. Classics

Students will be **invited to rank these subjects in order of their preference.**

Each student in SPCGS will sit 7 subjects for the Leaving Certificate. Leaving Cert. (CAO) points are then calculated based on your best 6 subjects.

It is advised that students select subjects that they enjoy. Having a genuine interest in the subjects you are going to take for the Leaving Certificate is very important. It can be difficult enough at the best of times to motivate yourself to study, but it can be twice as difficult if you are studying subjects which you don't particularly like.

You should examine your preferred choices very carefully to ensure that you have kept your career options open. You should check to see if you have the essential requirements for the third-level courses you are interested in.

Choosing a Career

Some people know at an early stage what they would like to do when they leave school, but many have no definite ideas about the kind of work they would like to do. To choose a career a young person needs information on ***entrance requirements, opportunities available*** and an awareness of their own ***qualities, skills, aptitudes, and potential.***

Subject choice is important because, once made, it **may** affect the options for college and employment opportunities.

It is essential to know the following:

- Minimum entry requirements for colleges (matriculation requirements)
- Specific subject requirements for your chosen course/career
- Academic entrance requirements e.g., Points in CAO system (although these may change each year)

Points about Choosing a Career

In choosing a Career you need to:

- Ask yourself what **you** would like to do? Then take some time to think about this, do the research and plan.
- **Assess your:**
 - **Skills and Aptitudes** – what are you good at?
 - **Interests** – what you enjoy doing?
 - **Values** - what motivates you and would give meaning to your work?
 - **Personality type** – what are your characteristics?
 - **Educational qualifications** – what qualifications have you got and what further qualifications do you want to achieve?
- **Explore the Options** – access job descriptions, research job sectors and further and higher education course details.

How to set about Choosing a Career

A good way to approach career choice is to first make a list of your **interests and skills**: Which school subjects are you best at? Do you write well? Are you creative? Do you get on well with other people? Do you work best with a group, or do you like to work alone on an exercise or a problem? Are you a leader? Would you like to work in a caring profession? Would you like outdoor or indoor, manual or deskwork? etc.

Then, make list of the **careers** that interest you and the **educational qualifications**, and any personal **qualities** required for each of them. By comparing your two lists, you should be able to narrow down the choice of occupations that you consider would suit you.

[A Careers Investigation should be completed before final choice of subjects is made.](#)

How your Aptitude tests can help you with choosing your subject preferences.

Verbal Reasoning- A high score in Verbal Reasoning means that you have an ability to express your thoughts through your words. This is a very useful skill to have. Jobs that this would be useful for include teachers, lawyers, and politicians. If you have a high verbal reasoning score you should consider subjects like History, Business and English where effective communication is important.

Numerical Reasoning- A high score in Numerical Reasoning means you are comfortable with numbers and calculations. For example, Bank tellers or cashiers need to have good numerical reasoning. If you do well in numerical reasoning you should consider subjects like Physics.

Abstract Reasoning- Abstract Reasoning is all about understanding abstract ideas, a high score in this means you can understand abstract concepts and apply them to the world around you. Jobs that require good abstract reasoning include Mathematics, Engineering, Draughting and Laboratory Work. If you have scored well in abstract reasoning, you should consider Physics as a Leaving Cert Subjects.

Mechanical Reasoning- Mechanical Reasoning is about understanding the basics of the mechanical world and how things work. This is key for people like engineers. If you score highly in this, you should consider subjects like Physics. Mechanical Reasoning Tests are often given by engineering organisations when selecting new employers.

Spatial Relations- Spatial Relations involves the ability to visualize objects in your head in three dimensions and deal with mathematical concepts at a high level. It is very useful for product designers, engineers, carpenters, and other occupations that require you to visualize objects or spaces. If you score well in Spatial Relations, you should consider subjects like Art, Geography and Physics.

Spelling tests. Great spelling skills aren't crucial in the modern world, but it is useful for all professions especially working in Law and Education. It's also important in the sciences as there will be a lot of terminology you will have to learn.

Language Usage is all about communication. Like verbal reasoning it is important for Lawyers and Teachers. It is a measure of how well one can distinguish between correct and improper grammar, punctuation, and wording of sentences. It is very useful for subjects like History or English.

Test	Description of Test	Careers / Courses	L. Cert Subjects
Verbal Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This test measures the ability to reason with words and to think logically. - Important for work involving communicating ideas or understanding written material. 	Solicitor, Doctor, Teacher, Computer Programmer, Management, Sales, Marketing and Advertising, Training, Administration.	Music Biology English History Languages Business Geography Home Economics
Numerical Reasoning	-Measures the ability to reason with numbers and to deal intelligently with quantitative measures.	Finance, Science, Sales, Banking, Architecture, Engineering, Statistician, Surveying, Navigation, Laboratory work.	Maths Physics Chemistry
Abstract Reasoning	- Non-Verbal/non-numerical measure of reasoning power. - It assesses how well one can reason with geometric figures or designs.	Engineer, Doctor, Scientist, Musician, Software Designer, Teacher, Computer Programmer, Mechanical & Electrical work, Management.	Chemistry Biology Physics Music Art
Spatial Reasoning	Measures the ability to visualize a three-dimensional object from a two-dimensional pattern and to visualize how this object would look if rotated in space.	Art, Design, Architecture, Engineering, Carpentry, Dentistry, Photography, Fashion Design.	Physics Chemistry Art



Application procedures and entry requirements for 3rd Level Colleges

Application for most full-time undergraduate courses (Honours Degree - Level 8, Ordinary Degree - Level 7 and Higher Certificate - Level 6) in the Universities and Institutes of Technology is made through the Central Applications Office (CAO). The CAO provides an applications pack with a handbook that lists all the courses on offer and gives information on how to apply. The closing date for applications from Irish and other European Union nationals is normally 1st February each year. A student must have the academic entry requirements needed for the course they want to take.

In addition, there is a wide and varied choice of other courses for which you apply directly to the college. These are known as PLC (Post Leaving Certificate) or FE (Further Education) courses and usually take one or two years to complete. In general, the entrance requirement for these courses is 5 passes in Leaving Cert and a suitability interview. The qualification awarded can lead onto higher education in the Technological Universities (or some universities-NUI'S) or into direct employment.

When **choosing your Leaving Cert subjects** it is vitally important that you know that certain subjects are required in order to apply for particular 3rd level college courses. Below is a brief description of these Subject Entry Requirements and a brief guide to the Leaving Cert. Points System.

Entry Requirements for 3rd Level Colleges - Very Important

There are two sets of Entry Requirements which must be met before a student can apply for places in 3rd level colleges (i.e., before points can be considered). These are:

1. **Minimum Entry Requirements**
2. **Specific Subject Requirements**

Once a student has met these two sets of requirements, they then compete for places using the CAO points system, described below. The points needed for all CAO courses are published each August and are available on www.cao.ie, www.qualifax.ie and www.careersportal.ie . Please note the points needed can vary from year to year.

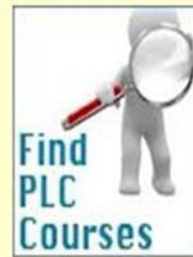
1. Minimum Entry Requirements:

These are the minimum entry requirements to enter college-Two H5's and Four O6/H7's are the basic entry requirements to apply to an individual college or university. If a student has obtained the correct number of points for a specific course-but fails to meet the basic entry requirements or basic requirements in Irish/English/Maths or a third language in the Leaving Certificate, they will not meet the criteria and not get offered a CAO place.

Full details of the Minimum Entry Requirements and Specific Subject Requirements of any particular courses you are interested in should be researched in www.qualifax.ie and the college's prospectus or website as requirements are subject to change.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION

- Level 8 – Honours Degrees
 - 3/4 years study
 - Min. of 2 H5 and 4 O6/H7
(TCD & a small no. of level 8 courses-
Min 3 H5 and 3 O6/H7)
- Level 7 – Ordinary Degrees
 - 3 years study
 - Min. 5 O6/H7
- Level 6 – Higher Certificate
 - 2 years study
 - Min 5 O6/H7
- Post Leaving Certificate Courses
 - 1 year study
 - Min. 5 passes in H/O/F or Leaving Certificate Applied



The following are the **minimum entry requirements** of the main colleges in the CAO system:

Abbreviations:

Dublin City University	DCU
Technical University Dublin	TUD
National College of Art and Design	NCAD
University College Galway	NUIG
University College Cork	UCC
University College Dublin	UCD
University of Limerick	UL
National University of Ireland Maynooth	NUIM
Royal College of Surgeons	RCSI
Trinity College Dublin	TCD
National University of Ireland	NUI

NUI Colleges (UCC, UCD, NUIG, NUIM, RCSI, NCAD)

- Irish, English & Modern Language.
- Maths is essential most but not all courses.
- Important: A Modern Language is essential to gain entry to several courses in the NUI universities except for Science, Agriculture, Nursing and Engineering courses. Art is required for entry to all courses in NCAD.

TCD

- English, Maths & Another Language (can be Irish)

UL

- English, Maths & Irish OR Another Language

DCU

- Maths & English OR Irish

INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY (e.g. TUD, IT Tallaght)

- Maths & English OR Irish
- A small number of courses do not require maths.

2. *Specific Subject Requirements*

(In addition to the minimum entry requirements mentioned previously, certain additional subjects may be required to gain entry to specific courses in a college.)

For most University & College courses, there are no specific subject requirements. This includes courses in Arts, Business, Computing, Law, Psychology, Design, Social Science, and many others. The following are **EXCEPTIONS** and for the most part the requirements are at **Honours (Higher) Level**.

i. SCIENCE (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS)

The following rule is unique to TRINITY College, Dublin:

Two Sciences with Ordinary Maths or one Science with Higher Maths are required for:

- Physiotherapy
- Medicinal Chemistry
- Pharmacy (Chemistry must be one)
- Human Health and Disease
- Physical Sciences

(SCIENCE refers to laboratory sciences i.e., Biology, Physics or Chemistry, however, Geography can count as a science for some of these courses in TCD only)

Apart from Trinity, **Two** Science subjects are required for:

- Medicine (TCD), (UCC specifies Chemistry must be one of them)
- Dentistry (TCD) (UCC specifies Chemistry must be one of them)
- Pharmacy (UCC and TCD specifies that Chemistry must be one of them)
- Human Health and Disease (TCD specifies Biology must be one of them)

Science subjects are also required for:

- All Nursing degrees (O/H accepted), it does not have to be Biology.
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech & Language Therapy
- Radiation Therapy, Radiography, Physiotherapy
- Medicine (UCD- Chemistry required for 5 yr. programme, NUIG, RCSI)
- Veterinary Medicine (UCD-Chemistry is essential and 2 sciences are recommended)
- Engineering (in some colleges)
- Agricultural Science
- Sports Science
- Nutrition & Dietetics (Chemistry is essential)
- Science
- Applied sciences (E.g., Clinical Measurement, Pharmacology, Optometry)
- Beauty Therapy (Biology is useful but not essential for many courses)
- Vet Nursing and Dental Nursing
- Home Economics Teaching

However, many of the courses available in science, engineering and electronics in the Institutes of Technology do not require a science subject but is beneficial in your studies.

II. ART

If you wish to take a course at third level in Art, some colleges/courses require that you have studied Art, others may not. However, a substantial **portfolio** of work is usually required, and this is difficult to complete if you are not doing Art.

III. MUSIC

If you wish to take a course at third level in Music, many courses require that you have studied Music, others may not. Some courses may require you to perform an **audition** or sit a music test.

IV. LANGUAGES

A modern language is required for **some** faculties in the National University of Ireland (UCC, UCD, UCG, NUIM). There are some language courses you can enter without having previously studied the language, but generally speaking you will be required to have studied a particular language to Leaving Cert in order to study it at third level and some language courses will require a H3 or H4 in a modern language.

V. ENGLISH

Almost all universities, colleges and employers require a pass in Ordinary level English though some will accept Irish instead (e.g., the Institutes of Technology and DCU). A H4 in English is essential for a

small number of courses like Journalism, Communications, Media studies, Creative Digital Media and Speech Therapy.

VI. IRISH

Irish is required for all faculties in the National University of Ireland (UCC, UCD, UCG, NUIM, NCAD) but you can be exempt from it under certain conditions e.g., being born outside Ireland or having a specific learning difficulty (dyslexia). Irish satisfies the requirement of a Modern Language for TCD and the language other than English requirement for UL and DCU. Primary Teaching requires a H4 in Irish.

VII. MATHEMATICS

Employers tend to expect applicants to have numeric skills and look for at least a pass in Maths. Likewise, the Institutes of Technology usually require a pass for entry to their courses (although in some cases they will accept foundation level). The universities require an O3 or an O4/H6/H7 for many of their Science and Business courses reflecting its importance as part of these courses. An O6/H7 is required for entry to Nursing.

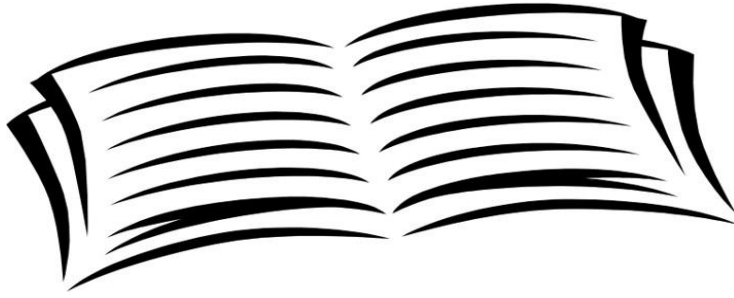
Higher level Mathematics is required by relatively few courses. One group that requires it is Engineering honours degree courses. For Engineering, Mathematical, Theoretical Physics courses, Actuarial degrees and Quantitative Business the requirements range from a H2 to a H4, depending on the course, again reflecting the crucial role it plays in these disciplines. Some Computer, Financial and Economics courses also require the equivalent of a H3 or H4 in Maths.

A bonus of 25 points will continue to be awarded to students who achieve a grade H6 or above in Higher Level Maths.

Foundation Level Mathematics is accepted by some employers and points are awarded in a limited number of colleges. Most PLC courses will accept it. Check www.qualifax.ie for a list of these courses.

Further Details of Specific Requirements

Further details of the specific requirements for courses can be found in the 3rd level colleges' literature. It is vitally important to check these requirements if you are hoping to apply for a particular 3rd level course, to ensure that you are choosing the appropriate subjects for your Leaving Cert. It is only after both sets of requirements have been met, that you are deemed to be qualified to submit your 'Points' for a particular course. If you don't have the right subjects to meet the above requirements for a course then you cannot apply for the course, even if you had 600 (625 with honours Maths) points! ***Check Qualifax and the relevant college literature/website yourself. It's your choice, your responsibility.***



OVERVIEW OF SUBJECT CONTENT AT SENIOR CYCLE

January 2026

GAEILGE

Gaeilge is a core subject in 5th and 6th Year. The Leaving Certificate examination at Higher Level and Ordinary Level includes two written papers, an aural test, and an oral test — the latter carries 40% of the total marks. Students who get a Distinction grade in Junior Certificate should try Higher Level at Senior cycle. Pupils should bear in mind the career/college implications of their choice of level.

Is ábhar riachtanach í an Ghaeilge don sraith sinsir. Sa scrúdú ag an Ard agus Gnáth leibhéal, bíonn dhá pháipéar scríofa, scrúdú cluaistuisceana agus scrúdú cainte le déanamh. Beidh 40% ag dul don scrúdú cainte. Ba chóir do dhaltá a fhaigheann onóracha sa teastas Sóisearach triail a bhaint as Ardleibhéal sa tsraith sinsir. Ba cheart do dhaltáí smaoineamh á dhéanamh ar impleachtaí triú leibhéal agus an rogha idir Gnáth agus Ard Leibhéal á dhéanamh acu.

ENGLISH

Leaving Certificate English builds on the foundation set down at Junior Cycle and Transition Year. The study of English at this level will enable students to interpret, compose, discriminate and evaluate a range of texts. The syllabus facilitates the development of students' competence in language and deepens their appreciation of literature while fostering independent and lifelong learning so necessary for today's world.

The examination for Ordinary and Higher-Level courses consists of two papers:

Paper I: Comprehension and Composition

Paper II: Study of Single Text, Comparative Study of texts (including film study) and poetry.

A student is required to have obtained a minimum of grade "Achieved", at Junior Cycle Higher Level to take up Higher Level at Leaving Certificate. It is also necessary for a student to be an active reader, as independent reading is a key element of the course.

MATHEMATICS

Leaving Certificate Mathematics tends to be a requirement for a great number of jobs and courses. For most jobs, employers look for numeracy skills in all areas including apprenticeships, nursing, and the Gardaí.

Securing a pass mark in an Ordinary Paper is necessary for entry into most college courses.

It is crucial to make sure that you meet the Maths entry requirements for your course.

HIGHER LEVEL MATHS

Students who would like to pursue honours Maths need to display a high level of comfort with the subject at JC. At least a Merit grade at HL in JC is the department's recommended level of proficiency. An interest in Maths is assumed and good algebraic skills are expected.

The CAO awards 25 bonus Points for grades of H6 and above in Higher Level Maths.

ORDINARY LEVEL MATHS

To study Ordinary Level Maths, students must have sat Ordinary Level or Higher Level at Junior Certificate.

FOUNDATION LEVEL MATHS

This course caters for those students who do not progress at Ordinary level in Senior Cycle. (No longer foundation level at JC)

FRENCH

French as a Leaving Certificate subject aims to bring students closer to fluency in the French language, as well as developing a good knowledge of literature, culture, geography, and national history, to provide a context for communication. Senior Cycle French builds on the knowledge acquired for the Junior Certificate.

A third language, besides English and Irish, is a requirement for entry into a number of third level courses. For example: Law and French or Business and French in TCD (H3 in French required), International Commerce with French NUIG (H3), European Studies with French in UL (H4) or Business Studies with French in UL (H4).

Why Study French?

- This subject may be a requirement for entry to third level and can be used as a third language for entry to a number of courses. See entry requirements for individual colleges.
- This subject is a useful foundation for students with an interest in studying French at third level or considering a career in a French speaking environment or country.

What kind of student would French suit?

- Anyone with an interest in French culture, history, and language.
- Students who are considering working in France, Canada, the EU or in the area of international relations in the future.
- Students who can already speak French and want easy points.
- Specific careers in which French is of benefit include Teaching; Translation; Interpreting; Linguistics; Localization; Journalism and Media among others.

Candidates are examined on 4 skills:

1. Speaking (the oral is obligatory at both Ordinary & Higher level)

15-minute interview. Students may opt to bring in a document.

(photo/project/picture etc.) No English may appear on it.

Marks – 25% Higher, 20% Ordinary

2. Listening (CD Test)

Understanding news, interviews, reports, weather, directions, recognizing feelings etc. 40 minutes.

Marks – 20% Higher, 25% Ordinary

3. Written

Letters, postcards, opinion-type questions, note writing, diary writing, dialogue, reports, sending e-mails.

4. Reading

Reading Comprehensions.

Answering in French & English. 2 ½ hours – 55%. Both Higher and Ordinary level

SPANISH

Spanish as a Leaving Cert subject aims to bring students closer to fluency in the Spanish language, as well as developing a good knowledge of literature, culture, and geography to provide a context for communication. As the second most widely spoken native language, and most widely studied language on the planet, Spanish has widespread use in international business. It also makes travel to Spain, Mexico, and most of South America more accessible.

What kind of Student would Spanish Suit?

- Anyone with an interest in Spanish culture, history, and language.
- Students interested in travelling the world.
- Students who are considering working in Spain (or other Hispanic countries) or international relations in the future.

Spanish follows a common syllabus framework for the teaching and examining of modern languages in the Leaving Certificate. The syllabus aims to develop learners' communicative skills in the Spanish, to develop their strategies for effective language learning and raise their awareness of cultural, social and political diversity.

Assessment is by means of a written examination, and an aural and oral examination at two levels, Ordinary level and Higher level.

(1) **Oral Examination (25%):** The Spanish oral exam consists of two parts, personal questions and role-plays and typically last between 12 and 15 minutes depending on the student.

Part 1: The examiner will use personal questions to assess knowledge of tenses in the following order: present, past and future and/or conditional tenses. Make sure you respond in the correct tense. If you make a grammatical mistake or mispronounce something don't just keep talking. If you realise your mistake, say sorry (Lo siento) and then what you meant to say. You will less likely be penalized for mistakes.

Part 2: This comes after the personal questions when the examiner asks a student one role-play from five prepared. Have fun with this and try avoiding monotony, let the examiner know that you are feeling what you are saying by using intonation in your speech and eye contact. Don't spend the whole time looking at the sheet, rather try to enjoy it and leave a positive impression.

(2) **Listening Examination (20%):** To do well in this, the most important thing is to be prepared. A segment on the weather forecast always appears. Make this an area you know inside out. If you know the vocabulary, it's easy marks. Do the listening comprehensions of previous years, this will help you get used to the process. Learning as much vocabulary as possible is always useful to all parts of the Spanish exam.

(3) **Written exam (55%):** You will need a lot of vocabulary for the written exam. Make a note of the words that come up frequently and learn them off. Also, learn all the tenses and become familiar with the endings of different verbs, especially the irregular ones.

In this exam, you will be asked to look within a comprehension piece for a Spanish sentence/phrase/word that is similar to a phrase they have given you. Have a look at the phrase and the tense it is written in - the phrase you are looking for in the text will normally be in the same tense so this will narrow down your search.

This subject is essential for entry into some Third Level courses. Related career opportunities are broad and include business, the IT industry, teaching, translation, the hospitality industry, sales, marketing, tourism and careers in the EU.

HISTORY

The History syllabus offers students an exciting opportunity to specialize in an area of History which they enjoyed at Junior Certificate level.

Topics include:

- Dictatorships and Democracy in Europe 1920-1945
- USA and The World 1945-1989
- Ireland – Sovereignty and Partition 1912-1949
- Politics and Society in Northern Ireland 1949-1993 (3 case studies with document-based questions)

Students are required to undertake a research study of their choice. They complete a report on this research and submit it before the examination takes place. This research study is required at Higher and Ordinary Level and is worth 20% of the total marks. Students will not complete the research in TY but may begin their research in this year.

A new area of study for Leaving Certificate students is a detailed examination of documents. These are both written and visual. This helps to develop analytical skills which are useful and important in many aspects of the workplace – also worth 20% of the final exam. 60% of the marks is based on three essays on the topics listed above. With the new grading scheme for Leaving Certificate, many students will achieve a pass with the research topic and the documents.

One of the main skills developed during the study of History is acquiring a critical approach to information. In addition, the student learns to develop an informed opinion about issues. Students also learn to recognize the complexity of issues and the need for balance when dealing with controversial and important events. Students will also learn to see issues from a wide variety of perspectives, (e.g., political, social, economic); learn to support an argument; organize ideas; express clear opinion and reach balanced conclusions. Reading and essay writing are central to this subject at higher level. Ordinary level students answer short questions and write in paragraphs.

The skills obtained are useful not only in the study of History, but also in courses/careers in Media,

English, Journalism, Law, Politics, Sociology and Archaeology. For more information, please check www.education.ie, (check syllabus/curriculum), or current textbooks.

GEOGRAPHY

The Geography Leaving Certificate Course Who might study Geography?

● Leaving Certificate Geography will suit somebody who enjoys learning about people and their societies, economies, cultures and the environment. ● Due to the broad applicability of geographic skills and knowledge, Geography is a discipline that can lead to a large number of career options in virtually every industry. For students who are undecided about what they want to pursue in third level, Geography encompasses a varied syllabus and complements other subjects at Leaving cert level (including history, economics, and agricultural science).

● Geography suits students who may be considering further study in areas such as environmental and town planning, economics, primary & secondary school teaching, environmental science, social studies, meteorology, geography and politics after school. A new Leaving Certificate Geography specification is being introduced as part of the Senior Cycle redevelopment. It will first be introduced **for 5th Year students in September 2026.**

Course Structure The new specification is designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time and is organized into four main strands:

- **Unifying Strand: Applying Geographical Thinking and Skills** – Focuses on geoliteracy, critical thinking, and inquiry-based learning. This strand is integrated across the other three contextual strands.
- **Strand 1: The Physical Environment** – Covers physical processes, systems (such as the Earth's atmosphere and pressure systems), and human interactions with the natural world.
- **Strand 2: The Human Environment** – Focuses on human settlement, population dynamics, and migration.
- **Strand 3: The Global Environment** – Explores agriculture, fisheries, tourism, globalization, development, and geopolitics.

Assessment Changes A significant shift in the new specification is the revised weighting of assessment components:

1. **Applied Geography Project (40%)**: This is an externally assessed project based on a common brief. Students will conduct an inquiry, gather and analyse data, and communicate their findings.

Written Examination (60%): This terminal exam will be offered at Higher and Ordinary levels and will assess learning across all strands and the application of geographical thinking to real-world challenges.

Implementation Timeline ● **September 2026**: Introduction for incoming 5th Year students.

● **June 2028**: First sitting of the Leaving Certificate examination under this new specification. For further details and updates, students should refer to the official National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Geography page and the Department of Education's Senior Cycle

Redevelopment Update Leaving Certificate Geography Overview Strand 1:

The Natural Environment ● Tectonics ● The Rock Cycle ● Endogenic processes ● Exogenic processes ● Surface Processes ● Management strategies ● Atmosphere and Weather ● Climate

Strand 2: The Human Environment ● Human Settlement ● Urban Development ● Population and Migration

Strand 3: The Global Environment • Agriculture and Fisheries • Tourism • Globalisation • Development Assistance and Cooperation • Geopolitics Learning Approach in Leaving Certificate Geography.

In Leaving Certificate Geography, students have opportunities to work individually and collaboratively, both in the classroom and outdoors. Peer learning and assessment enhance critical, analytical and geographical skills alongside interpersonal and communication skills. Ongoing and constructive teacher and peer feedback, as well as structured opportunities for reflection, are embedded throughout the learning process. Reflection supports students in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset.

TCD accepts Geography as a science subject for some courses. It is important to research these, if this is a factor in decision making.

MUSIC

LEAVING CERTIFICATE MUSIC PROGRAMME

The syllabus follows on directly from the Junior Certificate where the activities of performing, composing, and listening is central to the structure of the syllabus. Each section is worth 25% and students then select one of the three activities to be worth 50%. Most candidates around the country choose the performing strand for a full 50% of this subject. The practical is an enjoyable component to the Leaving certificate course and takes place in March/April of 6th year. Those students who choose Music at higher-level achieve the highest grades in the school every year.

PERFORMING SKILLS

Over 95% of those who study music for leaving certificate opt for the performing element to be worth 50% of the final exam. The performance is to last no longer than 20 minutes. Students should choose pieces that show off their talents their technique in a variety of styles such as pop, classical, jazz, folk, musicals etc. Similar to the Junior Certificate, students can perform individually or as part of a group, with many students using the SATB choir option for a group performance.

With 50% performance, students can choose to perform 6 pieces on one activity such as voice/instrument or present two activities with 4 pieces on each. Music technology can also be chosen as one of the performing activities where students make a backing track or edit a music score through music software.

COMPOSING SKILLS

Students will learn the skills necessary to compose a 16-bar melody that includes a modulation to a related key and compose a harmony exercise that demonstrates an understanding of chord progressions and basslines. The composition paper is worth 25% (100 marks) of the final music exam in June, with 40 marks going for the melody writing question and 60 marks for the harmony question.

LISTENING SKILLS

The listening paper is worth 25% (100 marks) of the final music exam in June. The listening element contains prescribed Set Works, Irish Music and aural skill development through an unheard question. Students will need to understand, identify and describe musical features in various set works, Queen, Bach, Barry and Tchaikovsky. In the Irish music component, students will identify Irish dances, instruments, traditional styles of singing and the fusion of different styles. Overall, the students will develop their aural skills through listening exercises that cover all styles and genres.

Requirements:

Ideally, one should have completed the Junior Certificate Music course. Those wishing to study music for the Leaving Certificate without studying it at Junior Certificate should discuss this with Ms. Balfe. Generally, students who have an excellent standard of performance and theory should be suitable for the subject.

Careers:

These subject builds skills and knowledge that are particularly useful for careers in Music related fields such as: Music Performer/Songwriter/Composer/Producer/Sound Engineer/Sound Designer/ Music Therapist/ Musicologist/ Instrumental/Vocal teacher and or school music teacher at primary and post-primary level. In addition, studying music can be advantageous in the following sectors: Arts and Cultural Administration, Education & Training, Events Management, Journalism, Radio & TV Broadcasting & Media.

ART

There are three assessment components in Leaving Certificate Art:

1. Practical Coursework
2. Practical Examination
3. A Written Examination.

Unlike most other subjects, most of the marks for Leaving Certificate Art have been awarded by the time the June exams come around. Only 30% of the final grade is based on a written exam, which is on Visual Studies (Art History). The practical work in art includes strands of Research, Respond and Create.

Research Strand

Students will learn how to become a visual researcher. As part of the research process, they will learn to select a stimulus, choose relevant primary sources and develop, rationalise and contextualise their ideas and work further. The learning outcomes in this strand address the research methods employed within a visual subject, including the recording of these within a visual

sketchpad. Learners will have the opportunity to also use their locality, including galleries, museums, architecture, public sculpture and more, for research purposes.

Create Strand

Learners will be engaged in the process of making/creating art from conception to realisation using a range of skills and chosen material(s), as appropriate. They will create work based on a starting stimulus, respond to it, and develop it as their work progresses.

Respond Strand

Learners need to understand that in Art they can, and do, react to artwork, whether it is their own or another's. They will learn to stand outside of their own work and to reflect on it critically. Learners will also learn about and learn from aspects of Visual Studies, which will help to increase their knowledge of Art and so inform their opinions of their work and the work of others.

Students also do Visual Studies (The History and Appreciation of Art), which covers Irish and European Art, and Art Appreciation.

Like every other subject, Art can be taken at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

The course for each level is the same but the marking scheme is different.

The practical coursework takes place after Christmas over a 10-week period, whereas the Visual Studies exam is in June.

There is also a practical exam in which the student is required to make a piece of design or craftwork.

If a student is considering taking Art at Leaving Certificate level without having done Art at Junior Certificate, the following criteria should apply:

1. Evidence of good drawing skills
2. A definite interest in the subject
3. Discussion (bring examples of drawing) to the Art Teacher before a final decision is made.

Art is highly recommended for those intending to do an Art course, particularly those that require a portfolio. Art will lay a solid foundation for many third level courses because of the research, design, technical skills, and creativity learned in Art. Preparation of a portfolio should not be left until 6th year but should be started in 5th Year. Art is useful for careers/courses in Architecture, Commercial Photography, Media Studies, Film Production, Animation, Advertising, Product Design, Industrial Design, Graphic Design and areas of Fine Art, Design and Craftwork.

HOME ECONOMICS: SOCIAL & SCIENTIFIC

The Home Economics Social and Scientific course is an interesting, detailed and lengthy study of four main areas. The **core** of the syllabus consists of 3 main core areas of study.

- Food Studies: Nutrition, Diet & Health; Food Commodities; Microbiology...
- Resource Management and Consumer Studies: Housing, Finance, Management of Households... ▪ Social Studies: Social Studies & the Family, the Family as a Caring Unit...

One **elective** is also chosen from:

- Home Design and Management
- Social Studies
- Textiles, Fashion and Design

Assessment takes two forms:

A terminal written examination which accounts for 80% of the marks is available at Ordinary and Higher Levels. Higher Level students are expected to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding of concepts, processes and principles and a greater degree of proficiency in skills, both practical and procedural.

A Coursework Journal of Food Study Practical Work is submitted to the Dept. of Education and Science for assessment in the month of November prior to the written examination. This journal is worth 20% of the total marks. It is written work related to practical cookery tasks that have been completed during the year.

An excellent, interesting course that requires a lot of learning of Food Science and other theory. It provides you with key life skills that will always benefit you. Having previously studied Home Economics at Junior Cert level is of great benefit but not essential. This subject provides a good foundation for careers in a wide range of areas including Health, Nutrition, Education, Tourism, Textiles, Design, the Food industry, Science and Social Studies. Social Studies studied in the Home-Economics Course can also give an insight into what sociology in 3rd level would be like,

BIOLOGY

The Biology Leaving Certificate Course:

Biology is one of the more popular science subjects chosen at Leaving Certificate level in SPCGS. Most students find the course interesting and enjoyable and many go on to study it in some form at third level.

The biology course builds on the Junior Cycle science course, but students should be aware that the course content is studied in much greater detail.

The biology specification is prescribed, which makes attaining a high grade in the final Leaving Certificate examination very achievable, particularly for students who work steadily from the start of 5th Year.

The **aim of Leaving Certificate Biology** is to provide students with an experience that develops their interest in and enthusiasm for the scientific study of life. In doing so, it aims to build the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions necessary for students to become scientifically literate citizens who are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities of their future, embracing life-long learning and sustainable living, as citizens in a technologically developing society.

More specifically, **Leaving Certificate Biology aims to empower students to:**

- build knowledge and understanding of a number of specified core concepts and fundamental principles of biology
- develop the skills, values and dispositions needed to apply this knowledge to explain, analyse, solve problems and predict events in a variety of systems and interactions in the biological world
- demonstrate inquiry and practical skills consistent with the principles and practices of biology
- understand how society and science are interwoven, the everyday relevance of biology and the ethical implications of biology.

The course is divided **into four strands**: a unifying strand, Nature of Science, and three contextual strands, Organisation of Life, Structures and Processes of Life, and in SPCGS Assessment for Certification

There are **two assessment components**: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a Biology in Practice Investigation (BIP).

The written examination will be taken at higher and ordinary level. The BIP will be based on a common brief. Each component will be set and examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

A brief for the conduct of the BIP will be published annually by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) **in term 2 of Year 1**. This component is 40% of the overall Leaving Certificate examination. As a consequence, it must be ENTIRELY the student's own work. The BIP investigation is completed over 20 hours, that is research and planning of the investigation, followed by the investigation (1-2 hours), followed by the write up. Dates for completion will be advised by the teacher and MUST be adhered to.

Please note that the BIP write up will be bundled with the student's Leaving Certificate paper and will be corrected by the same examiner, any major discrepancies may result in the loss of the 40% for the BIP component.

Overview of Assessment for Certification

The teachers of biology encourage students to become independent learners, taking responsibility for their own work, working collaboratively with each other and with their teacher. The teacher acts as a guiding influence within the classroom and students reach their potential within the levels they choose to sit.

For the syllabus specification please see: <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/biology/>

Biology forms a knowledge base for hundreds of careers ranging from Oceanography and Ecology to Medicine, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Dentistry, Veterinary, Pharmacy, Biotechnology, Nutrition/Dietetics, Agriculture/Horticulture, Fitness Instruction/Coaching and Beauty Therapy.

CHEMISTRY

The Chemistry Leaving Certificate Course Overview

The teaching of Chemistry in SPCGS fosters cooperation among students and encourages individuals to hold themselves accountable to high standards.

Collaborative work allows students to clarify their own thought processes and, in turn, build self-confidence. Over the two-year course, students develop skills in creative problem-solving, logical reasoning, pattern recognition and precise scientific communication. They are encouraged to think and work like scientists — asking questions, designing investigations, analysing evidence and drawing reasoned conclusions.

Content and Learning Approach

The course explores the nature, behaviour and interactions of matter, connecting chemical principles to real-world contexts in health, technology and sustainability. Practical and investigative work is an integral part of learning, helping students to develop independence, curiosity and critical thinking.

A key feature of the new syllabus is the Chemistry in Practice Investigation, where students research a real chemical issue, design and carry out an experiment, and present their findings. This project develops initiative, organisation and scientific inquiry skills that are highly transferable beyond the classroom.

Assessment

From September 2025, assessment is based on two components:

- 40% Chemistry in Practice Investigation (common brief)
- 60% Written Examination (Higher and Ordinary Level)

Students who thrive in Chemistry are typically curious about how the world works, enjoy solving problems, and are willing to engage actively in practical and investigative work. They are prepared to think logically, work carefully, and persevere through challenges.

PHYSICS

Physics is the study of how and why the world and the universe work. It tells us why the sky is blue, why do stars twinkle and how do planes fly.

It is an integral part of the everyday world. It is a branch of science which studies areas such as motion, forces, energy, electricity, particle physics, nuclear physics, light and optics. The study of Physics encourages the development of logical and numerical skills. It is a good basis for any scientific career especially Engineering, Medical Physics and Computer Science. There are two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component comprising a Physics in Practice Investigation. This experiment and research project are worth 40% of the grade.

Students who are interested in taking the subject at Senior Cycle should:

1. Have enjoyed Junior Certificate Science.
2. Have an interest in how things work.
3. As there is a high mathematical component in Physics, students should enjoy using Maths to solve problems.

BUSINESS

Leaving Certificate business creates an awareness of the importance of business activity and develops a positive and ethical attitude towards enterprise. The learning experiences in business develop students' critical thinking, creative and organisational skills while enhancing literacy and numeracy skills using real-life examples.

Business is particularly helpful for students who wish to pursue careers/courses in Marketing, Finance and Human Resource Management. It is also extremely useful for those who dream of setting up their own business one day. There is no requirement for students to have studied Junior Cycle Business Studies before, so it is open to all students to take it up for the Leaving Certificate.

What kind of student would Business suit?

Business will suit a candidate who is interested in current affairs and listens to the news, reads the papers, and stays alert to what is happening in the general business world. While there is a fair share of learning of key concepts the ability to apply these concepts in everyday life will be the difference between passing the subject and getting a good mark.

While the business concepts are easy to understand, it will be important to show that you can apply the concept to everyday business life.

This subject suits someone who has an organised mind and likes to answer questions in bullet points, rather than in long essay format.

Leaving Certificate Business is a practical and relevant subject that helps students understand how businesses operate and how business decisions impact individuals, society and the wider economy.

Assessment Breakdown

Students are assessed in two components:

- **Written Examination (60%)**
The written exam is set and marked by the **State Examinations Commission (SEC)**. It is worth **300 marks** and lasts **2 hours and 30 minutes**.
- **Business Alive Investigative Study (40%)**
This is a practical, research-based project where students apply their business knowledge to a real-life business scenario. Students receive a project brief from the SEC in **Term 2 of 5th Year**.

Written Exam Structure

The written exam is designed to assess how well students can **apply their learning** across all four strands of the course, along with the unifying strand, **Investigating Business**.

The exam paper consists of **five questions**:

- **Question 1:** 90 marks (compulsory)
- **Questions 2–5:** 70 marks each

Students must answer **Question 1 and any three of the remaining four questions**, meaning four questions in total, worth **300 marks**.

Key Themes Studied

Throughout the course, students explore important **cross-cutting themes**, including:

- **Ethics and Sustainability** – how businesses balance profit with responsibility to people and the planet
- **Entrepreneurial Thinking** – how entrepreneurs identify opportunities and take informed risks
- **Business and Financial Literacy** – understanding money, budgeting and financial decision-making
- **Digital Transformation** – how technology, data and AI are changing how we work, trade and shop

CLASSICS

Classics:

Classical Studies is concerned with the civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome in all their manifestations and focuses on their continuing influence on the modern world. It includes history, literature, art and architecture, drama, and philosophy. Students who have studied Classical Studies at Junior Certificate level will have received a good introduction to the Graeco-Roman world. However, it is by no means essential for the study of Leaving Certificate Classical Studies.

Why Study Classical Studies

The ancient world is one of the foundations on which much of our European civilisation is based. This course enables the student to go back to the originals (in translation) and learn the stories and legends which inspired so much in art and literature for the next 2,000 years.

What kind of Student would Classical Studies suit?

- Classical Studies will appeal to those interested in history and those who enjoy reading and writing about the ancient world.
- It can be taken by itself as a Leaving Cert. subject which will broaden the student's outlook and knowledge, as well as helping them to gain points for university entrance. Owing to the nature of the exam, and the material to be studied, it is likely that pupils who are strong in English and History might find themselves best suited to this subject.
- The subject is a popular choice in the Arts faculties of our universities. It is particularly suited to students who have scored highly in the Linguistic and Social areas in their Interest Profiler.
- This subject is helpful in the study of history and religion and even philosophy.

Subject Group: Humanities

These subjects explore the ways in which humans live and communicate in the world. Human life is examined by looking at our past, our present and into our future. These subjects help people to express themselves clearly and develop their reasoning ability.

Career Sectors

Exam Structure

<u>Classical Studies</u>	Higher	Ordinary
Written Paper	1 Paper - 80% of Marks	1 Paper - 80% of Marks
Project	1 Paper - 20% of Marks	1 Paper - 20% of Marks

The written examination paper will be two and a half hours long and will be presented at Higher and Ordinary level. In each case, the paper will be made up of two sections.

SECTION A: STIMULUS-DRIVEN QUESTIONS

Section A will present students with questions relating to stimuli, which may be of a range of types, including various kinds of written and visual sources. The weighting of marks at Higher level will give greater emphasis to skills such as explaining, interpreting, and evaluating, while the weighting at Ordinary level will give greater emphasis to skills such as identifying, describing and comprehending.

SECTION B: EXTENDED WRITING

Section B will require students to engage in writing extended answers appropriate to their level. The extended writing questions will invite students to demonstrate the following:

- Application of knowledge and understanding from different areas of the specification to familiar and new situations.
- Critical thinking, the ability to analyse and evaluate information and to form reasonable and logical arguments and conclusions based on evidence.
- Understanding of the social, political, artistic, ethical, historical and literary concepts and aspects of classical studies and of how these relate to the world of today.

Research Project- 20%

This assessment component requires students to investigate, evaluate and report on a topic that is anchored in the classical studies specification. The research study will be assessed through the medium of a report. The report will be submitted to the State Examinations Commission in sixth year in the format of a pro-forma booklet which will be issued to students and submitted in written form. The report may include illustrations.

The brief should contain three or four options and the students, in consultation with their teacher, will focus on a particular issue or question of their choosing.

The briefs will relate to these key areas of the subject:

- Material culture
- Literature
- History
- Thought and ideas.

Leaving Cert. Grading & Points System

Higher			Ordinary	
Grade	Points	%	Grade	Points
H1	100	90-100	O1	56
H2	88	80-89	O2	46
H3	77	70-79	O3	37
H4	66	60-69	O4	28
H5	56	50-59	O5	20
H6	46	40-49	O6	12
H7	37	30-39	O7	0
H8	0	0-29	O8	0

***25 bonus points in HL Maths with grade H6 or above** www.careersportal.ie (Students should log into their REACH account)

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