Addressing a Shortfall/Condition in the
History and Structure of the Irish Education System

1. **Background**

Education systems are shaped by the historical influences of politics, culture, religion, economic and social forces of society. When a person takes up a teaching position it is professionally desirable that he/she has a basic understanding of the character of that system and of the influences, which have formed it.

The history and structure of the Irish education system forms part of the studies undertaken in the Foundations of Education within all post-primary initial teacher education (ITE) programmes accredited by the Teaching Council.

Given it is a requirement for students on Council accredited programmes, the Council considers it necessary that registration applicants who completed their ITE studies outside the State gain a knowledge and understanding of the topic. The key elements sought are an understanding of the curriculum and of the management, administration of the post-primary system in the context of traditions and policy. To facilitate applicants the Council has designed an Aptitude Test and provides guidelines for this, which do not require attendance at a course in a third-level institution.

2. **Completion of an Aptitude Test**

A written Aptitude Test is organised by the Teaching Council twice a year. It consists of a written examination paper of two hours duration. Applicants are required to answer two questions, one on the structure, control and management of second-level education in Ireland; and the other on issues relating to curriculum and assessment at second level in Ireland.

The Test is intended to assess whether applicants have a knowledge and understanding of the history and structure of education in the Republic of Ireland, particularly second level education, since the foundation of the State in 1922. Applicants should have an understanding of key issues relating to the control and management of second level schools and of curriculum and assessment at second level.

Samples of the types of questions that will appear on the written test paper together with a suggested reading list are given at 4 below. The suggested reading list is not an exhaustive one; there are other books and articles relating to the period (1922 to date), which might also be helpful. Some of these are identified in the bibliographies at the back of the books on the suggested reading list. Applicants are also advised to read recent publications of the Department of Education and Skills, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and teacher union journals such as ASTI and TUI News for updated information on curriculum, assessment and other developments.

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3. **Completion of an Adaptation Period**

Registration applicants who have been considered under the terms of EU Directive 2005/36/EC are afforded the option of addressing the condition/shortfall in the History and Structure of the Irish Education System by means of an Adaptation Period. They can do so by attending an appropriate course in the History and Structure of Irish Education in an Education Department of a Higher Education Institute (HEI), which offers a Teaching Council accredited post-primary programme of initial teacher education. Such applicants are likely to be required to register as an occasional student and pay the appropriate registration and course fees.

4. **Structure of the Test Paper**

There are two sections on the paper: Section A and Section B. There are two questions in each section and candidates are asked to answer only one question from Section A and one question from Section B. The paper covers the curriculum and management/administration of the post-primary system in the context of traditions and policy from 1922 to the present day.

**Section A**

Section A covers such topics as school governance, patronage, structural reforms, system appraisal, policy formulation and implementation.

The following are samples of the types of questions that will appear in this section:

1) The issue of governance and management of secondary schools have emerged as one of the more controversial issues in the education debate in the Republic of Ireland in recent years. Taking account of the historical context, discuss the dilemmas facing (a) the owners of schools and (b) national educational policy-makers in relation to this issue.

   **Or**

2) It has been contended that the control and management of secondary schools has changed little since the nineteenth century. Discuss this contention in the light of recent debate on the governance of schools.

   **Or**

3) During the past quarter of a century the role of the Churches in education in Ireland has evolved significantly. Discuss this evolution in the context of second level education contrasting the 1930s/40 with the 1980s/90s.

   **Or**

4) Since the early 1990s a process of significant legislative and policy reform has been underway within the Irish educational arena. Select and name one policy document or Act of legislation which you consider of critical significance. Summarise key details of this document and state its significance and contribution in successfully effecting change within the broader educational landscape?
Select Reading List for Section A

(A) General Texts

Glendenning, D. ‘Recent developments in education in Ireland’ in European Journal for Education Law and Policy (2), 1 79-83 available at http://www.springerlink.com/content/v01m52167q88w861/


Titley, Brian E. (1983) Church, State and the Control of Schooling in Ireland, 1900-1944 (Belfast: Queen’s University Press) available at http://books.google.ie/books/about/Church_State_and_the_Control_of_Schoolin.html?id=Vipviw58PAUC&redir_esc=y


(B) Select National Educational Legislation and Policies

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(C) Select OECD Reports
The OECD website ([http://www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)) hosts a significant number of country background education reports including the annual education report, *Education at a Glance* which is available for viewing and download.
Section B

Section B of the paper covers topics associated with curriculum and assessment.

The following are samples of the types of questions that will appear in this section:

1) Some critics of the current second-level school curriculum argue that there has been little substantive change in that curriculum since the foundation of the State in 1922. Do you agree with these critics? Give reasons for your reply.

OR

2) How would you respond to the claim that examinations play an over-dominant role in second-level education in Ireland? What historical factors might have contributed to this situation?

OR

3) Discuss the content and nature of the curricular changes introduced for post-primary education either in the period 1966 to 1973 OR between 1922 to 2002.

OR

4) Towards A Framework for Junior Cycle (NCCA: 2011) sets out a series of changes regarding assessment at Junior Cycle level. Summarise these new arrangements and critically consider them in relation to one or more of your teaching subjects.
(A) General Texts


Mulcahy, D.G. *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post Primary Education* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration).


(B) National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

All current national curricula, syllabuses, guidelines and frameworks for schools and educational settings in Ireland can be found on the NCCA website (www.ncca.ie). Details of current developments in curriculum and assessment in early childhood, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle can also be found here.

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5. **Outline Marking Scheme for Correction of Aptitude Test**

**Grading** — Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory

**General Principles**
The answer is satisfactory when:

a) The factual information is accurate
b) The meaning is reasonably clear
c) Some background context is provided to frame the answer
d) The candidate demonstrates an understanding of the issues discussed within their context
e) Some links are made between the historical and current situation.

**Presentation**
In presenting the answer, the candidate will be expected:

a) To provide a relevant introduction
b) To present an accurate sequence of events
c) To provide relevant information, explanation and/or comment which demonstrate an understanding of the issue(s)

Irrelevant, insignificant or erroneous statements will not necessarily result in an “unsatisfactory” grade. Such statements may be ignored and a “satisfactory” grade given provided that the general principles set out above are satisfied.

Please note that you have the option of completing the exam in Irish or in English.
Exam Paper – 23 April 2016

Test duration: 2 hours

Candidates are required to answer TWO questions. One question from Section A and one question from Section B (two hour paper)

Section A – Answer either question (1) or (2)

(1) Critically consider the extent to which you believe the Irish post-primary system has become more secular since the foundation of the state in 1922. You should illustrate the points you make with relevant and concrete example(s).

OR

(2) Discuss the main deficiencies of the post-primary system as revealed by the Investment in Education report (1966) and critically evaluate the extent to which the policy initiatives since then remedied these shortcomings.

Section B – Answer either (1) or (2)

(1) Critically set out and appraise the various significant assessment reforms undertaken at both Junior and Senior cycle from 1924 to the present day. You should frame your response at a broad, national level and if you wish at your own particular subject(s) level.

OR

(2) Identify and critically treat what you consider to be the most important curricular reform in Irish post-primary education from 1922 to the present day.

In your answer you should:

(a) Make a clear case for your choice.

(b) Critically appraise those notable subsequent developments (intended or otherwise) which followed the introduction of the reform. You should frame your response at a broad, national level and if you wish at your own particular school/subject(s) level.
Exam Paper – 19 November 2016

Test duration: 2 hours

Candidates are required to answer TWO questions. One question from Section A and one question from Section B (two hour paper)

Section A – Answer either question (1) or (2)

(1) Over most of the period since independence, the remarkable feature of educational policy in Ireland has been the reluctance of the state to touch on the entrenched position of the church … it [the Roman Catholic Church] has carved out for itself a more extensive control over education in Ireland...

(Whyte 1971: 21)

There are two parts to this question:

a. Critically appraise the accuracy of this statement with reference to the role that the Roman Catholic Church played in Irish education in the fifty years from 1921 to 1971.

And

b. Briefly consider the changing role of the Roman Catholic Church in Irish education from 1971 to the present day.

OR

(2) A very significant agenda for reform of educational policy has been underway in Irish education since the early 1990s. Describe the key policy initiatives which emerged since 1991 and discuss the extent to which these initiatives have successfully reformed the broader educational landscape?

Section B – Answer either (1) or (2)

(1) On 29 October 1981 the Minister for Education, John Boland stated the following:

The present Examination System will be reformed to reduce the pressure on students caused by the Leaving Certificate Examination. The present points system for entry to university, while being fair and unbiased, is distorting second level education and having an adverse educational effect on school curricula.

Seanad Éireann Debate Vol. 96 No.5

To what extent has reform of the Leaving Certificate Examination been achieved? In your answer you should set out what you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of the current system of assessment at Leaving Certificate level. You can if you wish focus on one or two of your own teaching subjects.

OR

(2) Discuss the extent to which there has been substantive change in the post-primary curriculum in Ireland since the foundation of the Irish State in 1922. You can if you wish focus on one or two of your own teaching subjects.