

Consultation Report on the draft specification for Junior Cycle Home Economics

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1. Introduction

The draft specification for Junior Cycle Home Economics was approved for consultation by Council in February 2017. The aim of the consultation process was to hear the views of a wide range of key stakeholders, interested individuals and organisations on the draft specification.

The draft specification sets out the proposed rationale, aim, strands, learning outcomes and assessment components for the subject. It also situates the subject within the wider junior cycle developments with specific links to the key skills framework and progression between primary and senior cycle education. The consultation was designed to gather feedback on the extent to which these sections were successful in capturing the purposes of Home Economics at junior cycle and to hear different perspectives on the specification as a whole.

The consultation process consisted of different elements:

- an online questionnaire
- submissions and focus group

Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire was open from 14th February 2017 until the 31st March 2017 (see Appendix 3, pp. 33). A total of 295 respondents completed the online questionnaire with 84% of respondents identifying themselves as post-primary home economics teachers.

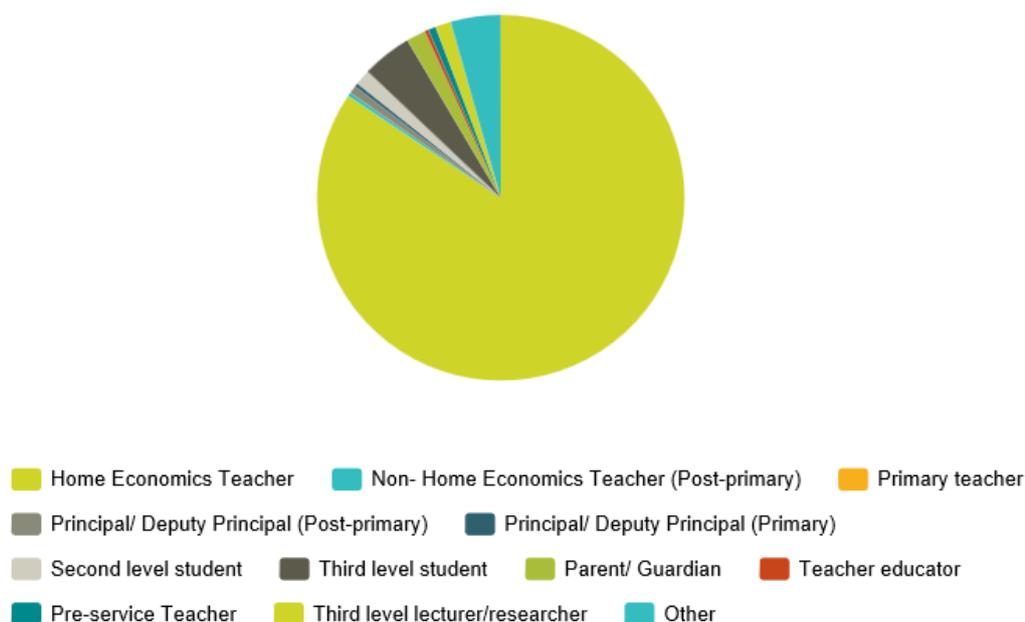


Figure 1 Breakdown of respondents to online questionnaire

Submissions

Eight written submissions were received (see Appendix 1, p. 31):

- Association of Teachers of Home Economics (ATHE)
- Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCOI)
- Dr. Kathryn McSweeney
- Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
- Irish Development Education Association, Formal Education Working Group (IDEA FEWG)
- Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute (INDI)
- Safefood
- Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College.

In addition, a focus group was arranged with the Hospitality Skills Oversight Group on the 21st March 2017 (see Appendix 2, p. 32).

The Report

The following report is based on an analysis of the views on the draft specification expressed by respondents through the various consultation tools. The material is dealt with in terms of the themes that developed through the consultation. Selected quotations from respondents are used, where appropriate, to characterise and clarify the views being expressed.

2. Feedback from the consultation

There is consensus that the draft specification is welcomed. This is evidenced by the comments and feedback generated through the consultation process. The initial impressions of the draft specification were positive. The opportunity for the development and application of practical and transferable skills across the three strands of the course was welcomed by respondents.

There were some concerns raised and challenges identified. Of significant importance to teachers is the introduction of 60 minute class periods in some school settings and the potential implications of this development on students' planning, organisation and demonstration of practical culinary skills. As part of wider junior cycle developments, from September 2017, class periods of less than forty minutes will no longer be time-tabled. There is a concern that 60 minute class periods will replace the current practice of providing single (40 minute) and double (80 minute) class periods. According to *The Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) and DES circulars, schools are advised to time-table subjects in a way that is more suited to the learning needs of their students and the subjects they study. Time-tabling is managed at a local level within school contexts and while it is not a requirement of the specification to time-table home economics lessons in 60 minute class periods, there is anxiety among teachers that this practice may develop and impact on the completion of practical work.

There was also a recognition in the feedback that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will be required to achieve the kind of learning envisaged by the specification's learning outcomes. A CPD programme will be provided by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) to support the introduction and implementation of the specification.

2.1 Rationale and Aim

The initial response to the rationale and aim was positive. It was indicated that the rationale and aim encompass all aspects of Home Economics, the philosophical underpinning of the subject and the importance of practical skills. This positive response was echoed by most respondents to the online questionnaire, who expressed the view that the draft home economics specification would be effective in the following:

- to develop students' knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies to achieve optimal, healthy and sustainable living for families and society (92%)
- to develop students' practical food and health literacy skills (93%)
- to cultivate students who are creative, innovative, adaptable and competent consumers (87%)

- to develop students who are environmentally conscious and dedicated to a sustainable and responsible way of life. (83%)

However, in relation to the aim, some respondents felt that, while laudable, it was too broad and should be more focused on what is achievable within the specification. Some respondents suggested a greater focus on decision making skills.

To empower individuals to make decisions for the betterment of society

Home Economics teacher

To help students use all resources available to them wisely and make wise decisions, so that they live healthy creative lives

Home Economics teacher

As an organisation we recognise the importance of Home Economics and the potential it has to foster a cohort of informed young people who are empowered to make positive decisions about their lifestyles.

INDI

Other respondents noted that there is no explicit reference in the aims to Strand 3 *Textiles and craft*.

We feel the aim should be elaborated to include management of other core resource areas along with food i.e. textiles and clothing

Textiles, Fashion and Design team, St Angela's College

Link to the importance of textiles also needs to be included

Home Economics teacher

It was also suggested that there should be greater emphasis on sustainability issues.

There should be a greater emphasis on the climate change impacts that food waste has, both nationally and globally. Prevention of food waste at source, allied to sustainable purchasing can, in the long run, have a positive impact on the whole of the food chain

Stop Food Waste programme

Educate students in order to live a sustainable and healthy life

Home Economics teacher

Explicit references to fostering citizenship would be a welcome addition [...] along with greater emphasis on community.

IDEA FEWG

In summary, while the response to the rationale and aim was positive, some consideration could be given to addressing concerns raised.

2.2 Course structure

The layout of the draft specification has been established in line with other subject specifications being developed across junior cycle. The draft specification divides the course into strands and elements. Strands describe how the subject is organised, outlining briefly the context of the learning for students in each section of the course. Elements focus on the goals of the learning process, that is, the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and values. The response to the course structure was mixed. In relation to the course structure respondents to the online questionnaire agreed with the following:

- The Overview section provides a clear description of the specification (53%)
- The Strands clearly encapsulate the important learning relevant to junior cycle students (56%)
- The Elements make relevant connections between the learning in the strands (59%)

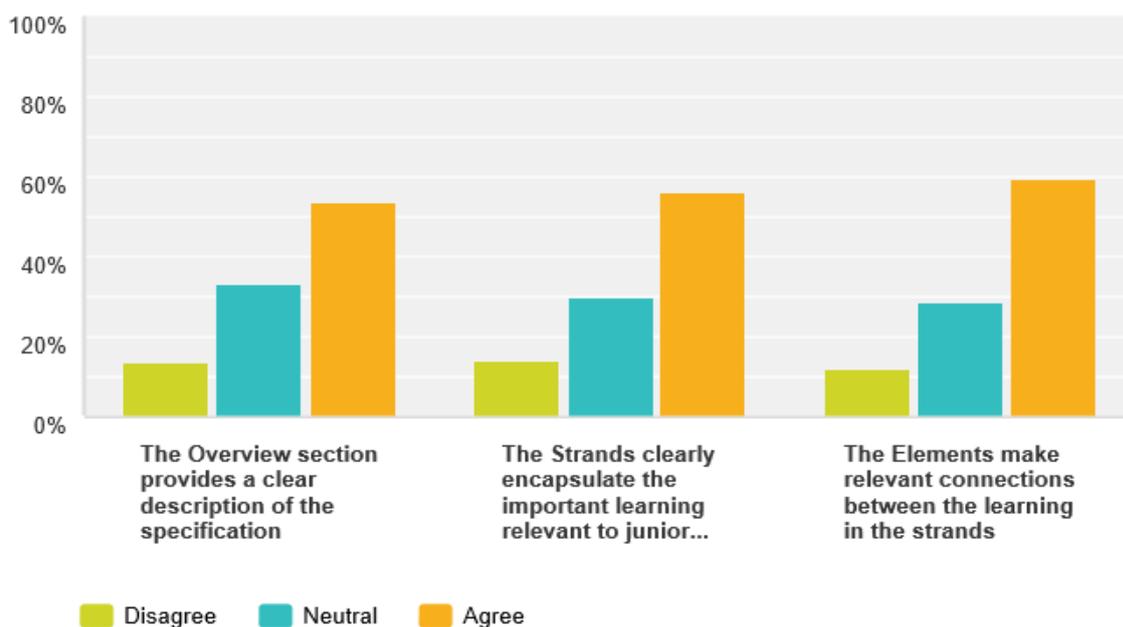


Figure 2 Response to course structure from online questionnaire

Some of the comments from the online questionnaire and submissions elaborate on how the course structure was received. There was some confusion over how the strands are diagrammatically represented in the specification (see p. 12 of the draft specification) with many respondents looking at the strands as a linear progression through the course rather than interconnected. Many respondents indicated that the relationship between the strands wasn't clear.

Overview - what is the percentage breakdown of the 3 areas - do the circle sizes indicate that food is the major part of the course in comparison to textiles and craft which is presented in the smallest circle. In terms of planning time allocation within the 200 hours it would be important to know

Home Economics teacher

It is important to keep the core stands in balance, in other words, keep course multidisciplinary Home Economics. Focusing too much on Food would narrow the subject to be a cooking course or culinary course instead of Home Economics. Home Economics JC specification should follow the Home Economics definitions in research, literature and IFHE [International Federation for Home Economics] position paper.

Teacher educator

Several respondents raised concerns about the apparent exclusion of childcare from the course.

Members are concerned in relation to the reduced element of childcare in the new specification. We feel, as the only subject concerned with family, childcare and child development is an important life skill.

ATHE

We are concerned in relation to the childcare and child development components of the subject not evident in the new specification. Home Economics is the only curriculum subject that is concerned with family education and at the core of this is the child

Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College

Concerns raised in the feedback will be noted and the presentation of the course structure will be addressed by exploring alternative visual representations.

2.3 Learning outcomes

The draft specification is written as a set of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes address the knowledge and understanding, skills and values which Home Economics aims to develop. The flexibility inherent in learning outcomes facilitates the teaching and learning of relevant topics in local school and community contexts, and matters of national interest. However, the perceived lack of specificity in terms of topics and content raised some concerns. Teachers will need support in unpacking and working with learning outcomes as this approach to curriculum development is a very new approach to many teachers.

The non-content driven manner in which the specification has been written is a worry to members. It is not a method they are familiar with and therefore unsure of how to plan and prepare going forward. We feel as an Association that it is imperative that specific professional development is offered to Home Economics teachers in order for them to become familiar with the process of unpacking the learning outcomes which should make the transition to implementation of the new Junior Cycle much smoother.

ATHE

As with many of the specifications there is a lot left open to interpretation with regards to the level of content required for assessment. Many of the areas which overlap have been integrated but with forty-one Learning Outcomes which indicate similar amounts of detail as is on the current course there will be a similar issue with regards to time management especially as Textiles has gained a more central and prominent role within the new course.

Home Economics teacher

Other respondents raised the concern that the learning outcomes appeared too theoretical and that there would be inadequate time to complete the course content and develop key skills in 200 hours.

Don't fill up the course with depth and breadth of content. If creativity and critical thinking is to flow in pupils they must not be swamped with too much information.

Home Economics teacher

There is a lot of theory to cover which takes a lot of time. That is why I would like to see the breakdown of each topic regarding what is to be covered.

Home Economics teacher

A lot of content has to be covered in 3 classes per week. I am unsure if this is viable.

Home Economics teacher

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which the learning outcomes were gender inclusive. 67% of online responses agreed that the specification was gender inclusive. Some respondents indicated that the focus on the family, textiles and the title of the subject are off-putting for boys.

Textiles puts boys off doing subject.

Home Economics teacher

It could be developed to include boys more maybe a cookery brief on catering for athletes.

Home Economics teacher

While the specification endeavours to be gender inclusive, its uptake can be impacted due to wider preconceptions regarding the subject as a “girls’ subject” and the roles that are or should be

performed by women and men. While much work and effort has been invested into challenging these preconceptions at local, national and international levels, schools, cultures and wider society need to support these initiatives and continue to tackle these preconceptions.

2.4 Strand 1: Food, health and culinary skills

In general, Strand 1 was well-received by respondents. The emphasis on essential life skills was welcomed. Respondents to the online questionnaire agreed that Strand 1 would support:

- students' knowledge and understanding of nutrition, diet and health principles (89%)
- students to develop problem solving, creativity and innovation and practical culinary skills (77%)
- students to develop a healthy and positive relationship with food (81%)
- students to develop as competent consumers (75%)
- students' skills for sustainable living. (68%)

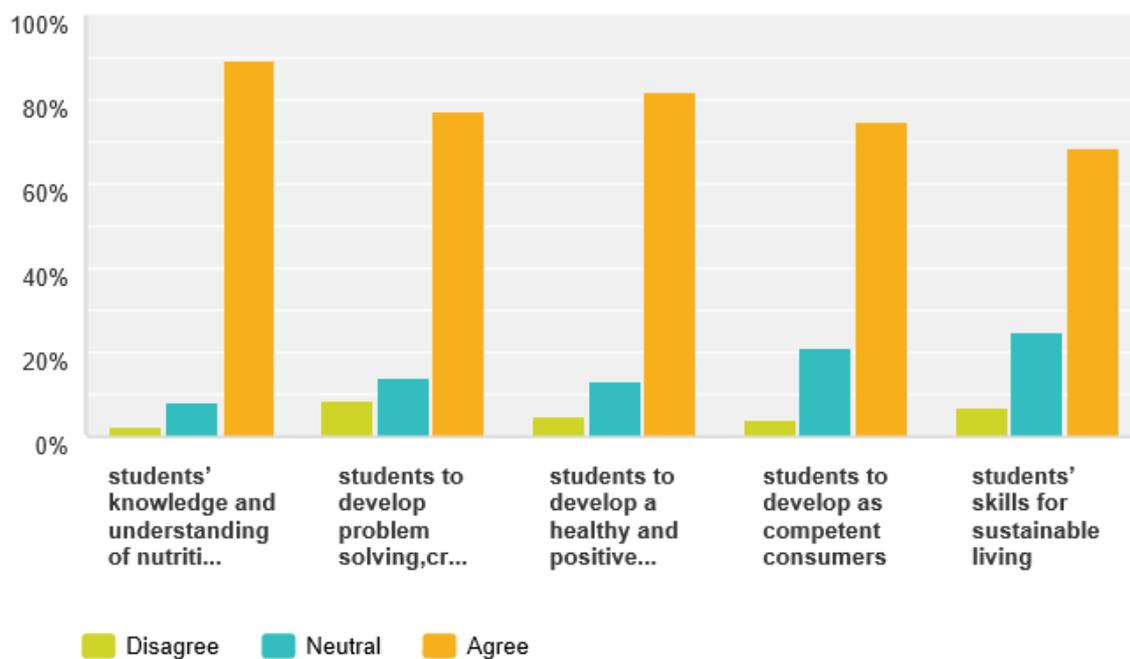


Figure 3 Response to Strand 1 from online questionnaire

The clear presentation of food, health and culinary skills in a discreet strand is to be welcomed [...] It is critical that the student be enabled to understand that broad range of influences that influence food choice i.e. both individual and collective determinants of healthy eating.

Safefood

I feel that the learning outcomes offer the teacher a myriad of different ways of having students learn. They offer scope, innovation and new opportunities.

Home Economics teacher

Some respondents indicated that the word 'nutrition' should be included in the title and overview of the strand and that this term is more reflective of the content of the learning outcomes. The focus on the scientific foundation of the course was welcomed generally.

As a subject discipline, there should be a greater focus on the nutritional science element of the subject. The nutrients found in food and the effect these have on the diet need to be studied.

Home Economics teacher

A few respondents raised concerns around the learning outcomes in relation to disease specific dietary requirements. Many respondents viewed this to be too advanced for the age and stage of junior cycle students. Some other concerns addressed the wording used in relation to this as misleading. It was indicated that a greater emphasis should be put on the causes and consequences of poor eating habits in the Irish context more generally, and the strategies to prevent and manage this as an individual, within families and within wider society.

While it is useful that students learn the impact of poor dietary patterns on disease risk, the INDI would not consider the planning and preparation of meals for people with disease specific dietary requirements to be a priority for students at this level.

INDI

Our country is presently in the middle of an obesity & diabetes type 2 epidemic - more emphasis needs to be out in healthy nutritional decisions and being able to make smart food choices

Home Economics teacher

Students should understand that the healthy eating guidelines are the cornerstone of healthy eating advice for all children over 5 and adults. Students should be provided with opportunities to apply these guidelines where possible e.g. practical cookery, menu planning, shopping and also be enabled to apply these guidelines to themselves and those in their own households.

Safefood

Many respondents welcomed the reference to sustainability but indicated a desire for a greater emphasis on the origin and sourcing of food and the environmental impact of food production and consumption. Ireland's commitment to achieving global environmental targets, as a member of the EU, in relation to food waste and consumption was mentioned as important alongside the cost saving associated with living and consuming more sustainably.

There needs to be a more defined path developed that links the generation of waste with personal choice.

Stop Food Waste programme

I think it would be a positive development to see reference to 'global' [...] It would mean considering things like air miles, impact on the producer in the developing world, use of land in the developing world to grow biomass crops for export rather than food crops for indigenous use, working conditions in some low cost economies, pollution impact of livestock production versus the benefits to diet etc. All as contributors to one's decision on how to run a home.

IDEA FEWG

We consider it very important that Home Economics maintains a strong focus on developing healthy food skills and in particular less emphasis on baking 'cakes and buns'. The sustainability and environmental aspects of food could be more developed in the learning outcomes to include food sustainability, origins of food and grow-it-yourself etc.

Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College

Other respondents indicated a need for human physiology to be more explicit in the learning outcomes.

I feel very strongly that the major systems within the human body must be studied to understand the how interconnected all of the systems of the body are, (not just digestion on its own). This area must look at the whole person (inside and out) not as a series of unconnected parts.

Home Economics teacher

The importance of teaching basic skills in health, safety, self-care and hygiene was mentioned.

There is scope to include health and safety under health and culinary skills in particular, e.g. recognising hazards and understanding why safety measures are in place, understanding hazard labels and recognising hazard pictograms and what they mean, use of personal protective equipment and clothing.

Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

2.5 Strand 2: Responsible family living

In general, Strand 2 was well-received. The focus on supporting students' understanding of the role of families as a core unit in contemporary society was welcomed. Respondents to the online questionnaire agreed that Strand 2 would support:

- students' understanding of the role of families as a core unit in contemporary society (77%)
- students' understanding of the contribution of families to the development of the child and adolescent in a safe and nurturing environment (72%)
- students to develop as discerning, competent consumers (73%)
- students to develop skills of resource management for independent living (72%)
- students' attitudes and values towards responsible and sustainable living (70%)

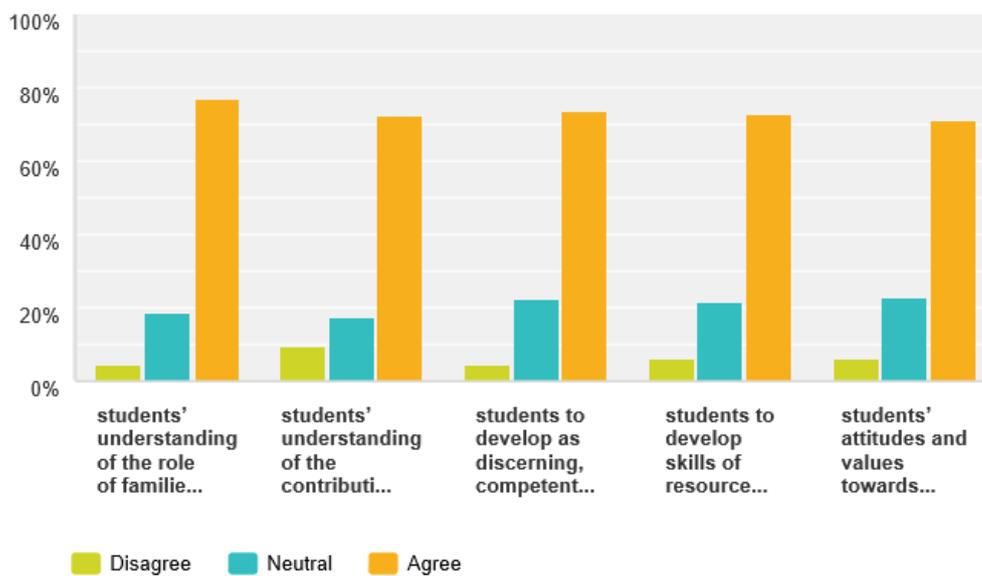


Figure 4 Response to Strand 2 from online questionnaire

Some respondents indicated that the strand would benefit from referring to the diverse nature of families, and identifying the material, cultural and social resources available to families. It was also indicated that an emphasis on values such as empathy and tolerance be promoted to encourage respectful relationships among individuals, families, communities and society. In this context, there was a suggestion that the term 'households' be just in conjunction with 'family' and 'community'.

I reiterate the focus on the term "family", this term will be misinterpreted by students and parents/guardians. This can have a negative effect on the uptake of the subject as it may be viewed as "wife studies" which is an insult to the subject discipline, students who study(ed) the subject and teachers as it empowers all individuals whether they plan on having a family or not.

Home Economics teacher

Due to the wide variety of family structures, I find that referring to families in class always causes upset.

Home Economics teacher

The home / household as a centre of responsible family living is not explicitly referenced in this strand. As per the International Federation for Home Economics Position Paper (2008) and other Home Economics curricula throughout the world the focus broadly is on Home Economics as an arena for everyday living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met.

Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College

As stated previously, many respondents commented on the absence of childcare and child development in this strand.

No mention of the reproductive cycle or development or care of the child which is the precursor to family development.

Home Economics teacher

The removal of the childcare option does not allow schools with a high incidence of young parents to fully explore the importance of child development and positive parenting strategies.

Home Economics teacher

It was suggested that there should be an increased emphasis on the practical skills that can be developed within this strand such as household budgeting, home management and interior design. It was also suggested that the role of technology as a resource for individuals, families and communities should be explicitly mentioned. Other suggestions that arose included the continued emphasis on physiology, sustainability, consumer competence, health and safety and hygiene. Clarity around the use of the terms 'systems approach' was also sought.

Physiology is needed as well as more social studies such as mental health, health hazards. This should not be removed. It's a vital part of the subject.

Home Economics teacher

Link with green schools initiatives and recycling of products; what can and cannot be recycled. Link with food commodities; what food packaging is used and is the packaging recyclable or not.

Home Economics teacher

2.6 Strand 3: Textiles and craft

In general, Strand 3 was welcomed although the response was more mixed than the other strands.

I believe that the skills student take from the textiles and craft area need to be nurtured. These skills have been passed down through generations and should be promoted as they promote creative learners, analytical learners and learners with gross and fine motor skills.

Home Economics teacher

This strand is given too much significance where modern students are concerned; many are beginning from a no-skills basis - and uptake at senior cycle does not support the idea that more time/ resources should be contributed to textiles and craft

Home Economics teacher

Respondents to the online questionnaire agreed that Strand 3 would support:

- students' knowledge and understanding of the design brief process (73%)
- students to develop practical textile and craft skills (69%)
- students to develop skills of creativity (66%)
- students' problem solving skills (62%)
- students' attitudes and values towards sustainable living (55%)

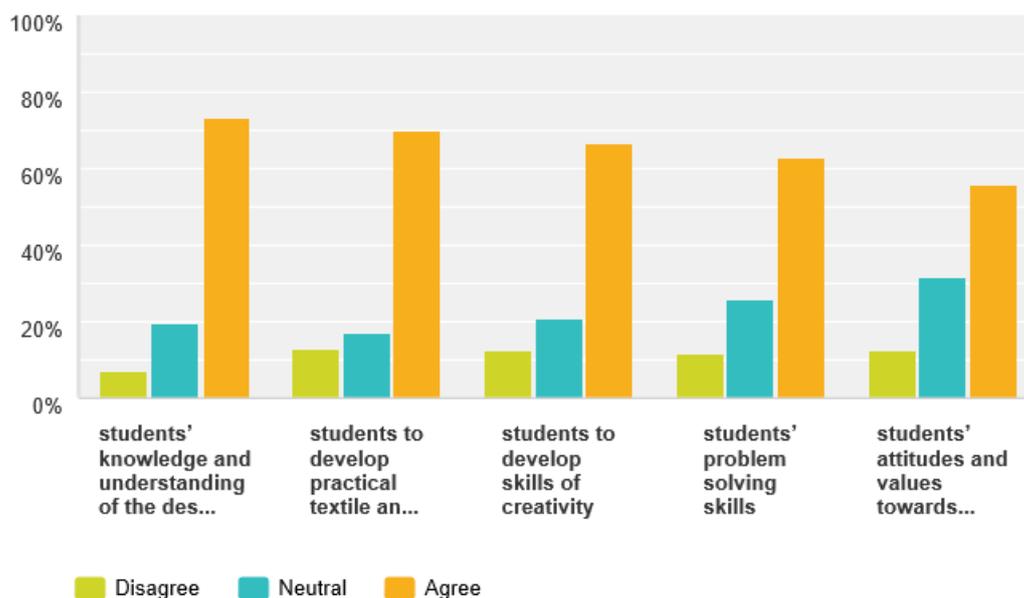


Figure 5 Response to Strand 3 from online questionnaire

Some respondents desired a focus on a wider range of practical skills such as crochet and knitting and key skills in creativity and design.

Too much emphasis on sewing, what about other crafts such as crochet and knitting? These are all important skills that support the fashion industry and develop motor skills.

Home Economics teacher

The title of this strand does not reflect the importance of design education. Design elements and principles inform the development of textile fashion and household items. There is a need to make explicit reference to the principles and elements of design in the learning outcomes. The role of textile, design and craft education in supporting the development of wellbeing in students' needs to be recognised explicitly.

Third level lecturer/researcher

Craft was a fantastic way of allowing students to be innovative and creative, for students who are no academic to excel and an opportunity to explore craft work that they absolutely would never get to otherwise. Craft is also a very effective tool with students with ADHD and behavioural issues. It's also an element tool for development of fine motor skills.

Home Economics teacher

Some feedback also suggested that a focus on the types and nature of textiles in the home was necessary for a foundational understanding of design.

Basic skills need to be gained such as understating the features of a variety of fabrics, the requirement for fire protection on certain household fabrics, sewing a simple seam, sewing on a button and putting in a zip [...] without this basic knowledge of textiles [students] are learning design without the basic grounding of how the materials respond.

Design and Craft Council of Ireland

It was suggested that sustainable decision making in choice of clothing and textiles be included in the learning outcomes. Some respondents mentioned the economic, social and environmental impacts of clothing and the total lifecycle use-phase of garments and textile products as being important for junior cycle students as significant consumers on the high street.

A basic understanding of the properties and characteristics of fibres and fabrics is required before understanding their sustainability, use and care.

Textiles, fashion and design team, St. Angela's College

It was suggested that clearer and more tangible links need to be made between this strand and the other two strands so that their interconnectedness is more explicit.

3. Feedback from the consultation: Assessment

The assessment for certification in Junior Cycle Home Economics is based on the aim, objectives and learning outcomes of this specification. Assessment for certification is provided for at Common Level. Assessment of Home Economics will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs): *Creative Textiles* and a *Food Literacy Skills Brief*. A practical food skills examination (worth 50% of a student's marks) and the written examination (worth 50% also) will be marked by the State Examinations Commission.

The introduction of CBAs is part of broader junior cycle reform. CBAs allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. CBAs are assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

As mentioned previously, recurrent comments related to the time-tabling of one hour classes in some school settings. It was consistently mentioned that a one hour class period in Home Economics cannot adequately prepare students for a practical food skills examination lasting 1 hour 30 minutes and weighted 50% of the available marks. This is an issue within school settings for teachers and school management.

3.1 CBA 1: Creative Textiles

While this classroom-based assessment was welcomed, many respondents expressed disappointment that it would not be externally assessed and graded by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Currently students submit textile work worth 15% to the SEC for marking and many respondents wanted this practice to remain.

We would advocate that the CBA 1 would retain the weighting for practical textiles craftwork that currently exists in order to maintain the standard and range of work. We welcome that all students of JC Home economics will now undertake this work. We hope that the fact that the Creative Textiles component is assessed by Classroom Based Assessment will not dilute its weighting within the curriculum. We expect that the written paper will address all three core strands.

Textiles, fashion and design team, St. Angela's College

The removal of an external assessment of the textile component is not a positive move. Without external assessment, the standard of the textile will be reduced.

Home Economics teacher

I believe some marks should be given towards the classroom based assessment on creative textiles as otherwise you are losing an extremely important part of Home Economics. If it is left as a classroom based assessment with no marks other than to show the progress of the student throughout the three years, I honestly believe you are losing one of the underlying concepts and values within Home Economics.

Home Economics teacher

Other comments suggested that the two options presented in CBA 1 were very similar: *make a textile item for an individual or the home, or recycle or upcycle a textile item for an individual or home*. It was suggested that one option could relate to a textile craft item and the other option relate to clothing/garments. This would allow for making from new or upcycling and recycling for both options, meaning greater choice and flexibility for students and teachers.

There was anxiety expressed around teachers assessing students' work more generally with teachers concerned about standards, parental pressure and a lack of resources. This anxiety is foreseeable as the system moves from an assessment approach that is prominently state-certified to one where teachers will be evaluating and assessing students' work for the purposes of formative feedback and reporting.

3.2 CBA 2: Food Literacy Skills Brief

In general CBA 2 was welcomed. It was familiar to teachers as it reflected current practice in relation to the preparatory brief for the cookery practical examination. It was felt to be very effective in assessing students' skills in menu planning and evaluation. Many respondents indicated a desire for the link between CBA 2 and the practical food skills examination to be more explicit in the specification.

I have indicated very effective as my understanding from reading the draft specification is that this CBA reflects the current process of preparation for the practical exam. At present, this process is effective in achieving the goals above, so it would follow that a CBA in a similar format would also. The relationship between the proposed CBA 2 and the practical food skills examination could be clarified.

Home Economics teacher

I think this is a good way of examining classroom based assessment as it will then follow through to the practical skills examination

Home Economics teacher

Generally works very well. Menus and food produced, instantly visible. Costs and evaluations keeping receipts

Home Economics teacher

Some comments indicated a concern that food and culinary skills were in danger of overassessment in the proposed specification. However, according to DES guidelines, the second CBA should be linked to the forthcoming practical work.

Would suggest that Strand 1 Food Health & Culinary Skills is currently in danger of over assessment Practical exam with 50% weighting – examination on the written paper and CBA 2. Suggest that Strand two which is currently under represented in the proposed assessment would preferably be the focus of this CBA with scope to explore household budgeting, consumer competence, social and family issues, home and resource management, interior design, etc.

Textiles, fashion and design team, St. Angela’s College

Is the course content weighted in such a way that over 50% of assessment is food based? Assuming food studies is also to be assessed in the written examination

Home Economics teacher

3.3 Practical food skills examination

The practical food skills examination was welcomed by respondents. Respondents to the online questionnaire indicated that the practical food skills examination would be effective or very effective in the following:

- students’ application of the design brief process (87%)
- students’ practical culinary skills (94%)
- students’ application of nutritional knowledge (83%)
- students’ skills of creativity and innovation (88%)
- students’ skills of critical analysis (78%)

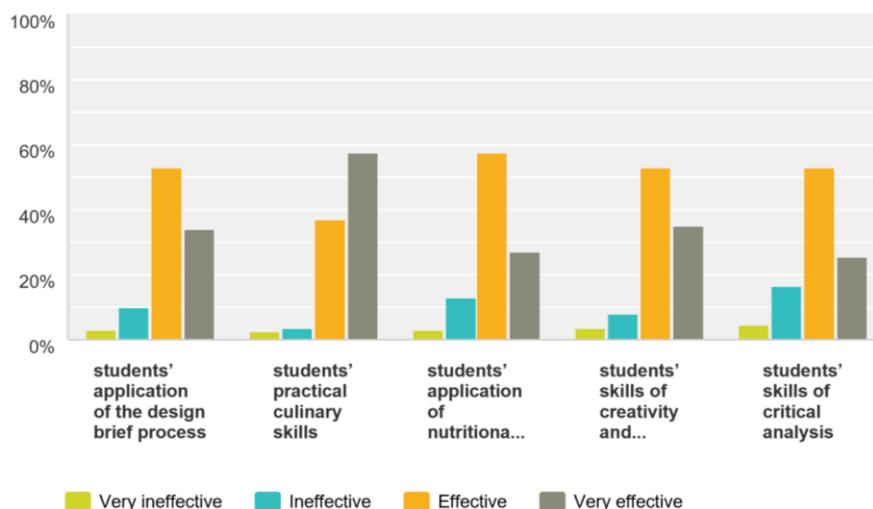


Figure 6 Response to practical food skills examination from online questionnaire

The results from the online questionnaire are echoed in comments from across the consultation.

This is what HE should be about, practical application, real-life skills and the promotion of healthy eating to reduce obesity and diabetes.

Home Economics teacher

It's similar to the current practical exam, and it works so it's great!

Home Economics teacher

Only true exam where students rely on self to complete brief in allocated time and present meal/dish with supporting documents - mirrors real life situations for family meals etc. and real sense of achievement in most cases when adequate preparation and planning is done

Home Economics teacher

We regard the practical food skills examination as very effective in assessing students' practical culinary skills. We note the importance of developing food literacy skills in modern society and the pivotal role Home Economics plays in developing these skills and consequently welcome the emphasis on developing food literacy skills.

Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College

Weighting

Generally, there was a positive response to the proposed weighting of 50% for the practical food skills examination and many comments reflect this.

Members are extremely positive in relation to the 50% weighting given to the practical food literacy exam.

ATHE

Home Economics is very much a practical subject and I feel the 50% is appropriate. I'm delighted to see this increase in marks.

Home Economics teacher

A major lifelong learning skill is being learned in Home Economics Junior Cycle, food studies is the major element out of the three and I feel the weighting is excellent as we will be spending 50% or more of our min 200 hours in the food studies area teaching cooking skills and principles etc.

Home Economics teacher

Practical work and practical application of knowledge is at the core of Home Economics education. I think that this is reflected in the proposed weighting.

Home Economics teacher

Nevertheless, some concerns were raised in relation to the proposed weighting. Several respondents indicated that the proposed weighting of 50% for the practical food skills examination and 50% for the written examination would be detrimental to textiles and craft as mentioned previously.

I would have liked to see the 50% practical to include textile and food as we have now.

Home Economics teacher

Options

Respondents also welcomed the five options proposed in the specification. Options 1, 3 and 4 were particularly well received.

These five options are very apt, they are the key areas students should be learning about.

Home Economics teacher

Option 4 is very important so students can see a better alternative than opting for takeaways and is very relevant to their lives.

Home Economics teacher

Some concerns were raised over option 2 with many respondents feeling it is less relevant and more difficult than other options for junior cycle students. Option 5 had a more mixed response. It was suggested including the word 'product' after Option 5 *A food enterprise/farmers' market* to help clarify expectations.

Special diets such as diabetes should not form part of this course.

Home Economics teacher

The focus on healthy family meals is very welcome. While it is useful that students learn the impact of poor dietary patterns on disease risk, the INDI would not consider the planning and preparation of meals for people with disease specific dietary requirements to be a priority for students at this level.

INDI

Whilst I love the idea of the last option (5), how will it equate to other three which are meals based?? It's restricting as many foods sold at farmers' markets will take longer to make eg yeast breads, jams, chutneys.

Home Economics teacher

I am happy with the above categories, but worry that baking skills may be lost due to the narrow focus. Baking skills could be applied in Option 5. Could there be more scope to allow for development of baking skills as well as cooking skills.

Home Economics teacher

I question the commercial aspect. I appreciate that lots of what we do in Home Economics feeds into the food industry but I think we need to concentrate on the home rather than product development at junior cert level.

Home Economics teacher

Respondents to the online questionnaire were asked to suggest other appropriate briefs. Suggestions included: cost-efficient or low budget meals, meals for a teen's life-stage, meals for special occasions, home baking and availing of local suppliers. The comments below provide a flavour of this feedback.

Much more focus on the diet of teenagers.

Home Economics teacher

A focus for independent & budget cookery for college students I think would be a good addition.

Home Economics teacher

Healthy eating for a school canteen or a packed lunch.

Home Economics teacher

An option that would allow for the application of baking skills, as application of these skills provides much opportunity for creativity.

Home Economics teacher

Would like to see option here linking to the idea of making healthy meals when very few ingredients are available or making a meal from left-overs.

IDEA FEWG

Some respondents suggested that the role of food in relation to identity, culture, heritage and religion could be explored more in the options available and through some of the learning outcomes in the specification.

Perhaps consideration should be given to awareness of multi-cultural and religious influence aspects of our food availability and choices. This is especially relevant considering our society is so multi-cultural. Our subject doesn't reflect this.

Home Economics teacher

Their own ethnic dish or food product. From teaching in a very multicultural school, I believe students should be given the opportunity to show what dishes are a delicacy in countries they may have once resided.

Home Economics teacher

Others felt that the options could be more modern and focus on students demonstrating an ability and disposition towards being more sustainable and cost-conscious.

Too much focus on nutrition based meal planning briefs; students are participating in this subject to develop a broad sweep of culinary skills reflective of their age, circumstance, socio-economic status, ability level, etc. - this does not reflect modern eating habits and how to be sustainable, consumer efficient, etc

Home Economics teacher

Sustainable, climate friendly and cost-wise meal planning

Teacher educator

Another possible option could be home grown foods as a main ingredient, maybe farmers market covers this or could incorporate this concept but it's a growing area that the public are becoming more conscious of the effects of pesticides etc of commercially grown produce

Home Economics teacher

The richness and diversity of the options suggested is note-worthy and provides much feedback for discussion and consideration.

Other concerns

Some respondents raised concerns about the design brief process, which relates to CBA 2.

I worry that teachers may pick the chosen dishes at start of year 3 and base the design process on this instead of fully observing the design brief process.

Home Economics teacher

Many weaker students find the design brief process, particularly evaluation beyond them

Home Economics teacher

Students as a rule are often quite poor at critical analysis so it will be great for them to further develop this skill

Home Economics teacher

Many respondents also raised concerns about the length of the course and amount of theory to be covered in the learning outcomes. It was felt that the balance between theory and practice needs to be reflected in the learning outcomes in line with the weighting proposed in the assessment.

I feel that the level of theory content is too heavy. Additional time will need to be given for cookery as it will now be worth 50% therefore I feel there is still too much theory to allow for this. Also 1 hour classes will not allow for enough time for practical work if introduced in schools. This will be a real hindrance to students achieving in an exam that is worth 50%.

Home Economics teacher

Other comments indicated a bias towards food skills in the assessment to the detriment of other areas of the course as mentioned previously.

What is a reason to assess only food skills in practical examination as HE is multidisciplinary subject - it should integrate areas. At least, there should be different weighting for practical examination as it is only focused on food skill. Eg. 30% to practical food skills and 70% to written, where Responsible Family living and Textiles & Craft Strands could be included.

Teacher educator

Additionally, many respondents raised a concern about progression to senior cycle home economics. They felt that students doing the new course would not be adequately prepared for the expectations of senior cycle home economics. Some suggestions included undertaking a review of senior cycle home economics in light of the new developments at junior cycle.

I think this is excellent. Students who struggle with theory will excel in home economics as they usually have exceptional cookery skills. However, I do not know how beneficial this will be as students move on to Leaving Certificate Home Economics.

Home Economics teacher

In summary, teachers will require Continuing Professional Development during the introduction and implementation phase of the new specification to achieve the kind of teaching, learning and assessment envisaged in the specification. They will also require additional assessment support materials to understand the process of assessment at junior cycle more generally, and specifically to Home Economics.

Teachers really need guidelines and in-service on this area - expected criteria, standards and marking schemes

Home Economics teacher

3.4 Written examination

There was a mixed response to the written exam being one hour. 60% of those responding to the online questionnaire disagreed that the examination should be no longer than one hour and suggested a longer examination. Some respondents referred to the nature of the written examination and that inclusion of open discursive answer questions is preferable to short recall type questions.

Members are worried about the exam only being one hour long. They feel in order for students to show off 3 years' worth of learning they need more time. They are also worried about the content of the exam when the specification is none content driven.

ATHE

One hour is not sufficient to allow students to elaborate on their learning, and they would not be able to show the scope of their knowledge and analysis, nor would they be able to demonstrate creativity.

Home Economics teacher

As I do not know what type of written assessment is envisaged it is difficult to judge if one hour is sufficient. It is a very short time to access three years of study but the current 2.5 hours for HL and 2 hours for OL is too long.

Home Economics teacher

We would agree that the written examination should be no longer than one-hour duration. We appreciate that the written examination will constitute a sample of the relevant outcomes from the tables of learning outcomes across the three strands. However, we would suggest that the nature of the written examination is very important and the type and mechanism of assessment therein. The use of more open discursive answer questions would facilitate students to present practical everyday experiences and outline experiences of skill application rather than short recall style questions.

Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College

4. Messages from the consultation

It was evident from the consultation that the draft specification is welcome. The consultation process was very affirming of the work of the NCCA Development Group for Junior Cycle Home Economics. This section of the report looks at ways in which progress can be made on some of the issues raised.

4.1 Areas for further consideration

The consultation process revealed some constructive and considered concerns about sections of the specification. Addressing these concerns will be the immediate focus of the development group. The following are areas to be considered:

- Rationale and aim: The description of the aim should be considered.
- Structure: Some respondents required further clarity on the relationship between the three strands, and re-designing the diagrammatic representations of the structure was recommended.
- Learning outcomes: Concerns were raised regarding the breadth and depth of some of the learning outcomes and the inclusion or revision of some learning outcomes was suggested.
- Gender inclusivity: Consideration of some modifications to the learning outcomes and assessment components was suggested to ensure male participation in the subject.
- CBA 1: Creative Textiles: It was suggested that clothing/garments be included in the options and for textiles to be given weighting as part of formal assessment.
- CBA 2: It was suggested that the links between CBA 2 and the practical food skills brief be clarified.
- Practical food skills brief: Further consideration of the options was suggested.
- Written examination: Concerns around the 1 hour duration were raised.

4.2 Continuing Professional Development

Emerging from the feedback was the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to support the introduction of the specification in schools. The draft specification is a welcome development but will require professional support for teachers. Adequate and appropriate CPD will be important to the introduction of the specification. It was acknowledged that organisations, enterprises and teacher professional networks have an integral role to play in supporting the introduction of the new course, with many excellent education resources available to support teachers.

I love the new specification it gives us great scope and freedom as Home Ec teachers to select topics etc suited to our school context. I look forward to planning a programme based on the learning outcomes. It's a good time for Home Ec, I'm excited about it.

Home Economics teacher

I feel this new specification for JC Home Economics is relevant and will undoubtedly empower all students with many skills necessary to manage living in the modern world. I feel the success of this new and revised curriculum will be greatly influenced by the assistance and guidance available to HEC teachers during 2017/18, leading up to the introduction in September 2018.

Home Economics teacher

5. Conclusion

The consultation process shows support for the new specification for Junior Cycle Home Economics. It is evident that some modifications to the specification will be required to ensure its usability and accessibility. The feedback from the online questionnaire, submissions and focus group highlight the need for Continuing Professional Development, to support teachers with integrating the specification into their planning for teaching and learning.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who completed the online questionnaire, sent in submissions and attended focus groups. The themes emerging from these responses will inform the work of the Home Economics Development Group.

Appendix 1

Submissions

- Association of Teachers of Home Economics (ATHE)
- Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCOI)
- Dr. Kathryn McSweeney
- Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
- Irish Development Education Association, Formal Education Working Group (IDEA FEWG)
 - A Partnership with Africa (APA)
 - Ubuntu Network
 - Worldwide Global Schools
- Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute (INDI)
- Safefood
- Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College.

Appendix 2

Focus Group attendees

Irish Hotels Federation

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)

Regional Skills Dublin

Fáilte Ireland

Irish Hospitality Institute

Licensed Vintners Association

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Institute of Technology Tree (ITT)

Restaurants Association of Ireland

Appendix 3

Online questionnaire

Participant's details

*** 1. I am responding as a ...**

<input type="radio"/> Home Economics Teacher	<input type="radio"/> Third level student
<input type="radio"/> Non-Home Economics Teacher (Post-primary)	<input type="radio"/> Parent/ Guardian
<input type="radio"/> Primary teacher	<input type="radio"/> Teacher educator
<input type="radio"/> Principal/ Deputy Principal (Post-primary)	<input type="radio"/> Pre-service Teacher
<input type="radio"/> Principal/ Deputy Principal (Primary)	<input type="radio"/> Third level lecturer/researcher
<input type="radio"/> Second level student	<input type="radio"/> Other

Other (please specify)

2. Responding on behalf of ... (if applicable)

3. If you are responding on behalf of a group/organisation, please indicate below whether the submission may be made publicly available and/or whether the group/organisation may be named in the consultation report as a contributor.

	Yes	No
My group/organisation agrees to this submission being made available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My group/organisation agrees to be named as a contributor to the consultation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide the name of the group/organisation on whose behalf you are responding.

4. School type (if applicable)

<input type="radio"/> Voluntary secondary school	<input type="radio"/> Vocational school
<input type="radio"/> Community school	<input type="radio"/> Community college
<input type="radio"/> Comprehensive school	<input type="radio"/> Other

Other (please specify)

Aim

The Aim for Junior Cycle Home Economics was drafted to reflect and elaborate on the purposes for learning the subject (see p. 6)

6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The Aim of Home Economics should be

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
to develop students' knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies to achieve optimal, healthy and sustainable living for families and society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to develop students' practical food and health literacy skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to cultivate students who are creative, innovative, adaptable and competent consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
to develop students who are environmentally conscious and dedicated to a sustainable and responsible way of life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding the aims of the subject. If so, you may use the space here.

Course structure

The draft specification divides the course into strands and elements.(see pp.12 - 15).

7. Regarding the course structure of Junior Cycle Home Economics, please respond to the following statements showing your level of agreement.

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The Overview section provides a clear description of the specification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Strands clearly encapsulate the important learning relevant to junior cycle students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Elements make relevant connections between the learning in the strands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Any further comments?

Strand 1: Food, Health and Culinary Skills

This strand focuses on developing students' food, health and culinary skills. Students are enabled to develop a healthy, sustainable attitude and positive relationship with food through practical experiential learning. They apply their understanding of nutrition, diet and health principles in order to adopt a healthy lifestyle and make informed decisions that impact the health and wellbeing of themselves as individuals as well as within their families. The application of practical food and health literacy skills is integral to this strand and includes menu planning; shopping; cooking; health and safety food skills; portion control; reading food labels; dietary analysis; costing; sensory analysis; food waste. (pp18-19)

9. The learning outcomes in Strand 1 Food, Health and Culinary Skills are appropriate for supporting

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
students' knowledge and understanding of nutrition, diet and health principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop problem solving,creativity and innovation and practical culinary skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop a healthy and positive relationship with food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop as competent consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' skills for sustainable living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding Strand 1. If so, you may use the space here.

Strand 2: Responsible Family Living

This strand facilitates students to explore, from a systems perspective, responsible family living. Students develop an understanding of the role of families as a core unit in contemporary society. They develop an understanding of the contribution of families to the development of the child and adolescent in a safe and nurturing environment. Students develop essential lifeskills to enable them to manage resources for independent living responsibly, sustainably and creatively. They are facilitated to become discerning, competent consumers who are able to apply effective decision-making skills in everyday contexts. Enabling students to become responsible and have a caring attitude towards other individuals, family members, society and the environment is integral to this strand (pp. 20 -21)

10. The learning outcomes in Strand 2 Responsible Family Living are appropriate for supporting

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
students' understanding of the role of families as a core unit in contemporary society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' understanding of the contribution of families to the development of the child and adolescent in a safe and nurturing environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop as discerning, competent consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop skills of resource management for independent living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' attitudes and values towards responsible and sustainable living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding Strand 2. If so, you may use the space here.

Strand 3: Textiles and Craft

This strand focuses on developing students' creativity and textile skills and knowledge. Practical textile and craft skills are integral to this strand and include hand and machine sewing skills, and fabric texturing and embellishment techniques. Students have an opportunity to apply the design brief process in designing and making a textile item for an individual or the home (p 22)

11. The learning outcomes in Strand 3 Textiles and Craft are appropriate for supporting

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
students' knowledge and understanding of the design brief process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop practical textile and craft skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students to develop skills of creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' problem solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' attitudes and values towards sustainable living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding Strand 3. If so, you may use the space here.

Assessment

Assessment in education involves gathering and using information about students' learning in order to provide feedback on their progress and achievements.

12. Do you think the assessment described in the draft specification will be effective in assessing students' learning in Junior Cycle Home Economics?

No	Unsure	Yes
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tell us why

13. Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Creative Textiles

How effective is Classroom-Based Assessment 1 in supporting

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
students' creative skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' practical textile and craft skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' application of the design brief process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' problem solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding Classroom-Based Assessment 1. If so, you may use the space here.

14. Classroom-Based Assessment 2: Food Literacy Skills Brief

How effective is Classroom-Based Assessment 2 in supporting

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
students' application of the design brief process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' knowledge and understanding of nutrition, diet and health principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' skills of meal planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' problem solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' skills of creativity and innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding Classroom Based Assessment 2. If so, you may use the space here.

Final Examination: Practical Food Skills Examination

15. The draft specification allocates 50% of the marks available for the final assessment to the practical food skills examination and 50% to the written examination. What are your views on this weighting of marks?

Disagree	Unsure	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment in relation to this. If so, you may use the space here.

16. How effective is the practical food skills examination in assessing

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
students' application of the design brief process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' practical culinary skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' application of nutritional knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' skills of creativity and innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
students' skills of critical analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment in relation to this. If so, you may use the space here.

17. How effective are each of the five options presented in the specification, from which briefs will be developed, in facilitating students to demonstrate their culinary and creative food literacy skills

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
Option 1: Healthy family meals to reflect the current healthy eating guidelines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option 2: A special dietary consideration or a diet related disease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option 3: A particular stage of the lifecycle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option 4: A healthy homemade alternative of a commercial / takeaway meal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Option 5: A Food Enterprise / Farmers Market	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments?

18. Is there any other option, that is not identified in the specification, from which you would like to see a brief developed

Yes

No

If yes, please identify a possible option

Final Assessment: Written Examination

19. Please respond to the following statement showing your level of agreement

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The written examination should be no longer than one-hour duration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment in relation to this. If so, you may use the space here.

Overall course comments

20. Regarding the Junior Cycle Home Economics course, please respond to the following statements showing your level of agreement

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The learning in junior cycle home economics is relevant and up to date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The specification has a good balance between theory and practical skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The specification is gender inclusive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You may wish to add a comment regarding the junior cycle Home Economics course. If so, you may use the space here.

Suggestions for improvement

21. In this final section we invite you to make any further comments in relation to the specification

22. You can provide your name and email address to enable us to follow-up on particular issues that you may identify. However, the survey data will be anonymised and we will ensure that no views that you articulate will be attributed to you or your school/organisation or be reported in any way that would allow you or your school/organisation to be identified.

Name

Email address

