***Senior Cycle Developments – TUI Briefing Note***

***November 2011***

At various points over the past couple of years branches and schools/centres have been advised of significant developments at senior cycle:

* A new senior cycle subject – Politics and Society
* New syllabuses and assessment arrangements for science subjects – Biology, Chemistry and Physics
* A new framework and revised syllabus for Physical Education
* Short Courses in Enterprise and Psychology.

**Politics and Society**

Earlier this year the syllabus and assessment arrangements for the new senior cycle subject ‘Politics and Society’ were approved after lengthy consultation and discussions. This subject now joins syllabuses that have been revised for some time in a queue for implementation (e.g. art, technology subjects, agriculture science) pending adequate support and resources becoming available. Despite welcoming the inclusion of ‘Politics and Society’ in senior cycle education,TUI remains especially concerned about teacher qualifications and/or professional development and teacher allocations needs. These are both critical for effective implementation and to guard against an undue negative impact on other subjects.

**Science Education (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)**

Changes proposed in the science subjects address the content and emphasis of each syllabuses and their assessment in the Leaving Certificate Examinations. A very significant proposed change to the assessment approach is the introduction of a second assessment component. It is proposed that 20% of the overall marks will be allocated to this component which will have two parts:

* a laboratory notebook on specified activities (5%)
* a practical examination marked externally (15%).

Concern has been expressed that aspects of human biology have been deleted in favour of an increased focus on molecular biology. In general feedback on the draft physics syllabus has been favourable. However, it has been indicated that much more refinement of the proposed changes for chemistry is necessary. Great concern has also been expressed with regard to continued curriculum overload, inconsistencies in the level of practical work expected across the three subjects and the new approach to assessment for state examinations. These will have significant implications for students, teachers and schools in general.

**Physical Education – A New Syllabus and Framework**

Changes proposed for the teaching of physical education reflect a significant shift in current practice for teachers of physical education.

***A. Physical Education Syllabus (for examination)***

A draft syllabus has been designed for students who wish to take the subject in the Leaving Certificate Examination. This includes two Units of Study each of which has a number of topics as set out below.



Learners' active participation will be a central emphasis and students will select three physical activities from six areas: Adventure Activities; Aquatics; Artistic and Aesthetic Activities; Games; Athletics and Personal Exercise & Fitness.

The examination will be available at two levels: Ordinary Level and Higher Level and will have two components:

* Personal performance project - 50% (performance 30%, report 20%)
* Written examination 50%

***B. Physical Education Curriculum Framework (not for examination)***

A draft curriculum framework has been designed for students who do not wish to take the subject as a Leaving Certificate Examination. The framework is structured over three years around six instructional areas.

****

Under each instructional area the framework sets out what students learn about and should be able to do on completion. The focus of assessment will be formative and particular emphasis is placed on portfolio assessment.

**Short Courses**

The concept of introducing Short Courses was endorsed some time ago as part of the wider reform agenda. The broad aims are:

* enabling more flexibility and choice at senior cycle
* promoting learning strategies that equip learners to participate in and contribute to a changing world

They will be designed as 90 hour courses (half the size and volume of current senior cycle subjects) and will become available as optional, examinable areas of study in the future. Development has been slow in this regard and just two courses for introduction at senior cycle have been brought to consultation stage - Enterprise and Psychology. Each is underpinned by the overall framework for the senior cycle curriculum. Specific content is designed around four units of study as set out below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Enterprise** | **Psychology** |
| Unit 1: Exploring Enterprise | Unit 1: Psychology and Research |
| Unit 2: Business Enterprise | Unit 2: Psychology and the Body |
| Unit 3: Community Enterprise | Unit 3: Psychology and You |
| Unit 4: The Entrepreneur in Me | Unit 4: Psychology and Society |
| Assessment for examination will be through a terminal written exam and will be recognised for selection to higher education.  |

As with the other proposed changes the introduction of Short Courses will have significant implications for students, teachers and schools in general.

The final public consultation on the draft syllabuses and framework is drawing to a close and the TUI response will be posted on its website shortly. If you have not already expressed your views and wish to do so it is not too late. The feedback emanating from the public consultation will be considered in due course by the relevant NCCA committees and Council before final changes are agreed for advice to the Minister for Education and Skills. TUI will be participating in the discussions within the NCCA and, as relevant, with the Department and the State Examinations Commission. In particular, TUI would like your views on these developments with regard to:

* Educational value (depth and breadth of content, assessment approach)
* Resource implications (facilities, teacher numbers, school capacity)
* Equity issues (access, availability etc)
* Teacher qualifications and teacher professional development requirements
* Workload for teachers and students (especially with reference to syllabus length/depth, assessment approaches, investigative work)
* Administrative issues.

**Full details of all the draft syllabuses and framework and other support material can be accessed at** [**www.ncca.ie/consultation**](http://www.ncca.ie/consultation) **or** [**www.tui.ie**](http://www.tui.ie)**.** **Send comments as soon as possible for the attention of the Education and Research Officer at** **showard@tui.ie****.**