

Just Forests
Submission 

on the

**Draft Leaving Certificate Drama,
Film And Theatre Studies
specification**

to

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

[“Our musical instruments are the tools of our trade. Its in all our interests to use fair-trade wood [in our musical instruments] and help deal with the issues related to poverty in timber exporting countries. ”]

Paddy Moloney - The Chieftains

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hV7uFtd1V4I>

Setting the scene for this submission...

While Just Forests see the rationale is very strong, with its emphasis on the whole person, collaboration, culturally enriching experiences, storytelling, empathy, creativity, critical thinking, and the development of informed opinions, there is a serious disconnect – **music**. For many performing artists music was the stimulus. Music is drama. Music is film. Music is expression/theatre. Music is science. Music is arithmetic. **But above all, music is storytelling.**

Drama, film and theatre as we know it today, would be sterile without music at its core. Just Forests believes this is a great opportunity to combine music, drama, film and theatre and to rename this specification to: **LC Music, Drama, Film and Theatre Studies**.

This submission will strongly emphasise Just Forests approach to **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)** - past, present and to come. Over the coming months Just Forests will produce a number of separate, but connected, supplementary GCE resources for schools and local communities.

<https://prezi.com/p/embed/wnwZIE7N4znKCtWtMQ/>

- On Thursday **7 March 2024**, Just Forests participated in the on-line consultation with the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) **Formal Education Working Group**. The meeting focused exclusively on compiling comments for submission to the **NCCA Consultation on the Leaving Certificate**. The first part of the meeting focused on the overall submission process and key **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)** messages, and on the **Climate Action and Sustainable Development** specification. The second part of the meeting focused on the **Business and Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** specifications.
- On Wednesday **13 March 2024**, Just Forests attended the NCCA in-person consultation event at the Limerick Strand Hotel, to consult on one of the three draft specifications and was allocated a table with other participants from the same interest/ subject area – namely, **Climate Action & Sustainable Development**.
- In addition, on a separate, but absolutely linked consultation session to this NCCA process. On Wednesday **28 February 2024**, Just Forests (as a member of IDEA's Formal Education Working Group) attended and participated in the IDEA Strategic Planning Consultation Session held in the IDEA Office, 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin 1.
- It is also important to note here that Just Forests participated in the **'ABC of Global Citizenship Education'** hosted by IDEA, in collaboration with Concern Worldwide. The first day was **in-person on Wednesday, 21 February**, in the Ormond Meeting Rooms, Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin. The second session took place **online on Tuesday, 27 February**, and the third and last session was also **in-person on 21 March**, in the Ormond Meeting Rooms, Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin.

All the above sessions and interactions plus my 35 years of on-the-ground activism and contribution to Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has greatly influenced this submission to NCCA.

Just Forests has always tried to support calls for public submissions in areas of interest such as education and environment and take them seriously – see previous submissions

<http://www.justforests.org/public-submissions>.

See following EXAMPLE from NCCA website: Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-subjects/music/>

i.i Rationale

i. INTRODUCTION (P.S. underlining by Just Forests for emphasis)

Music, from earliest times, has been an important expression of human creativity. Today it is a valued social and cultural art form that transcends language and religious and racial barriers.

In modern life, music serves many functions:

- Music is a worthwhile accomplishment for its own sake - an education for life
- Socially shared musical activities help develop personality skills and co-operative effort
- Music education engages actively and imaginatively the affective, cognitive and psychomotor aspects of human development
- Musical creativity, linked with competence and enterprise, provides life and employment opportunities
- Music has an important role to play in the economy, both nationally and internationally

Today, individual differences in musical values and experiences are an indication of the diversity and vitality of the nation's musical life. In accommodating these differences, this syllabus also accommodates divergence in students' musical needs, interests, and ambitions. Source: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/85bfed8e-207e-4fbc-b8ed-3120cd979a4b/SCSEC26_Music_syllabus_eng.pdf

We all love music. It is a great conversation piece, a great unifier. It transcends all cultures and races in today's multi-cultural Ireland. Music is also a great hook for engagement in any conversation about Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

We note many similarities between GCE and the Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification and we welcome, in particular, the emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, divergent and radical thinking, problem solving and the challenging of conventions and orthodoxies, as outlined in the rationale.

Just Forests own EXAMPLE of how music gets people talking about Global issues: In 2010, Just forests organized a Sound of Wood Concert in Tullamore. The main attraction was the late Paddy Maloney and The Chieftains accompanied by St. Colmcille's Tullamore Pipe Band. The purpose of the concert was to highlight the serious decline in 'tonewoods' - the precious timber species used in the making of our beautiful musical instruments. Six hundred and forty (640) attended the concert in the Tullamore Court Hotel. This is a very people-friendly way of delivering a serious/challenging message through the lens of Global Citizenship Education (GCE). See: <http://www.justforests.org/just-music>

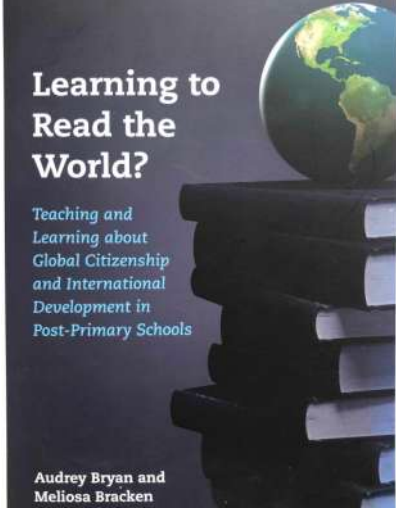
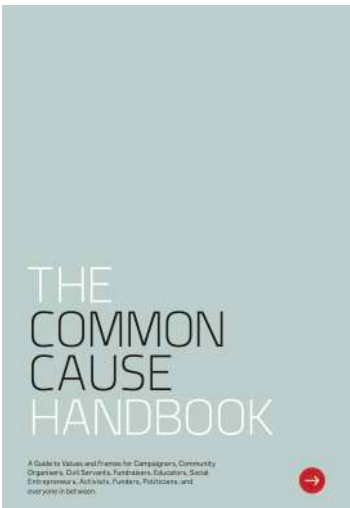
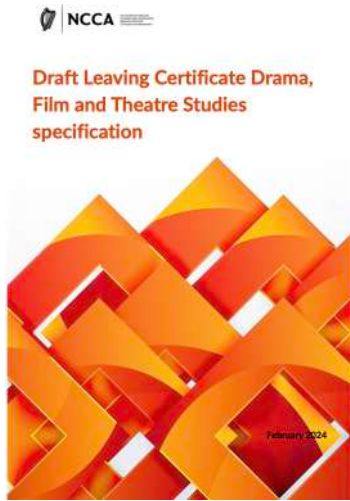
During the Concert well-known advocates of GCE made short interjections about sustainability, poverty and human rights and how they all relate to deforestation:

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdLpKNkPajM>

As a member of Tallaght Choral Society busily rehearsing for our upcoming recital of Handel's Messiah in The Helix Theatre on Sunday 14 April 2024, I fully appreciate the role music has played in my understanding of 'development', drama, film and theatre.

Historically, Ireland experienced many of the social, economic, cultural and environmental deprivations many countries are experiencing today in regard to deforestation and all that goes with that. So, we are very well placed to have empathy with other nations immortalised here by The Dubliners rendition of Cill Chais – a lament for the loss of Ireland's forests in the 1600's. <http://savekillarneynationalpark.com/lament-for-cill-airne/>

Apart from the aforementioned ‘in-person’ and ‘on-line’ workshops on page 4, Just Forests consulted a number of reports and related publications prior to making this submission, including the following:



Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies Submission

Areas of Focus

This section aims to determine the degree to which the Draft Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies Specification gets to the heart of the learning aspired to within the subject. Below you will find questions related to different sections of the draft specification. Having read the draft specification, please give your feedback/ comments/ suggestions.

The specification can be accessed at

<https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/drama-film-and-theatre-studies/>

1) Rationale (p.2)

The rationale of the draft specification situates Drama, Film and Theatre Studies within the broader discipline of the arts, describing how Drama, Film and Theatre Studies extends the range of practical, arts-based subjects on the senior cycle curriculum, encouraging and promoting a well-rounded education. In addition, it sets out the how the study of Drama, Film and Theatre enhances the learner in terms of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions.

Aims (p.3)

Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies aims to provide students with an experience that develops their interest in and enthusiasm for this subject. In doing so, it aims to enable students to explore and experience the world of drama, film and theatre; how it can inform their own work and their creative and critical choices, helping them become more aware of their own place in a wider society.

What are your views on the rationale and aims of the draft Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification? Please indicate if there are specific aspects of the rationale or aims that might be edited (removed, merged, reframed).

Rationale:

The rationale is very strong, with its emphasis on the whole person, collaboration, culturally enriching experiences, storytelling, empathy, creativity, critical thinking, and the development of informed opinions.

Just Forests is a member of IDEA. The Irish Development Education Association, is the national network for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. IDEA represents over 120 members involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen GCE in Ireland. We note many similarities between GCE and the Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification and we welcome, in particular, the emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, divergent and radical thinking, problem solving and the challenging of conventions and orthodoxies, as outlined in the rationale.

The suggestions below are made with a view to further enhancing the specification through the application of a GCE lens, drawing upon GCE sectoral experience of using creative methodologies to explore key challenges facing our world today. We strongly support and are convinced of the central role of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies in

promoting the voice of students, facilitating exploration and engagement with the wider world, and connecting with complex global inequalities and injustices.

Aims:

We welcome the inclusion of risk-taking in the first aim, as it is an essential component of learning and of imagining and creating a better world for all.

We support the pairing of creative and critical processes in the second aim.

Just Forests suggest the addition of an aim linking [Music] Drama, Film and Theatre Studies to students' interaction with the wider world e.g. foster students' creative and imaginative engagement with global themes and challenges **and strongly suggest that this can be done so positively and enjoyably through the addition of music to this specification.**

2) Teaching and Learning (p.8-10)

This section outlines how the student-centred design of Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies emphasises a practical experience for each student and that learning in this subject needs, as far as is possible, to be applied to creative activities - while students will sometimes exercise creativity alone, in general, the creative act will be a collaborative endeavour. Furthermore, it highlights how the subject supports the use of a wide range of teaching and learning approaches and that the signature pedagogies of the Drama, Film, and Theatre Studies classroom will be those that foster critical thinking, creative thinking and creative practice.

What are your views on the Teaching and Learning section in the draft specification? You may refer to aspects such as the role of applied creative tasks, the portfolio, and/or the role of key competencies, as it applies to Drama, Film and Theatre Studies.

We think this is a strong section. We support the emphasis on critical thinking, creative thinking and creative practice; on the focus of the creative process often being on asking the right questions rather than finding the right answers; and the reflective and collaborative nature of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies as outlined in this section. We recommend that strong links be made between this specification and Global Citizenship Education approaches and resources, which could support teachers to bring the above concepts to life in the school setting.

3) Key Competencies (p.5-7)

Key competencies is an umbrella term which refers to the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students develop in an integrated way during senior cycle. These competencies are linked and blend together; can improve students' overall learning; can help students and teachers to make meaningful connections between and across different areas of learning; and are important across the curriculum.

The draft specification sets out examples of how key competencies can be developed in Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies on pages 5-7.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the development of key competencies in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies.

We particularly welcome the link made between stories, students' own experience, cross-cultural understanding, empathy and the wider world:

"Making their own work will provide students with opportunities to tell their personal stories and offer social commentary on the world in which they live; while encountering the worlds of others through drama, film and theatre will help to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and promote empathy".

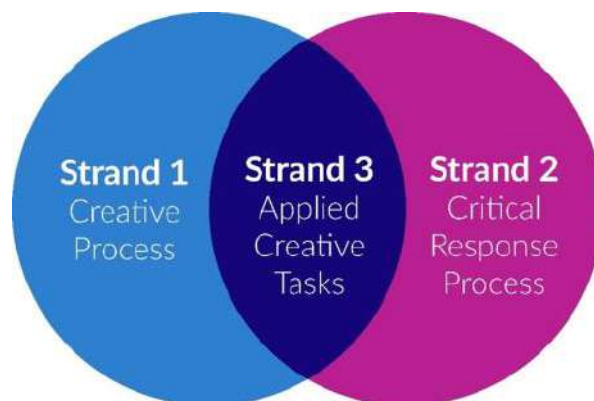
As above, we believe that the Global Citizenship Education sector has much to offer by way of support and collaboration on this subject area.

4) Strands of Study in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies Specification (p.10-11)
The Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification is set out in three interconnected strands:

- Creative Process;
- Critical Response Process;
- Applied Creative Tasks (ACTs)

All three strands are interwoven and should be studied concurrently, not in a linear order and the specification is designed to enable students to engage in the creative and critical processes simultaneously.

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the extent to which the overview and diagram (p.10-11) illustrates the interconnected nature of strands in an appropriate way.



It would be useful to show a visual representation of all three strands overlapping i.e. showing how Strand 1 and Strand 2 interact, as well as Strand 1 interacting with Strand 3, and Strand 2 interacting with Strand 3.

5) Strand 1 - Creative Process (p.12-16)

The creative process is intended to support students' understanding of the iterative nature of making any piece of film or theatre. Engaging with a range of sources, including the work of established practitioners and researching a variety of forms and conventions will

be a key part of the creative process. It will provide students with a foundation of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions upon which they can develop their work.

In this strand, students will have opportunities to apply this creative process through active engagement, making informed decisions about what to do and how to do it. Combining their knowledge and understanding of the creative and critical processes will help them to develop an holistic understanding of the skills, practices and principles of drama, film and theatre.

Please provide specific feedback/ observations/ comments on the learning set out in Strand 1: Creative Process.

You may wish to refer to aspects such as the Creative Process diagram; the strand introduction; the level of detail in the learning outcomes ("students will be able to" column, and in the "students will learn about" column); the alignment of this strand with other strands; the number of learning outcomes etc.

If mentioning specific aspects/tasks/ learning outcomes please use appropriate coding (e.g. ACT1.1.)



CP2: Developing

Under the list of ethical issues, we suggest the addition of the following:

- Considering the ethics of representation of countries and cultures different to one's own

6) Strand 2 - Critical Response Process (p.17-21)

In this strand, students learn to develop and articulate their own considered personal and critical responses to the work of established practitioners. They engage in a process of critical response as they interact with artistic and creative works from the world of theatre and film. They begin to view plays and films through a critical process lens and engage with the work of established critics in both the theatrical and cinematic spheres.

Critical response involves the examination, analysis and evaluation of work or ideas to develop a deep understanding of, and an informed perspective or point of view on, the

subject matter. The procedure involves critical thinking, which requires questioning, evaluating, making rational judgements, finding connections and exploring personal

preferences. Developing these competencies assists in the development of students' own aesthetic judgement.

Please provide specific feedback/ observations/ comments on the learning set out in Strand 2: Critical Response Process.

You may wish to refer to aspects such as the Critical Response Process diagram; the strand introduction; the level of detail in the learning outcomes ("students will be able to" column, and in the "students will learn about" column); the alignment of this strand with other strands; the number of learning outcomes etc.

If mentioning specific aspects/tasks/ learning outcomes please use appropriate coding (e.g. ACT1.1.)



We particularly support the emphasis on “openness to other points of view” in this Strand.

7) Strand 3 - Applied Creative Tasks (p.22-26)

In this strand, students learn to apply and further develop their competencies in practical ways by responding creatively and critically to three Applied Creative Tasks.

What are your views on the design of Strand 3, and the related learning outcomes?

You may wish to refer to aspects such as the description of this strand, the number and design of the creative tasks, the learning outcomes themselves; the "students will learn about" column. the alignment with other strands etc.

If mentioning specific aspects/tasks/ learning outcomes please use appropriate coding (e.g. ACT1.1.)

8) Specified Areas of Learning

Students of Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies will be expected to engage with work by a variety of practitioners across a wide range of genres, periods, styles and forms in both theatre and film.

To help focus teaching and learning, and to facilitate students' achievement of the learning outcomes across all three strands, this experience must include engagement with the specified areas of learning in theatre and in film. This will take the form of a prescribed genre, period, style or form.

What are your views on the role of required areas of learning? Please provide specific feedback/ observations/ comments on this section.

You may wish to refer to aspects such as the description of this aspect of the specification, the accompanying table, the advantages and disadvantages of having one set film and one set play that students must engage with, in addition to their engagement with the work of other practitioners as they engage with the various strands, learning outcomes and applied creative tasks.

The prescription of a set film and a set play may prove to be restrictive and in contraction to the creative and critical nature of the rest of the specification. In order to encourage student and teacher creativity and engagement, it may be wise to provide a range of suggestions, and to also include and encourage the identification of alternatives by the students and teachers. This would allow for the curriculum to continue to be relevant for a longer period of time, and would open up the possibility of films and plays from cultures and countries around the world to be considered.

In relevant lists provided by the Department of Education, we strongly recommend the inclusion of:

- Participative popular education theatre methodologies such as Theatre of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal)
- Films and plays with a strong emphasis on human rights and global citizenship (e.g. For Sama)
- Films and plays by playwrights in the Global South

We also recommend the film - **The Mission** (this film with a strong Irish cast, gives a very questionable view of how the Catholic Church impacted tribal people of South America)

9) Additional Assessment Component: Creativity in Practice Project (p.29-30).

This component will allow students to demonstrate the competencies they have developed and acquired throughout the course with a focus on the learning outcomes of the Applied Creative Tasks and those in strand 1. Building on their experience to date, students will utilise the elements and stages of creative practices through imagining and conceptualising creative projects, developing their ideas, creating, producing and presenting these ideas and reflecting on the experience.

The project will be based on a stimulus provided in a common brief issued annually from the SEC. The time allocation for completion of the Creativity in Practice project is up to 25 hours. Upon completion, it will be submitted digitally to the SEC in a format specified by the SEC.
Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the opportunities associated with the AAC in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies.

10) Additional Assessment Component (cont...)

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the challenges associated with the AAC in Drama, Film and Theatre Studies.

11) Additional Assessment Component (cont...)

Please provide specific feedback / observations / comments on the manageability of the AAC in up to 25 hours of class time.

12) Timing

The specification has been designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time with 25 hours dedicated to the completion of the additional assessment component.

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the likelihood of 180 hours of class time being sufficient to achieve the learning specified in the draft specification.

If you think it is unlikely that 180 hours of class time is sufficient to achieve the learning specified in the draft specification please indicate specific topics/learning outcomes (Use coding e.g Strand 1, LO CP1a.) that might be edited (removed, merged, reframed) and include a rationale for your suggestion

13) Appendices (p.33-37)

There are three appendices provided in the specification (Glossary of Terms; The Role of Storytelling; Glossary of Action Verbs).

Please provide specific feedback/ observations/ comments on the clarity and appropriateness of the glossaries.

We suggest extending the appendix on The Role of Storytelling to highlight the power of collective storytelling in the challenging of conventions and orthodoxies, as outlined in the rationale.

After this sentence “Storytelling broadens our awareness of our own as well as other cultures, allows us to understand ourselves better, and gives us a sense of belonging to a group”, we recommend including a sentence on how storytelling can be harnessed to promote a sense of

empathy and solidarity with people from a range of communities and cultures, and can encourage students to imagine and create alternative ways of living with one another that are grounded in peace and justice. Strategies such as those promoted by Narrative 4 can support this.

14) Appeal of this subject

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on the likelihood that this subject will appeal to a broad range of learners with a diverse range of post-school aspirations.

Creativity and imagination to explore thoughts, emotions, reactions to the world around them. Use of this subject to 'Take Action' and connect across curricular areas e.g. host a community GCE film night, showcase a GCE drama/theatre piece.

Imagining alternative - more just and sustainable - futures through drama, film etc Strength of drama in exploring 'controversial issues' - e.g. exploring past and present Creative methodologies – essential

15) Supports for successful enactment

Please provide specific feedback/observations/comments on supports that might be needed for successful enactment of this specification.

Section 2

In this section we invite you to provide specific feedback/observations or comments in the spaces below. If you refer to a specific learning outcome in any of your responses please use the appropriate coding (e.g. strand letters and learning outcome number)

In order to be successfully enacted, we suggest that students and teachers be afforded flexibility and encouraged to explore a range of films, plays and drama methodologies from around the world. This will help them to value the power of the creative to engage with matters of real importance to them and to the wider world of which they are part.

It would also be beneficial for the creative and critical processes emphasised in this specification to be used to influence other curriculum areas, including the Business, and the Climate Action and Sustainability specifications also currently under development.

Furthermore, the profile of Drama, Film and Theatre Studies could be promoted, by showcasing its power in providing creative spaces for exploring the core values and solutions required by humanity to address the multiple crises currently faced.

16) Any Further Comments

Please make any final comments or observations on the draft Drama, Film and Theatre Studies specification. Can you suggest any gaps, omissions, or any other ways the specification could be strengthened?

Just Forests, through our association with IDEA, advocates for each curriculum specification to have at its core, the flourishing of the planet and all of humanity. This includes the embedding of (Just Forests proposed re-prioritising) the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which Ireland has committed.

SDG 4: Quality Education, is of particular relevance to curriculum development. Target 4.7 provides the impetus for ensuring that all learners access quality Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

“By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

IDEA would welcome further opportunities to engage with and support the NCCA with the integration of Global Citizenship Education across the curriculum.

Just Forests, through our membership of IDEA would welcome further opportunities to engage with and support the NCCA with the integration of Global Citizenship Education across the curriculum. We recommend that support materials (such as Just Forests **RIO Series** <https://prezi.com/p/embed/wnwZIE7N4znKCAtCtwMQ/>) and training for teachers include clear and explicit guidance on the handling of complex and/or controversial themes and concepts in the classroom and wider school setting.

Ensuring that teachers and school leaders are GCE literate will support them in this regard. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a long- standing and well-established field of transformative education, providing policy guidance, training and resources for educators and students to explore key questions and challenges around how we live in this interdependent, complex world. We must foster global citizenship competencies in order to create a sustainable, healthy way of living for the benefit of humanity and the planet. This in turn will provide space for innovation, creativity and motivation for alternative models of business - including **Drama, Film and Theatre** .

The adoption of GCE as the foundation for [Music] **Drama, Film and Theatre Studies** curriculum will enhance it and ensure its successful implementation.

