

Loreto Secondary School



Policy on Subject Options and Class allocation

Review Dates

Stakeholder	Date	Draft/review/ratified
Staff		
Parents		
Student Council		
BOM	23/05/24	

Signed Elma M. Hayes Date 23/05/24
(Chairperson of BOM)



1. Mission Statement

As a Loreto Catholic Secondary School we strive to be a community in which learning and teaching can take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

Our aims are:

- To promote a safe and happy environment in which each student can achieve her full potential
- To ensure that each student knows she is respected and valued
- To encourage high standards while at the same time affirming and appreciating diversity of gifts and goals
- To allow staff to work in a safe and happy environment and to support their professional development
- To facilitate Social Justice awareness, education and action within the school community

In Loreto, Fermoy we try to make an integral part of our lives the characteristics which Mary Ward wanted for all her schools; truth, sincerity, justice, freedom and joy. We pray that as a school community we may continue to live the Christian message through the example and the philosophy of Mary Ward.

2. Rationale

Option subject selection is an important process and students and parents are asked to give careful consideration to the subject choices they will make. Loreto Secondary School will make every effort to facilitate subject choice in accordance with student preferences as indicated through Options on VShare. This however is influenced by the following factors:

1. The allocation of resources from Department of Education & Skills.
2. The school's ability to offer a subject in a given year
3. The availability of teaching staff qualified to teach a particular subject
4. The demand for a subject relative to the cohort in a given year.

Every effort is made to meet the preferences of students and there are support structures in place to ensure that students make informed choices. The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming, thus there is limited scope for change of subjects after submission of 'Option Choices' on VShare. Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be

accommodated up after the deadline set of the end of November in 1st year and end of February in Transition Year or 3rd year for those students moving straight to 5th Year.

Students must attend class and fully participate in all their chosen timetabled subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Leaving Certificate cycle.

3. Junior Cycle Option Subject Choices Support Structures & Selection Procedures

Curriculum Provision

In 1st Year, all students study the full suite of 7 option subjects: French, German, Science, Business, Home Economics, Technology, Art and Music in addition to core subjects: Irish, English, Maths, Religion, CSPE, History, Geography and Wellbeing. The rationale behind the provision of tasters across all options is to empower students to make informed option choices for Junior Cycle in accordance with their interests, aptitudes and ability levels.

Support Structures for Students

All option teachers will offer advice and guidance about their subject to their students prior to the students deciding on subject choice. Students can also avail of individual guidance appointments to support option choices for junior cycle. In addition to this an informative booklet with information about all of the subject options will be made available to students prior to choosing their subjects.

Support Structures for Parents

Prior to choosing 4 option subjects for the Junior Cycle, the selection process is further supported through a Parents Options Information Talk by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellor and through a booklet that will be sent to parents with further information about the various subject options.

Procedure for Selecting Junior Cycle Option Choices

- Students select 6 option subjects, (of which they will get 4) for the Junior Cycle, from the suite of option subject tasters taken in 1st year.

Students are then allocated classes based on these preferences and every effort is made to place them in their preferred subjects.

- Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be accommodated after the deadline in November in 1st year.

4. Senior Cycle Option Subject Choices Support Structures & Selection Procedures

Curriculum Provision

Incoming 5th years select 6 option subjects (of which they will get 4) from the following suite of 14 option subjects; French, German, Accounting, Business, Economics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Technology, Home Economics, LCPE, Music and Art. Senior cycle students study a total of 4 option subjects in addition to core subjects Irish, English, Maths, Religion and PE for Senior Cycle.

Support Structures for Students

There are many support structures in place to ensure students make informed decisions on their option choices for senior cycle. A 5th Year Subject Choice Options Day is scheduled annually for TYs and 3rd years progressing directly into 5th year. This consists of Subject

Choice Options presentations by all subject teachers and is followed by question-and-answer sessions. A subject choice speed dating is also arranged for students to speak to 5th and 6th year students about the subjects they are studying. TY students are timetabled for a career's class once a week, which also supports option choices and subject requirements for third level courses. Students can also avail of individual guidance appointments to support option choices for senior cycle.

Support Structures for Parents

A Parent Information Evening via Zoom on 5th Year Options Subjects, consisting of presentations by the Guidance Counsellor and Principal further supports the selection process and provides an opportunity to address parental questions. We encourage all parents to attend this very important presentation.

Guidelines for Making Option Choices

- When choosing Leaving Cert subjects great care must be taken as the choice of subjects made now may determine 3rd level and career options after school.
- Be aware of minimum entry requirements and specific course requirements for 3rd level courses.
- Identify the subjects you like—it is easier to work on something you enjoy.
- Note subjects you are good at.
- Ask your subject teachers for advice.
- If uncertain about your future career, choose a balance of subjects to keep options open.
- Talk about options to your parents, guidance counsellor, and Leaving Certificate students (remember that individuals have different competencies for different areas of study).
- Research online careers websites.

Procedure for Selecting Senior Cycle Option Choices

- Students select 6 option subjects for 5th year (they will get 4) from the suite of option subjects offered.
- Students complete "5th Year Option Subject Choices" on VS Ware. The options portal is opened in early February and parents are given a week to submit subject options. Upon completion of option choices on VS Ware, bands are created solely based on student preferences and timetabling will commence in April.
- The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming and there is limited scope for change of subjects after submission of the '5th Year Option Subject Choices' on VSWare.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be accommodated after the deadline set of September 30th in 5th Year. Where students request movement to another subject, priority will be given to those students who had included the subject in their top 6 preferences. If the number of requests for movement to a particular subject exceeds the number of places available, the following procedure applies. The options registered initially are examined and the student who has included it in their 6 preferences may be offered the place. If this does not offer a solution then there will be random selection. Students may be denied their request to change subjects if classes are not timetabled at the same time or if the class they wish to change into is full.
- Students must attend class and participate in all of their chosen subjects throughout the entirety of the Leaving Certificate cycle. If a student opts to study an additional subject outside of school, then this is a matter for the student, their parents/guardians and their

external tutor. Students will not be permitted to drop one of their in-school subjects in this case.

5. Subject Change in Exceptional Circumstances

There is limited scope for changing subjects after the option blocks have been created and the timetable designed. Only in exceptional circumstances will option changes be considered after the deadline of September 30th annually.

- 'Change of Mind Applications' from a parent or guardian must be made in writing to the Deputy Principal.
 - A completed 'Change of Mind Application' form must be submitted on or before September 30th in 5th Year only.
 - Every effort is made to accommodate subject changes but decisions on changing subject are based on class sizes, classes that are timetabled at the same time, preference order when submitting subject choice. In some circumstances students will be denied their change request.
 - Subject changes will not be accommodated in 3rd or 6th Year except in exceptional circumstances.
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- A meeting with the guidance counsellor may be required for students who wish to give up a language or laboratory science subject.

The Deputy-Principal will communicate their decision to the student and parents as soon as possible after receipt of application and the required meetings have taken place.

Note: Section 28 of the Education Act allows for the Appeal of the Principal's decision to the Board of Management

6. Additional Subjects and the Expectations to Study the Full Leaving Certificate Curriculum

- Studying additional subjects outside of the school curriculum is the sole responsibility of students and their parents. Students may register for additional subjects through the State Examinations Self Service Portal. The completion of project/coursework is the responsibility of students and SEC official submission and signing of SEC forms will be accommodated by the Deputy Principal. However, any decisions to study additional subjects should not adversely impact on the studied school curriculum and are not deemed as exceptional circumstances for subject change.
- We are contracted by the Department of Education and Skills to provide each student with 28 hours of tuition or 42 class periods per week. Students must attend class and fully participate in all of their chosen timetabled subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Senior cycle.
- The following expectations to study the full Leaving Certificate school curriculum apply:

- All students are required to take the core subjects for Leaving Certificate:

English

Maths

Irish

****Unless they have an exemption granted for Irish.**

- All students must also take 4 optional subjects for the Leaving Cert from the list provided and in accordance with preferences stated on their '5th Year Option Subject Choices'.

- Students are required to continue studying these subjects for Leaving Cert and are expected to fully engage in coursework and complete homework for all of their selected subjects.

- Students cannot opt out on the basis of studying an additional subject outside of school.

- Students cannot opt out just because they wish to do 6 subjects.

****Students with specific learning difficulties may on the advice of the Special Needs Department and in consultation with parents / guardians, the pastoral team and the Principal be granted a reduced curriculum. If a student is granted a subject exemption by the DES, this will be fully accommodated.**

7. Class Allocation

- While subject change may be accommodated, a request for a teacher change will not.
- In the case of a student moving level in a particular subject, students may change level based on results, but they may not change within the same level to a different teacher. The changing of student maths classes is solely based on results in class tests and term exams.
- Teachers may recommend in writing that students change level. However, the responsibility for entering the examination at the appropriate lies with the student.