

# Circular S/IF/21/24

February 2024

To: The Heads of Department for GCE Modern Languages

For circulation to: All Teachers of GCE Irish

## GCE Irish

### AS and A2 Topics for Irish Speaking

In Summer 2023, aspects of the Speaking examination in all languages were brought to light by visiting examiners, and subsequently commented on in the chief examiners' reports. To address the issues, CCEA held a webinar on 5 December 2023 to refresh teachers' understanding of the requirements of the Speaking examinations at AS and A2. A narrated version of the presentation relevant to all Modern Languages is available on the Irish subject website under the [webinar tab](#)

In addition to the general issues, there was a robust discussion particular to Irish about the suitability of topics for AS and A2 Speaking in Irish. This discussion was recorded and is also available on the Irish subject site under the [webinar tab](#). After the discussion, the teachers present requested written guidance on the issue as not all of their colleagues were present, hence this circular.

Below are quotations from the [2023 Chief Examiner's Report](#) relevant to the issue:

"However, a few candidates' presentations, while competent, failed to align with the requirements of AO4, which subsequently limited their potential for higher marks. Centres are reminded of the guidance on Page 11 of the current specification ... It emphasises the requirement to knowledgeably discuss their researched Irish-speaking country or community."

"Presentations must integrate references to Irish contexts beyond mere mentions of *in Éirinn*."

"Some faltered in the Discussion element of the examination, where their research of the topic seemed limited, where the topic itself was either too narrow or too extensive, or where candidates were reliant on fluency and neglected to provide evidence, insights, views etc. as required by the mark-scheme. In some cases, candidates included elements in their chosen topics which were barely allowable according to the specification. It is not feasible for a visiting examiner to refuse a candidate a chosen topic on the day of the exam, but topics must align with the requirements of the specification, and it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure as far as possible that this is understood by candidates."

To summarise, the advice is clearly that, in order to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to access the higher mark bands, the topic chosen must reference Irish-speaking communities or organisations to some extent.

In recognition of the fact that teachers may have already commenced extensive preparation of candidates for the Summer 2024 Speaking examinations, and having listened to the views on the issue expressed by teachers at the webinar, please note the following:



Rewarding Learning

We recommend that teachers should be working towards the implementation of the advice of the Chief Examiner, and have fully implemented it by Summer 2025.

As an illustration, and in response to queries raised at the webinar, some of the sample presentations topics for AS provided in the Specification would require elaboration to be certain of complying with the advice of the Chief Examiner. Possible elaboration is shown below in brackets after the sample title as it appears. Just to emphasise, neither the sample titles nor the suggested elaboration are compulsory: teachers and candidates are free to choose their own titles, providing they comply with the advice regarding suitability.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael [promotion of Irish as a rule of the organisation; comórtas peile na Gaeltachta]  
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann [branches which are Irish-speaking; does the organisation have a policy regarding Irish?]

Lá Fhéile Pádraig [links to Seachtain na Gaeilge]

Cultúr na dí agus aos óg na hÉireann [is there a particular problem in rural/urban Irish-speaking communities?]

Foireann rugbaí na hÉireann [how did Gaeilgeoirí react to the dropping of An tAmhrán Náisiúnta?]

### Conclusion

The aim of both this advice and this circular is to try to ensure that candidates for AS and A2 Irish are in a position to access the higher mark bands, not to in any way complicate further the jobs of Irish teachers. I think that, with a little reflection, most topics can be manipulated to be consistent with the advice.

I wish to thank those teachers who attended the webinar for their honest and helpful contributions to the discussion.

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