An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Science Implementation Support Grant

Guidelines for post-primary schools

Contents

Introduction

These guidelines are designed to support post-primary schools in the free education scheme in their use of the new Science Implementation Support Grant.

This new funding is primarily aimed at supporting post-primary schools in the rollout of revised Leaving Certificate science subjects in the 2025/26 school year as part of Senior Cycle Redevelopment.

Senior Cycle Redevelopment

In 2022, the Minister set out an ambitious programme for the redevelopment of Senior Cycle, guided by the vision of a Senior Cycle that delivers “equity and excellence for all.”

The programme is informed by, and builds upon, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s (NCCA) Advisory Report on the review of Senior Cycle, as well as the experience of Leaving Certificate students, a growing demand for change and international experience and perspectives.

The Minister for Education announced an acceleration of the programme on 20 September 2023, including the introduction of revised specifications for seven existing Leaving Certificate subjects which includes Biology, Chemistry and Physics as part of Tranche One. Later Tranches will see the revision of other Leaving Certificate science subjects.

Each of these revised subject specifications will incorporate additional assessment components that are not a traditional written examination, which will be worth a minimum of 40% of the available marks and will be externally assessed by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Revised science specifications

Under the programme of redevelopment, three science subjects – Biology, Chemistry and Physics – have been revised as part of Tranche One. The revised specifications include an Additional Assessment Component (AAC), worth 40%. The AAC, called Biology, Chemistry and Physics “in Practice”, will require students to

- consider issues related to real-world applications of science
- demonstrate investigative skills
- relate their investigative work to the work of scientists in society
- communicate their findings appropriately and effectively

The specifications in each of the three subjects is composed of a unifying strand, Nature of Science, and a number of contextual strands.

The learning outcomes in the unifying strand identify the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions related to scientific practices which are essential to students’ learning about science throughout the course, underpinning the activities and content in the other strands. The specifications also identify three crosscutting themes which are common to all three subjects – Health, Sustainability and Technology.

As students learn to work like scientists, they develop a habit of mind that sees them rely on a set of established procedures and practices associated with scientific inquiry to gather evidence, generate models and test their ideas. Through these lenses, students engage with contemporary

issues in each science subject as they pose questions and integrate and apply their learning from across the specification.

The revised specifications will be implemented in schools for fifth year students from the next school year (2025/26), commencing in August/September 2025.

The revised specifications can be accessed on curriculumonline.ie

The Science Implementation Support Grant

Details of the grant

All schools in the free scheme will receive additional funding with a minimum base payment of **€13,000** up to a maximum of **€22,000**. There will be no application process, and the payment will be made on an automatic basis by year end.

Funding arrangements

Funding is based on school enrolment bands and provides for a 10% uplift for DEIS schools. This means a DEIS school will receive an additional 10% on top of the base payment for their enrolment band. This is in line with previous applications of a DEIS uplift in Departmental funding models, including the grant for ICT infrastructure.

Funding will be allocated based on four bands of enrolment. The enrolment bands range in size from schools with 1-300 pupils in the lowest band to schools with over 900 pupils in the highest band. School size will be identified using data held by the Department through P-POD.

Grant payments will issue to schools in the coming weeks. It is not necessary for any school to apply to receive this funding.

Funding details

Funding details for on the Science Implementation Support Grant

Enrolment Band	Base Payment	DEIS Payment (10% Uplift)
1-300	€ 13,000	€ 14,300
301-599	€ 16,000	€ 17,600
600-899	€ 19,000	€ 20,900
900+	€ 22,000	€ 24,200

The funding is in addition to existing support provided to schools who offer Physics, Chemistry and the combined subject Physics & Chemistry.

This announcement also aligns with the Department's STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026, which recognises the importance of initiatives that raise awareness and interest in STEM, and the need to improve STEM education.

Use of funding

Schools will have the autonomy to utilise funding provided under the Science Implementation Support Grant in a way that best suits their school context and apply it to their locally identified Science needs. It is expected that schools will prioritise the purchase of consumables and related equipment needs. The funding may be utilised to support the implementation of the new senior cycle sciences or more generally to support the broader science programme which may include, for example: Agricultural Science, Transition Year science, Leaving Certificate Applied science, Junior Cycle science.

Equipment lists

To assist schools in auditing their science equipment needs, and identifying potential use of this grant payment, this guidance document is accompanied by recently updated science equipment lists. As part of Senior Cycle Redevelopment, and in acknowledgement of the revised subjects, these lists were revised and are published now to guide schools in identifying priority requirements in terms of consumables and equipment.

The lists are as follows:

1	LAB	Laboratory basic equipment
2	**RES**	Resource area (Preparation room) equipment
3	**AGR**	Agricultural Science equipment
4	**BIO**	Biology equipment
5	**CHE**	Chemistry equipment
6	**PHY**	Physics equipment

The equipment and quantity within each list, listed above, is primarily intended for use by the Department for the purposes of funding new and upgraded laboratories and associated preparatory rooms in a school. The lists should not be taken as establishing a mandatory baseline of required equipment that is necessary to offer any given subject. The grant funding is intended to support the purchase of items identified by the school as priority needs and not to purchase all items on the lists.

Subject teachers and departments are best placed to determine needs for their individual school context, informed by the revised lists.

Lists can also be used by school leaders, teachers, and subject departments when managing their laboratories, as a reference to an indicative list of resources for the teaching and learning in the Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied, Transition Year and Junior Cycle programmes, including Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. In line with the nature of curriculum design, including national specifications and locally designed curricula such as short courses, Transition Year modules and extra-curricular or co-curricular science activities, the list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive for any one or all curricula/specifications.

School leaders and teachers have flexibility to consider how best to develop and manage the stock within the laboratories, in accordance with their own school's context. These include the range of subjects, modules, short courses, and specialisms that might be introduced or are currently taught in the school, the demand placed on the laboratories and the layout of the laboratories and preparatory rooms throughout the school campus.

Receipts and auditing

Proper financial management procedures need to be applied at all times to the funding provided to schools under the Science Implementation Support Grant.

Transactions in relation to the grant should be identified as such in the schools' accounts. Invoices and receipts must be retained for the purposes of potential audit by the Department, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) / Internal Audit Unit/ETBs as appropriate and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General.

It is necessary for schools to retain, on school grounds, as appropriate, details of any quotations received, invoices, receipts and any other relevant records in respect of all expenditure for a period of seven years.

If a school closes permanently, any balance held in the account must be surrendered to the Department on the date that the school ceases operation. Where a school closes permanently, due to an amalgamation, any balance held in the account shall transfer to the new school. The Department reserves the right to recoup funding issued from other grant funding for non-compliance with any of the terms of this grant scheme.

Schools must ensure compliance with DPER Circular 13/2014, Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds.

Review

These guidelines may be reviewed by the Department as required. Any review will be notified to schools, and school management bodies.

Queries

Queries in relation to this guidance should be directed to scr_info@eduction.gov.ie

Issued by: **Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Management Office**

Department of Education

December 2024.