

Leaving Certificate Languages Information Sheet



What are the two types of foreign language available in the Leaving Certificate examination range?

Curricular and non-curricular.

What is the difference between curricular and non-curricular Leaving Certificate languages?

Most curricular languages have aural, oral, reading, and written assessments. Generally speaking, candidates for curricular languages will have engaged in a programme of tuition over a number of years in preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination in their chosen curricular language. Curricular languages have a specification or syllabus, developed by the NCCA, and available [here](#).

Non-curricular languages

Non-curricular languages are offered as examination papers, not typically as subject areas within schools, and have reading and written assessments only. According to information available on the State Examinations Commission website, students may opt to be examined in a non-curricular language if they meet certain criteria, including:

- Speaking the language in which they opt to be examined in as a mother tongue
- Have followed a programme of study, either in or outside of a school setting, leading to the Leaving Certificate
- Be taking Leaving Certificate English
- Candidates may undertake examination in one non-curricular language only.

Which Leaving Certificate languages are non-curricular?

Any European Union language not offered as a curricular language is available as a non-curricular language paper option: e.g. Czech, Dutch, Hungarian, Romanian.

Ukrainian is also available as a non-curricular examination paper for those sitting the Leaving Certificate from 2025 onwards.

What supports are available for students who wish to study these languages?

Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) supports fifth- and sixth-year students with Saturday classes in lesser taught curricular languages. Students must be entering into fifth year to avail of the support.

PPLI also currently offers support to students planning to undertake the non-curricular Romanian examination paper. Further information can be found at [here](#).

In certain circumstances, we may be able to send a teacher (of lesser taught curricular languages) directly to schools. For further information, please email info@ppli.ie

Are the standards to be achieved in the Leaving Certificate papers the same for each language?

No. The standards to be achieved in the Leaving Certificate vary depending on the language that is being assessed.

Increasingly, language specifications are broadly informed by, and aligned with, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR](#).

Broadly speaking, what is the difference then in the standards to be achieved amongst the various curricular languages?

French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish are all broadly aligned to A2/B1 levels of the CEFR.

Students of Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese with existing knowledge of the relevant language, and two years of tuition, will be well placed to reach the same standards as most other curricular modern foreign languages.

Japanese and Mandarin Chinese are pitched at ab initio level and broadly aligned with pre-A1/A1 level of the CEFR.

Russian is assessed at a slightly higher standard than other MFLs (Modern Foreign Languages), broadly aligned with B2 level of the CEFR.

How do these languages work for the purpose of CAO points?

All Leaving Certificate languages, curricular and non-curricular, count for the purposes of accumulating CAO points.

It is also a possibility, under certain conditions, for learners to undertake both a curricular and a non-curricular language examination in the Leaving Certificate. Further details available [here](#).

Where and how can I find past papers for curricular or non-curricular languages?

Past papers for curricular and non-curricular certificate examinations can be found in the material archive subsection of the State Examinations Commission Website [here](#).