
9: CURRICULUM PLANNING

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Curriculum Planning Materials

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9: CURRICULUM PLANNING

The fundamental purpose of School Development Planning is to ensure that all students experience a quality education appropriate to their needs in a changing world. Its key focus is the enhancement of student learning. Curriculum may be defined as the full range of learning experiences encountered by the students. Clearly, then, curriculum planning is central to School Development Planning.

The purpose of this unit is:

- ◆ To highlight the importance of collaborative curriculum planning within the School Development Planning framework
- ◆ To explore the notion of the Subject Department as a structure to facilitate collaborative curriculum planning
- ◆ To suggest approaches to curriculum planning for subject departments that reflect the planning models described in Unit 2
- ◆ To outline a range of collaborative curriculum planning activities
- ◆ To provide worksheets and resource materials to support these activities

I. SDP and Curriculum Planning

Changing Needs: Planning Challenges

The desired outcome...[of School Development Planning] is the provision of an enhanced education service, relevant to pupils' needs, through the promotion of high quality teaching and learning, the professional empowerment of teachers, and the effective management of innovation and change.

(School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools, p. 9)

In order for planning to be effective, the school plan must address the school's needs as articulated by the teachers and their school partners. School Development Planning works on developing an awareness of these needs, not only in terms of managing the local world of the school but also in terms of the wider needs of the students as members of society.

Two recent Irish reports have highlighted the planning challenges that arise because of the changing needs of society:

Increasingly, society is requiring educators to re-think and re-vision the kinds of learning environments that will produce creative, generative and critical thinkers who have the ability to develop and grow in tandem with the growth of society.

(Multiple Intelligences – Final Report, Anne Rath, UCC, April 2000)

The changing and increasingly complex nature of societal, community and school settings... makes particular demands on teachers' knowledge, personal and pedagogical skills, powers of adaptability and decision-making ability.

(Report of the Steering Committee on the Establishment of a Teaching Council, June 1998)

These challenges have informed thinking on school and curriculum planning and have influenced the development of curriculum planning materials

Specific challenges confronting the development of curriculum in Irish schools include:

- ◆ The culture of individualism among teachers
- ◆ The absence of a tradition of professional dialogue
- ◆ The domination of examination results
- ◆ The changing and increasing demands on schools

Curriculum Planning within a whole-school context addresses those challenges by offering opportunities for teachers to:

- ◆ collaborate
- ◆ engage in debate and reflection
- ◆ become empowered as educators

Curriculum Planning Framework

The basis of an approach to Curriculum Planning is outlined in *School Development Planning: An Introduction for Second Level Schools* (pages 46-48), where it is suggested that four general aspects of curriculum should be reviewed as part of the planning process:

1. Curriculum Provision
2. Curriculum Planning and Coordination
3. Curriculum Implementation: Teaching and Learning Processes
4. Curriculum Outcomes: Student Progress and Attainment

1. Curriculum Provision

Areas of Curriculum Provision which may usefully be reviewed include:

- ◆ Subjects, Programmes, Courses, Levels
- ◆ Time allocations, Options structures
- ◆ Provision for Students with Special Needs
- ◆ Breadth and Balance
- ◆ Relevance and Differentiation
- ◆ Co-curricular Activities

In the context of such a review, it is noteworthy that two significant Irish reports—*Do Schools Differ?* (Emer Smyth, ESRI, 1999) and *From Junior to Leaving Certificate: A Longitudinal Study of 1994 Junior Certificate Candidates who took the Leaving Certificate in 1997* (NCCA, 1999)—have highlighted how a school's curriculum policies and implementation procedures can determine the subject choice and the subject level choice of the student and ultimately affect the outcomes attained by the student.

The booklet, *School Development Planning: Curriculum Review at Junior Cycle* (NCCA/SDPI, 2001) offers a set of curriculum review instruments to assist schools in reviewing their junior cycle curriculum provision in order to plan for its development. The booklet can be downloaded from www.sdpi.ie

2. Curriculum Planning and Coordination

It is important for the school to look at its arrangements for **Planning and Coordinating the Curriculum**. A review of this aspect of curriculum would explore:

- ◆ Structures for Planning
- ◆ Procedures for Collaboration
- ◆ Programme Coordination
- ◆ Cross-Curricular Issues

Schools may need to ask such questions as ‘What structures would help?’ or ‘How can teachers work together?’

The introduction of new curriculum programmes, such as the Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programmes, has led to the development of structured approaches to programme coordination.

Cross-curricular work is also being undertaken within these programmes, with varying degrees of success.

A review of arrangements for curriculum planning and coordination may enable the school to identify creative approaches within the new programmes that could fruitfully be applied in other areas

3. Curriculum Implementation: Teaching and Learning Processes

The basic purpose of curriculum planning is to ensure effective learning that is relevant to the full range of students’ educational needs. In pursuing this purpose, the school may find it helpful to:

- ◆ Review its current situation with regard to:
 - the grouping of students for learning (streaming/banding/mixed ability grouping)
 - teaching methodologies
 - classroom environment
 - classroom practice
- ◆ Explore the impact of these aspects of school life on student learning
- ◆ Consider whether classroom processes are serving the aims and objectives of the curriculum and promoting the development of students as effective and responsible learners

There is much excellent practice by teachers in Irish schools, but traditionally there have been relatively few opportunities for teachers to express or analyse, to share, discuss, refine, develop or disseminate good practice in the wider school or among peers. A collaborative approach to curriculum planning fosters the sharing of good practice.

4. Curriculum Outcomes: Students’ Progress and Attainment

In reviewing curriculum outcomes, the school may usefully examine:

- ◆ Its current methods of assessing student progress and attainment
- ◆ How students’ levels of attainment compare with their standards of attainment on entry to the school
- ◆ How students’ levels of attainment compare with national standards of attainment

- ◆ What students have actually learnt, in terms of both holistic development and academic achievement, on completing any given programme or course in the school

To draw these strands together, this unit provides materials to help the school to adopt the subject department as a focus for curriculum review. This will enable the school to:

- ◆ Promote collaboration
- ◆ Establish common purpose
- ◆ Develop communication
- ◆ Foster the sharing of good practice
- ◆ Provide support
- ◆ Encourage interdependence and mutual responsibility

It would be important for the school to provide a structured programme of staff development to support collaborative curriculum planning at whole-school level.

Such a programme might address whole-school curriculum issues such as the following:

- ◆ Homework Policy
- ◆ Thinking and Learning
- ◆ Multiple Intelligences
- ◆ Effective Methodologies
- ◆ Special Needs and Learning Support
- ◆ Assessment and Reporting
- ◆ Team Development

Clearly the individual school will identify many more.

II. Structures for Curriculum Planning

This section:

- ◆ outlines the rationale for introducing subject departments
- ◆ suggests a range of possible structures which may be helpful in organising the subject department
- ◆ provides materials to promote reflection on the introduction of subject departments and on how the subject department might best operate in the individual school.

A Rationale for the Establishment of a Subject Department

The Subject Department may be seen as an ideal vehicle for curriculum planning in the school as it affords the opportunity for teachers of the same subject to collaborate and to support each other in sharing good practice.

The Subject Department offers an opportunity for teachers and the school to:

- ◆ Establish common purpose and direction in teaching the subject
- ◆ Develop communication among subject colleagues
- ◆ Promote collaboration with subject colleagues in order to :
 - Share good practice
 - Provide mutual support
 - Review subject needs
- ◆ Decide on matters of policy and procedure for the subject (within the whole-school framework)
- ◆ Coordinate assessment practices
- ◆ Manage subject resources effectively
- ◆ Enhance continuity and progression in student learning through coordinated subject planning and subject development
- ◆ Create a useful and convenient forum for communication and consultation with other school personnel and structures

Subject Department Activities

The range of possible activities which might be undertaken by the subject department includes:

- ◆ Liaison with the Principal and other colleagues, e.g. Career Guidance teachers, Exam Secretary, Learning Support teachers, other subject departments
- ◆ Organising subject resources and accommodation
- ◆ Communicating with book companies and resource providers
- ◆ Convening meetings, preparing agendas, negotiating times etc.

This list of possible activities is not exhaustive and will depend on the traditions and structures in the school. Each subject department will operate within the framework of the whole-school approach to such issues

Helpful Structures in Organising the Subject Department

The decision on structures will depend on such matters as school size, school tradition and culture, the number of teachers in the subject department, etc. The issues to be addressed by the school and the subject department will include:

◆ Approaches to Coordination

- Team of subject teachers with a coordinator who has a Post of Responsibility, or acts in a voluntary capacity
- Team of subject teachers with the role of coordinator rotating between members
- Faculty grouping of similar subjects (effective where there may be only one teacher of a subject)
- Cluster planning with teachers of same subjects from other local schools

(Whatever coordination structures are adopted must be on the basis of teamwork where ideas and associated tasks are shared among the team –collaboration and involvement are key words)

◆ Infrastructural Supports that will be provided in terms of :

- Meeting Times
- Venues for meetings
- Planning Materials, e.g. subject syllabus and guidelines

◆ The procedures to be followed in relation to

- communication
- consultation

Planning Resources Required for the Subject Department

Each subject department will be planning in the context of the prescribed syllabuses for the subject and in the specific context of the school. A copy of each of the following documents should be provided, therefore, for each member of the subject department:

- ◆ Statement of School Mission, Vision and Aims
- ◆ Subject syllabuses
- ◆ Teacher Guidelines related to the syllabuses
- ◆ Relevant subject association material
- ◆ Developmental priorities which may have been identified in earlier phases of the planning process

Approaches to Establishing a Subject Department

In schools where subject departments have not been developed, the activities outlined below may be used to structure reflection on the introduction of such structures and how they might operate in the school. These activities may involve the whole staff or may be undertaken by one or more individual subject departments.

Initially the teachers may consider a number of questions such as :

- ◆ Why have a subject department ?
- ◆ What could a subject department do for the partners (Teachers, Students, Parents) and for the school ?
- ◆ How would the subject department best operate ?

When the teachers of a subject reach consensus on the desirability of establishing a department, they may then consider a number of questions focused more closely on how their subject department should operate:

- ◆ What approaches to coordination would be most helpful for this subject department in this school?
- ◆ what activities will be undertaken by the subject department?
- ◆ what procedures should be followed?
- ◆ what supports will be required?

Before decisions are finalised on how a department for their subject should operate, consultation with the Principal and / or the Senior Management Team as appropriate must take place. This will ensure that the organisation of the subject department is consistent with other school structures and operates within the parameters of whole-school policy.

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides information sheets and worksheets for the reflective process outlined above:

Activity 1: **Reflection on the establishment of a subject department**

Materials

Worksheet 1A: **To consider the introduction of a Subject Department**

Worksheet 1B: **To consider how the Subject Department will operate**

Developing the Subject Department

In developing the subject department, the school may consider arranging training in the following areas:

- ◆ School Development Planning
- ◆ Group Facilitation
- ◆ Team Development
- ◆ Policy Writing
- ◆ Methodology Development
- ◆ Assessment Procedures
- ◆ Parameters of operation within whole-school planning

This training may be provided concurrently with the subject department planning process and either on a whole-school basis or for individual subject departments.

(It may be possible to arrange initial training locally through the School Development Planning Initiative, the Education Centre or in conjunction with a group of schools)

III. Approaches to Curriculum Planning

There are many ways of setting about curriculum planning. Each school will decide on the approach that is best suited to its own particular needs and circumstances. **Unit 2** of these Guidelines outlines a number of planning models that can be adapted to shape a curriculum planning process.

Route 1: Early Action Planning Model

In the Early Action Planning Model, the first priority is to identify issues of concern and to develop plans to address them. Matters relating to values, aims, policies and procedures are dealt with as they arise in the course of the planning cycle (review, design, implementation, evaluation) and not in accordance with a pre-ordained sequence. This approach ensures that planning is seen to focus on evident needs and to involve action. The early achievement of relevant targets strengthens commitment to the collaborative process and supports the development of more complex planning structures.

In this model, curriculum planning begins with a review (either by the whole staff or by curriculum, programme or subject teams) and proceeds to the development of action plans to address immediate concerns. In the context of this unit, a subject department following this route would review the current situation with regard to their subject, identify immediate needs (such as the need to prepare for the introduction of a new syllabus), and develop plans to address them.

Route 2: Foundational Model

This model is based on the premise that development planning operates more effectively when the school's fundamental purpose and values have been clarified so that they can serve as a frame of reference, and when the necessary enabling structures are in place.

In this model, the first phase of planning involves formulating the statement of mission, vision and aims and whole school policies. The identification of development priorities comes later. Curriculum planning from its inception is explicitly related to the school's mission, vision, aims and policies, and focuses in the early stages on the formulation of curriculum aims and objectives and the establishment of curriculum-related policies and procedures.

Section IV of this unit shows how these two routes can be applied to the process of collaborative subject department planning.

IV. Collaborative Curriculum Planning Process

Outline of the Planning Process

This section of the Curriculum Planning Unit outlines a range of collaborative planning activities which the subject department may undertake:

- ◆ Review of the subject
- ◆ Planning for the subject
- ◆ Monitoring and Evaluating the subject

It outlines two routes through the activities:

1. Initially, the subject teachers may reflect on the current operation of the subject within the school to identify any matters that need to be addressed in order to enhance that operation.

The subject department may then move directly to devise curriculum action plans to address those matters.

This may be called the **Early Action Planning Route**.

2. Alternatively the subject teachers may focus first on articulating the aims and objectives of the subject department (in the context of the school's mission, vision and aims) and on formulating subject department policies and procedures, and then proceed through the planning process as outlined.

This may be called the **Foundational Route**.

Schools may combine aspects of both routes in devising a process to suit their own individual circumstances.

Part 3 of the section deals with **Monitoring and Evaluation**.

1. Early Action Planning Route

Review of the Subject

Review is the first stage of the planning process. It focuses on identifying the needs that must be addressed through planning. The subject department's review may involve a number of different strands:

- i. An initial review may be carried out by using either the **Diagnostic Window**, which focuses on 'What is already working well? / What is not yet working well?' or the **SCOT Analysis** to identify Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats. These instruments may be particularly helpful in identifying areas for development.
- ii. The subject department must also keep in mind such contextual issues as national developments, e.g. syllabus changes over which the school has no control
- iii. In order to consider the wider impact of the subject, the teachers then may consider how the subject contributes to the **holistic development** of students in the context of the school's mission vision and aims statement
- iv. The subject department may then choose to use the **Subject Department Policy Checklist** to assist in identifying any policy or policy implementation needs.

Arising from this combined process of needs identification, the subject department may then proceed to prioritise the needs to be addressed at the planning stage.

(For detailed information on Review and Prioritisation, see **Unit 3**)

Action Planning

If the school is following the early action-planning route, then action plans may be devised at this stage to address the prioritised needs.

(For detailed information on Action Planning, see **Unit 4 Section I**)

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides information sheets and worksheets for the process outlined above:

Activity: **Subject review**

Materials:

Worksheet 2A: **Diagnostic Window**

Worksheet 2B: **SCOT Analysis**

Worksheet 3: **Contribution to the Holistic Dimension of the Curriculum**

Worksheet 4: **Subject Department Policy Checklist**

Activity: **Action Planning**

Materials:

Template 7: **Curriculum Action Plan for the Subject**

2. Foundational Route

Planning for the Subject

This section outlines the process of planning in a logical sequence, commencing with agreement on the **aims and objectives** for teaching the subject.

In the interest of developing collaboration and sharing good practice, planning materials are provided to explore and discuss **effective methodologies** which may be used in teaching this subject.

The process then moves to considering the issue of **supporting students** who may experience difficulty in the classroom and devising strategies to meet their needs in the context of whole-school policies and structures for supporting students.

A range of issues is then proposed for which the subject department may decide to agree a common approach or **policy**.

Planning materials are provided to record agreements on **course content** for specific year groups.

It is likely that several stages of this planning process may highlight the need for staff development or training. Materials are provided for recording these **staff development** needs

i. Aims and Objectives

Some schools may address these at an early stage immediately after the establishment of the subject department or even following the completion of the statement of the school's Mission, Vision and Aims Statement.

Other schools may prefer to proceed with the formalisation of the Aims and Objectives for teaching the subject at a later stage in the planning cycle when some collaborative planning has already been successfully undertaken.

Aims

In the context of the relevant planning resources (see list below), the subject department teachers agree **the principal aims of the subjects**. The aims are broadly phrased statements of educational intent, they are aspirational, they express the desired intentions of the subject.

e.g. *“The teaching of English in this school aims to”*

“The English curriculum in this school aims to “

Relevant planning resources to inform the clarification of aims include:

- ◆ Statement of School Mission, Vision and Aims
- ◆ Subject syllabuses
- ◆ Teacher Guidelines related to the syllabuses
- ◆ Relevant subject association material
- ◆ Developmental priorities which may have been identified in earlier phases of the planning process

Objectives

Arising from the agreed aims of the subject, the teachers outline the objectives of the subject. Objectives are observable, measurable and assessable **statements of intended learner outcomes / behaviour**, usually expressed in terms of specified levels of achievement.

“It can be useful to sort objectives into three categories: attitudes, skills and knowledge. In stating active learning outcomes precisely, active verbs can be especially helpful.” *Writing the Transition Year Programme*.

e.g. *“The student will be able to”*

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides the following:

Activity: **Establishing the aims and objectives of the subject**

Materials:

Template 1: **Subject Planning: Aims and Objectives**

ii. Methodologies Development

Initially the teachers review and discuss the methodologies which they find effective.

They then consider what methodologies might be introduced or emphasised to meet the subject needs in the light of the subject syllabus, the teacher guidelines, the aims and objectives agreed by the subject department, and the differentiated needs of students. A list of **key learning skills** and of **effective teaching strategies** is provided to prompt this consideration.

The teachers may then select three or more teaching and learning strategies which the subject department agrees to adopt as a means of meeting the needs of the specified groups of students

Finally the teachers identify what will be required in order to implement these methodologies in terms of:

- ◆ timetabling
- ◆ resources
- ◆ provision for differentiation
- ◆ in-service needs
- ◆ modifications in assessment practices

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides information sheets and worksheets for the process outlined above:

Activity: **Exploring Effective Methodologies**

Materials:

Worksheet 5: **Individual Teacher Reflection on Methodologies**

Worksheet 6: **Key Learning Skills**

Worksheet 7: **Effective Teaching Strategies**

Template 2: **Subject Methodologies**

Template 3: **Subject Resource Needs**

iii. Support for Students

In the context of whole-school policy, the Subject Department teachers

- ◆ Agree a strategy for supporting students who may experience difficulty with the subject or in the classroom
- ◆ Agree a strategy for liaising with the Learning Support, Guidance and Pastoral Care personnel in the school.
- ◆ Agree a strategy for liaising and communicating with parents

For further information, see **Unit 10**.

iv. Policies and Procedures

Having identified from the list below the issues which are relevant to the teaching of the subject and to the school, the teachers discuss, formulate and agree the department policy and procedures. This process is carried out in the context of whole-school policies, the subject's aims and objectives, and the consensus reached on teaching and learning.

Policy Issues may include:

- ◆ Class organisation and allocation of students to classes
- ◆ Textbooks and course materials
- ◆ Homework
- ◆ Assessment, formal and informal
- ◆ Record-keeping
- ◆ Reporting
- ◆ Resources and accommodation
- ◆ Cross-curricular links
- ◆ Health and Safety considerations
- ◆ Associated activities, field trips etc.
- ◆ Subject development, i.e. measures to assist the promotion of the subject in and out of school

There may be other significant issues which the subject department may also wish to address in terms of policy formulation

For information on policy writing, see **Unit 4**.

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides the following materials for the process outlined above:

Activity: **Agreeing Policies and Procedures**

Materials:

Template 4: **Subject Planning – Policies and Procedures**

v. Course Content

The teachers outline the course content for each year group, listing content, specifying depth and key concepts to be taught.

The teachers plan and record the agreed outline programme of work for each year group, terms 1, 2, and 3, with guidelines on time framework.

In view of the demands of this undertaking, it is recommended that this work would be carried out on a phased basis, taking, for example, one senior and one junior year group each year.

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides the following planning materials for the process outlined above:

Activity: **Planning Course Content**

Materials:

Template 5: **Curriculum Content 1. Long-Term Planning**

Template 6: **Curriculum Content 2. Year Plan**

vi. Staff Development

The Subject Department is asked:

- ◆ to identify the needs for professional training/development which have emerged in the course of the planning process
- ◆ to prioritise these needs and indicate the numbers of staff and timeframe involved
- ◆ to recommend, where possible, potential courses or inservice providers, including colleagues who may have developed expertise in the identified areas
- ◆ to communicate these needs to the Staff Development Task Group or Principal as appropriate

For further information on Staff Development, see **Unit 8**.

Related Worksheets

Section V at the end of this unit provides the following materials for the process outlined above:

Activity: **Subject Department Planning for Staff Development**

Materials:

Template 8: **Subject Department Staff Development**

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

The subject teachers consider procedures for monitoring student attainment and progress in this subject, in the context of its aims and objectives and within a designated timeframe. Student progress and attainment may be considered in terms of academic achievement and holistic development.

Academic Attainment

Students' levels of attainment may be compared with their standards of attainment on entry to the school. Results attained in state examinations may be used.

The percentage of students taking each level of examination may be considered.

Where the subject is optional, the level of take-up of the subject could be reviewed. This, however, may be influenced by the composition of optional subject choices in the school.

These patterns within the school may be compared with current national norms, but it is essential first to consider the range of ability in the cohort of students. This information is often available from standardised ability tests administered on students' entry to school.

Holistic Development

In order to evaluate how the subject contributes to the holistic development of the student, the subject teachers could examine:

- ◆ how it contributes to the fulfilment of the school's Mission, Vision and Aims
- ◆ how it helps to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of the student. [The Education Act (1998) confers on the school the function of promoting "the moral, spiritual, personal, social development of students"]
- ◆ how it contributes to the Eight Areas of Experience proposed by the NCCA as a Curriculum Framework

For further information and related worksheets, see *School Development Planning: Curriculum Review at Junior Cycle* (NCCA/SDPI, 2001)

Detailed guidelines on the process of evaluation are provided in **Unit 5**.

V. Curriculum Planning Process: Activities and Worksheets

The school with the Facilitator must consider and select the approach to subject department planning which will best suit the school's unique circumstances and planning experience. An outline of various approaches is provided in Sections III and IV of this unit. Further detail on these options is available in **Unit 2**.

Materials are provided in this section to cater for several options and approaches.

Activity 1: Reflection on the Establishment of a Subject Department

Planning Materials:	Page
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Worksheet 1B: 'To Consider how the Subject Department will operate'	21

Activity 2: The Review of the Subject

Planning Materials:	Page
Worksheet 2A: Diagnostic window	23
Worksheet 2B: SCOT Analysis	25
Worksheet 3: The Holistic Dimension	27
Worksheet 4: Subject Department Policy Checklist	29

Activity 3: Planning for the Subject

Planning Materials:	Page
Template 1: Aims and Objectives	31
Worksheet 5: Individual Teacher Reflection on Methodologies	33
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ACTIVITY 1

REFLECTION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUBJECT DEPARTMENT

INFORMATION SHEET

Instruments :

- ◆ **To Consider the Introduction of a Subject Department (Worksheet 1A)**
- ◆ **To Consider How the Subject Department will Operate (Worksheet 1B)**

Procedure :

Individual Reflection (1)

- ◆ Each teacher is asked to complete the questionnaire on Worksheet 1A

Group Discussion (1)

- ◆ The responses to the questionnaire are shared in subject groups and recorded on a flipchart
- ◆ Each subject group considers the implications of their responses and arrives at a position regarding the establishment of a subject department
- ◆ the outcome is brought to the attention of the Principal and / or other school personnel, as appropriate

Where it has been agreed that a subject department might be introduced, the teachers of that subject proceed to Worksheet 1B, either during the same session or on a later occasion.

Individual Reflection (2)

- ◆ Each teacher of the subject is asked to complete the questionnaire on Worksheet 1B

Group Discussion (2)

- ◆ The responses are shared with a view to arriving at an agreed list of suggestions regarding the operation of the subject department
- ◆ The agreed suggestions are recorded and brought for consultation or negotiation to the Principal and / or other school personnel as appropriate

In this context it may be helpful to consider the issues outlined in Section II of this unit, **Structures for Curriculum Planning**

WORKSHEET 1A

To Consider the Introduction of a Subject Department

1. Why should we have a subject department ?

2. What, if anything, would a subject department do for:

Teachers ?

Students ?

Parents ?

The School ?

3. Have you any suggestions on how a subject department might operate ?

WORKSHEET 1B

To Consider How the Subject Department will Operate

- 1. What approaches to coordination would you consider helpful for this subject department in this school?**
- 2. What activities will be undertaken?**
- 3. What Procedures are to be followed ?**
- 4. What infrastructural supports will be required?**

These will depend on the traditional structures in the school and on operating within the framework of the whole-school approach to such issues

ACTIVITY 2

REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT

INFORMATION SHEET

Review Instruments and Materials

1. To commence the review of the subject, the teachers may select **either**
 - ◆ **Worksheet 2A: The Diagnostic Window**, which focuses on what is already working well? / what is not yet working well?
 - or**
 - ◆ **Worksheet 2B: The SCOT Analysis**, to identify Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats. This may be particularly helpful in identifying areas for development.

2. To focus on how the subject provides for the holistic development of the students, the subject teachers may then select
 - ◆ **Worksheet 3: To Review the Holistic Dimension of the Subject**

3. To identify any policy or policy implementation needs, they may use
 - ◆ **Worksheet 4: The Subject Department Policy Checklist**

Arising from this combined process of needs identification the Subject Department then proceeds to prioritise the areas to be addressed in the planning stage.

ACTIVITY 2

REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT:

THE DIAGNOSTIC WINDOW

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument

- ◆ **Diagnostic Window** : What is already working well / What is not working well
(Worksheet 2A)

Instruction:

In relation to this Subject Department:

- ◆ Identify four instances of what is working well, citing evidence
- ◆ Identify 2 instances of what is not yet working well, citing evidence
- ◆ Record any contextual issues affecting this subject, e.g. syllabus change etc.

Procedure:

- 1. Individual Reflection**, preparing individual input to group discussion
- 2. Group discussion**, collating feedback on a flip –chart or blackboard to produce a list of suggested areas for improvement

SUBJECT REVIEW WORKSHEET 2A

The Diagnostic Window

In relation to _____ (name of subject)

- ◆ Identify 4 instances of what is already working well, citing evidence
- ◆ Identify 2 instances of what is not working well, citing evidence
- ◆ Record any significant contextual issues affecting this subject e.g. change in syllabus etc.

What is already working well?	Evidence
What is not working well?	Evidence

Contextual issues affecting this subject:
--

ACTIVITY 2

REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT:

SCOT ANALYSIS

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **SCOT Analysis (Worksheet 2B)**

Instruction :

- ◆ In relation to this subject department please list the main **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we must overcome
- ◆ In relation to this subject department please list the **OPPORTUNITIES** that arise for the development of this subject department and the **THREATS** (if any) presented to its future
- ◆ Please record any significant contextual change which may affect this subject e.g. syllabus change etc.

Procedure :

1. **The teachers complete the SCOT Analysis of the Subject Department individually.**
2. **The Subject Department teachers as a group** discuss the responses which are recorded on a flipchart or blackboard to produce an agreed list of issues for development.

SUBJECT REVIEW WORKSHEET 2B

SCOT Analysis

SCOT Analysis of the Subject _____

1. Please identify in this subject's current provision and performance the **STRENGTHS** on which we can build and the **CHALLENGES** or weaknesses that we must overcome.
2. Please identify the **OPPORTUNITIES** for and the **THREATS** to the subject's future development that arise from those strengths and challenges and from any external factors that affect us.

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Contextual issues which may affect this subject:

ACTIVITY 2

REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT:

TO REVIEW THE HOLISTIC DIMENSION OF THE SUBJECT

INFORMATION SHEET

Procedure :

1. The Subject Teachers select a particular year group for consideration.
2. A slide or chart displays this information :

◆ **The Education Act (1998) expects the school ‘to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of the student’**

◆ **This school expects**

(quote from the school mission or other statement of purpose or founding intention)

3. **Individual reflection:** The subject teachers complete, individually,
Worksheet 3: ‘Contributing To The Holistic Dimension Of The Curriculum’
4. **Group discussion:** The subject teachers share their responses and these are listed on a flip chart / blackboard.

WORKSHEET 3

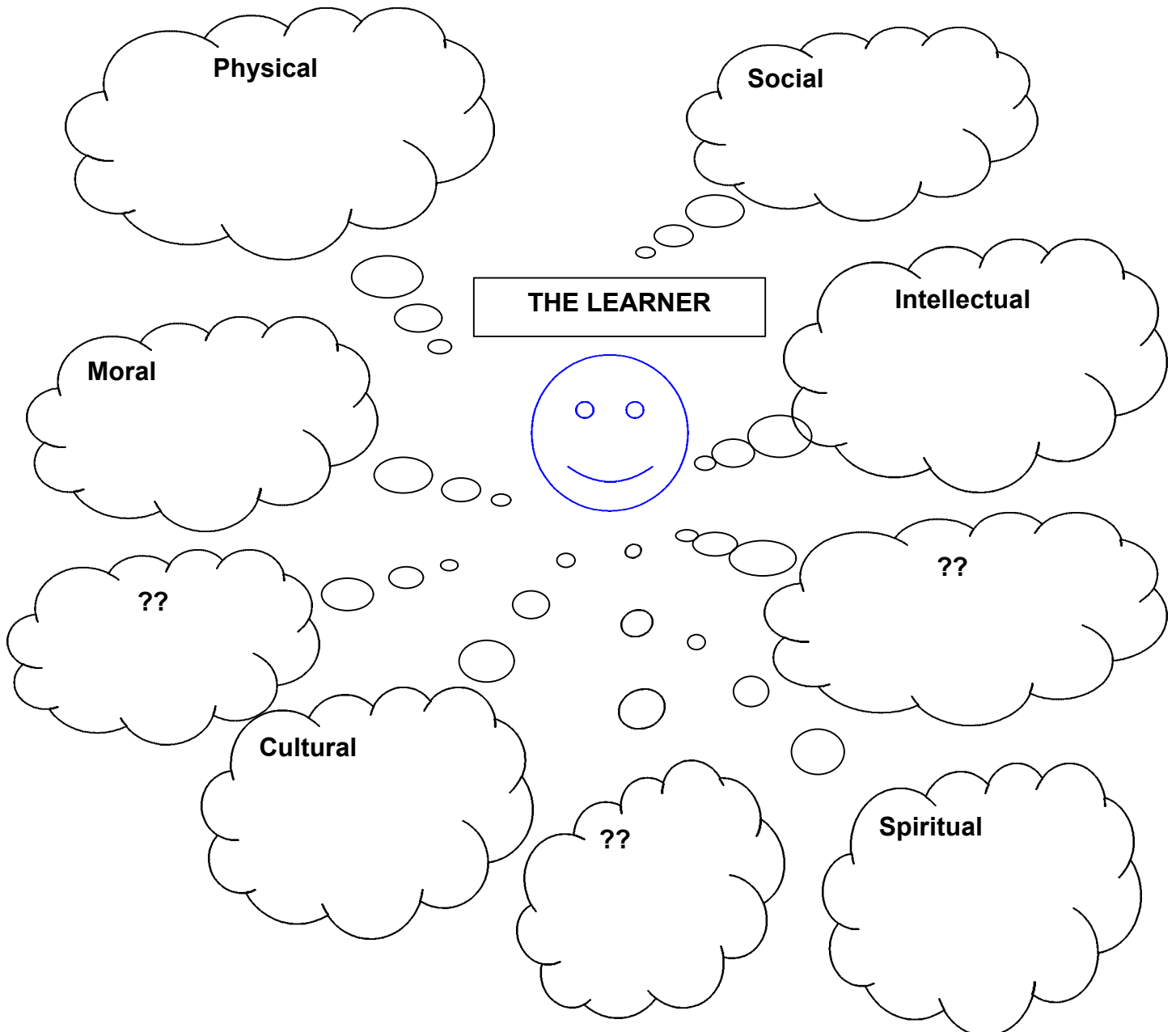
Contributing to the Holistic Dimension of The Curriculum

What contribution does your teaching of :

_____ (NAME OF SUBJECT)

make to the **personal, social, moral, spiritual (and other)** development of the student?

- ◆ On the sketch below some aspects of the learner are named. Are there others that you would like to add?
- ◆ Can you enter in each cloud three or more ways in which this subject contributes to the development of the whole person?



ACTIVITY 2

REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT:

SUBJECT DEPARTMENT POLICY CHECKLIST

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **The Subject Department Policy Checklist (Worksheet 4)**

This may be used to identify subject department policy or policy implementation needs. This checklist is intended to act as a useful 'menu' of options to guide subject departments. The teachers will select a **maximum of three policy needs** to be addressed in this planning phase.

Instruction :

- ◆ Please tick 'yes' or 'no' in response to each question in the column indicated
- ◆ Please identify in the third column the policy needs (max. 3) which, in your view, should be most urgently addressed by the subject department (rank order in terms of importance by using 1, 2, 3,)

Procedure :

- 1. Individual reflection:** Each teacher in the subject department completes **The Subject Department Policy**
- 2. Group discussion:** Responses are collated and discussed to produce an agreed list of policy needs to be addressed
- 3. Group discussion:** From this list of agreed needs, two or three priorities are established by consensus to be addressed in the planning process.

WORKSHEET 4

Subject Department Policy Checklist

This worksheet is intended to act as a 'menu' or range of options from which a maximum of three will be selected to be addressed at this time

		YES	NO	3 Priorities
1.	Does the subject department have an up-to-date copy of the school Mission Statement and aims?			
2.	Has the subject department defined aims and objectives consistent with the School's mission, vision and aims?			
3.	Does the subject department have copies of syllabus, draft guidelines etc.?			
4.	Are there detailed outline programmes of work available for all courses taught within the subject department?			
5.	Have these outline programmes of work been agreed by all members of the subject department?			
6.	Is policy in respect of these plans implemented by all members?			
7.	Has the subject department details of the resources available to it?			
8.	Is there an explicit policy in respect of: (a) Assessment? (b) Record-keeping? (c) Reporting?			
9.	Does the subject department policy provide for (a) Continuity? (b) Progression?			
10.	Does the subject department policy provide for special needs/students at risk etc.?			
11.	Does the subject department policy provide for systematic liaison with: (a) Learning support teacher(s)? (b) Guidance counsellor?			
12.	Does the subject department policy provide for (a) Cross-curricular themes? (b) Cross-curricular Links?			
13.	Is the subject department monitored and reviewed on a regular basis?			
14.	Does the subject department policy include a commitment to the professional development of staff			
15.	Has the subject department a development plan, consistent with the whole/school development plan?			
16.	Is the subject department policy communicated to: (a) Parents? (b) Students? (c) Other subject departments?			

SUBJECT PLANNING TEMPLATE 1

Aims and Objectives

SCHOOL : _____

SUBJECT : _____

1. AIMS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. OBJECTIVES :

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

EXPLORING EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **Individual Teacher Reflection on Methodologies and Classroom Practice (Worksheet 5)**

Instruction :

- ◆ List four strategies which you use currently in teaching this subject and state why you find them effective

Procedure :

1. **Individual reflection:** The teachers individually complete the worksheet, **Individual Teacher Reflection on Methodologies and Classroom Practice.**
2. **Group Discussion:** Responses are shared and discussed. These responses are listed on a flip chart or a black/white board

WORKSHEET 5

Individual Teacher Reflection on Methodologies and Classroom Practice

List 4 strategies which you use currently in teaching this subject and state why you find them effective (because my students)

As a teacher of

I have found it helpful and effective to:

• _____

because my students _____

• _____

because my students _____

• _____

because my students _____

• _____

because my students _____

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

EXPLORING EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES TO DEVELOP KEY LEARNING SKILLS

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **Key Learning Skills (Worksheet 6)**

Instruction :

This list identifies some of the learning skills that students may require to develop.

- ◆ Please enter any additions you may wish to make to this list
- ◆ For each 'skill' listed enter in the blank column examples of how this subject might develop this skill in students

Procedure :

- 1. Individual reflection:** Worksheet 6, '**Key Learning Skills**' is completed individually by teachers in the subject department.
- 2. Group discussion:** Responses are shared and discussed to produce a list of examples of strategies to develop these skills in students.
- 3. This list is then recorded on a flipchart** for use as a planning resource for Template 2, **Subject Methodologies**, and Template 3, **Subject Resource Needs**.

WORKSHEET 6

Key Learning Skills

The following list identifies some of the learning skills that people may require to develop.

1. Please enter any additions you may wish to make to this list
2. For each 'skill' listed enter in the blank column examples of how this subject might develop this skill in students

SKILLS	EXAMPLES
Generating ideas	
Gathering information	
Testing theories	
Reflecting	
Questioning	
Hypothesising	
Observing	
Interpreting	
Communicating	
Investigating	
Experimenting	
Team learning	
And/more	

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

EXPLORING EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **Effective Teaching Strategies (Worksheet 7)**

To explore what methodologies might be introduced to meet the needs of the students of this subject

Instruction :

This list identifies some of the teaching strategies which might be used in teaching this subject

- ◆ Please enter any additions you may wish to make to this list
- ◆ For each strategy listed, enter in the blank column examples, if any, of how the teaching of this subject might effectively employ this strategy

Procedure :

1. **Individual reflection:** Worksheet 7, **Effective Teaching Strategies**, is completed by each teacher in the subject department.
2. **Group discussion:** Responses are shared and discussed to produce a list of examples of strategies which might be used in teaching this subject.
3. **This list is then recorded on a flipchart** for use as a planning resource for Template 2, **Subject Methodologies**, and Template 3, **Subject Resource Needs**

WORKSHEET 7

Effective Teaching Strategies

Effective Teaching Strategies:	How could these be used in teaching this subject ?
Whole-Class Teaching	
One-To-One Tuition	
Individual Assignments	
Group Assignments	
Pair / Small Group Work	
Groups Preparing Work For Class	
Role Play	
Individualised Programmes Of Learning	
Reflective Learning	
Structured Discussion	
Students Undertaking Research	
Students' Reflective Journals	
Student Self-Assessment	
Decision-Making / Problem-Solving	
Practical Activities	
Field Trips	
Using Computers	
Using Videos / Television	
Making Films / Radio Programmes	
Creating Displays	
Using An Outside Speaker	
Oral Presentations	
Project Work	

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

EXPLORING EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES: ADOPTING AND RECORDING AGREED STRATEGIES

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **Subject Methodologies (Template 2)**
- ◆ **Subject Resource Needs (Template 3)**

To agree and record three Teaching & Learning Strategies on which this Subject Department intends to focus

Instruction :

- ◆ In the light of the discussions on Planning Worksheets 5, 6 and 7, please agree three strategies to be adopted with three agreed groups of students
- ◆ Please record on Template 2 the agreed strategies which will be adopted by the teachers of this subject department with the specified target groups of students
- ◆ Please agree and record on Template 3 the resource needs to be addressed in implementing these strategies

Procedure :

1. **Group Discussion:** Using the list of skills and strategies generated from Planning Worksheets 5, 6 and 7, the teachers agree and record their decisions to adopt certain strategies to meet the needs of specified groups of students.

TEMPLATE 2

Subject Methodologies Template

SUBJECT _____

DATE _____

	Selected Group Of Students	Agreed Teaching & Learning Strategies on which This Dept. will focus with this Group	What Do We Wish
1.			
2.			
3.			

TEMPLATE 3

Subject Resource Needs Template

SUBJECT _____

DATE _____

	Provisions To Address The Differentiated Needs Of Students	Resources Required (Accommodation, Equipment, Books Etc.)	Assessment Requirement	Related In
1.				
2.				
3.				

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

INFORMATION SHEET

Instrument :

- ◆ **Subject Planning - Policies And Procedures (Template 4)**

Procedure :

1. **Group Discussion:** The teachers agree on the issues for which a subject department policy is desirable
2. **Individually or in pairs**, the teachers then select a specific issue and draw up a draft policy for that issue
3. **Group Discussion:** The subject teachers discuss and modify this draft policy
4. **Individually or in pairs again**, the teachers then draw up draft procedures for implementing that policy
5. **Group Discussion:** These are agreed by the subject department and recorded on Template 4
6. The proposed policies and procedures are then agreed with the Principal and / or the Whole-School Planning team as appropriate

TEMPLATE 4

Subject Planning – Policies and Procedures

Class Organisation Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Class Organisation Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Textbooks and Course Materials Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Textbooks and Course Materials Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Homework Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Homework Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Assessment Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Assessment Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

(Formal and informal assessments to be included)

Record Keeping Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Record-Keeping Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Reporting Policy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Reporting Procedures:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Policies and procedures on the other issues outlined in the subject planning process section may be recorded similarly, as required

ACTIVITY 3

SUBJECT PLANNING:

PLANNING COURSE CONTENT

INFORMATION SHEET

Instruments :

- ◆ **Curriculum Content – 1. Long-term Planning (Template 5)**
- ◆ **Curriculum Content – 2. Year Plan (Template 6)**

Procedure :

1. The subject teachers agree a summary of the content to be studied in each year of the school's programme
2. This summary is recorded on the Template 5, **Curriculum Content – 1. Long-term Planning**
3. The teachers then select one or two year groups and agree a work procedure to prepare a detailed outline of work for each year group selected
4. This outline is recorded on the Template 6, **Curriculum Content – 2. Year Plan**

TEMPLATE 5

Curriculum Content – 1. Long-Term Planning

SUBJECT _____

Content To Be Covered In Each Year Of Programme:

YEAR 1

YEAR 2

YEAR 3

YEAR 4

YEAR 5

YEAR 6

TEMPLATE 6

Curriculum Content –2. Year Plan

SUBJECT : _____

YEAR GROUP: _____

Concept / Topic	Text References	Time Allocation	Materials/Equipment	Asses Mod

This table may be modified or extended to suit individual subject needs

TEMPLATE 7

Curriculum Action Plan for the Subject

Subject: _____

Priority to be addressed : _____

What to we want to achieve? (TARGETS)	What needs to be done? (TASKS)	When? (TIMEFRAME)	Who? (REMITTS)
AGREED MONITORING PROCEDURES :		AGREED EVALUATION PROCEDURES :	

(A sample Action Plan for a subject follows)

Sample Curriculum Action Plan – Maths – Junior Cycle

Priority: To ensure that all Junior Cycle students have an opportunity to take maths in the Junior Cert at a level suited to their potential.

Target: To develop a system in first year maths classes that puts in motion the agreed priority for the Junior Cert group of 2004.

Tasks:	Who:	How:	When:	Resources:	Success Criteria - Implementation:
1. To identify ability level of new first years for Sept 2001.	Learning support teacher in conjunction with Guidance Counsellor	Assessment test of new first year students	Early April 2001	Room to seat 90 students, assistance of 6 teachers & 6 senior students	Information on Maths ability of each individual first year student available for use.
2. To agree a policy on class organisation for first years	First Year Maths teachers with Learning support teacher and guidance counsellor	Meeting convened by Senior Maths teacher using results of entry assessment	Mid-May 2001	Time for meeting 1 hour	Policy agreed and class lists drafted
3. To agree a common programme of topics to be covered by each first year Maths teacher for 2001/02.	All Maths teachers	Meeting of group convened by senior maths teacher, using results of induction assessment test, & in consultation with Learning Support teacher.	Mid - May 2001	Time for meeting – 1.5 hours, draft ideas of class lists for new first years showing ability mix, & Junior Cert Maths syllabus with recommended text book.	Agreed programme of work in first year Maths available to each Maths teacher
4. To advise principal of timetabling needs in first year for 2001/02.	Senior maths teacher	Meeting with principal re overall timetabling needs for Maths with specific reference to first year programme.	End of May 2001	Time for meeting – 1 hour	Agreement reached with Principal on timetable allocation for 2001/02
5. To agree timing and content of assessments at induction stage and during 2001/02	Team of first year Maths teachers	Meeting of team convened by senior maths teacher	Early Sept 2001	Time for meeting – 1.5 hours, school calendar 2001/02, & agreed pace of work for each ½ term.	Agreed calendar for assessment during 2001/02 with a list of topics to be assessed at agreed stages of the year.
6. To implement agreed programme during 2001/02	Team of first year maths teachers in conjunction with Learning Support teacher	Regular meetings of group, with feedback given to all staff at each end of term. Use of agreed evaluation procedures and tools during & after implementation	Oct 01 – June 02	Time for meetings, agenda item for staff meetings at end of term, time to carry out regular evaluation using agreed framework.	Achievement of agreed targets at key times during the year – end of each ¼ term
7. To monitor progress of implementation and evaluate outcomes on completion of plan.	First year Maths teachers in conjunction with senior maths teacher, principal, & Learning Support teacher				Agreed criteria tested at key times during the year – end of each term, & at year-end.

Success Criteria – Outcomes - Impact on Learning & Teaching:

- ✓ The needs of each first year student have been identified and catered for during the year.
 - ✓ Special needs students have shown an ability to maximise their potential in Maths
 - ✓ Progression from first year into second year indicates that all students are reaching their potential in Maths
 - ✓ Others as appropriate
-

Monitoring Procedures:

Meetings, convened by the senior maths teacher, to be held among the teaching team at the end of each ½ term.

Liaison between the Learning Support teacher and each class teacher of special needs students to occur at the request of the Learning support teacher

Meetings between the senior maths teacher and the principal to be held at the end of each term

Evaluation Procedures:

Evaluation tools, designed by the teaching team in consultation with the SDP steering group, to be used to test the success criteria at agreed regular intervals throughout the year

Regular use (at least once every ½term):

✓**Spot Check** – To be applied regularly by individual class teachers in order to discover student motivation for specific course topics.

✓**Force Field Analysis** – To be applied to students and teachers in order to determine the factors which assist/hinder learning and teaching during the year.

✓**Critical Incident Analysis** – To be applied by the guidance counsellor to individual students identified by the team as requiring special treatment.

End of year

Information to be collected on assessment results for each student during the year, and compared against standard results on induction.

Closed questionnaires to be issued to students and teachers seeking information on success criteria above.

First year maths teachers to be given a Self-evaluation profile document, which elicits opinions on the process & product of the action plan implementation.

Final report to be drawn up, circulated and agreed for early Sept 2002.

TEMPLATE 8

Subject Department Staff Development Plan

SUBJECT: _____

DATE : _____

PRIORITY TO BE ADDRESSED	STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS INDICATED	STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES PROPOSED	TO BE PROVIDED BY	WHE