

Press Release

Constant change needed in science education - ICSTI statement

All science subjects in second level schools should be subject to rolling reviews, with specified timescales for implementing changes, according to a statement from the Irish Council for Science Technology and Innovation (ICSTI).

The Council also proposes that curriculum development and examination and assessment, currently divided between a statutory agency and a government department, should be brought together under one roof "in order to ensure consistency of objectives".

ICSTI expresses its concern that innovations in the content and methods of science teaching may not be fully reflected in the manner in which pupils are assessed. It underlines that "science and technology are at the heart of issues in everyday life. The school system must reflect this changing environment by making changes to courses and processes at an appropriate rate".

The ICSTI statement, Science in Second Level Schools, is released today (Monday 22 November) in the context of continuing concern over the falling proportions of Leaving Certificate students taking physics and chemistry. The Council acknowledges the initiatives being taken by the Minister for Education to address this problem, but concludes that more needs to be done to make science subjects more relevant and attractive.

ICSTI urges that more emphasis should be given to the applications of science and to the social and historical contexts of science. It also calls for new incentives to attract physical sciences graduates to teaching, a programme of investment in schools laboratories, and expansion of the range of professional development courses for science teachers.

"ICSTI has said forcibly that the falling numbers of Leaving Certificate students taking physics and chemistry represent a threat to Ireland's ability to develop as a knowledge-based society. Changes are urgently needed in the design, delivery and assessment of science courses in order to reverse this decline. This ICSTI statement, Science in Second Level Schools, maps out some of the pathways to making the necessary changes," Dr Walsh said.

The ICSTI statement comes shortly before a major conference, Science Education in Crisis, taking place at the Royal Dublin Society on 1 December. Speakers at the conference will include Dr Ed Walsh, chairman of the Irish Council for Science Technology and Innovation, who will deliver the keynote address.

ENDS.

**For further information please contact:
Tom O Dwyer
Forfas Press Office: (01) 6073085
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