

Dear Sir,

As Heads of Geography Departments at Irish third level institutions we are writing to express our deep concern at the demotion of Geography from being a core subject at Junior Cert Level. This will have detrimental impacts both on our young people and on the country as a whole.

Geography is the only discipline which combines the study of both the natural and social worlds, and their interaction, and is key to solving global problems such as climate change and poverty, in addition to examining and proposing solutions to pressing national issues such as the current housing crisis. At a time when the unique skills of geographers are being recognised as essential to successful decision-making processes it is vitally important that all secondary school students in Ireland have a geographic training so that they can become active participants in tackling national and global issues.

As we live in a world increasingly defined by these “wicked problems” with multiple causes and interactions the next generation of Irish decision-makers need to be equipped with the practical and analytical skills to effectively address them – this starts in primary and secondary schools. Geographers in Ireland, make vital contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, are central to rural diversification innovations, lead the field in marine spatial planning, have an ever growing role in optimising terrestrial planning and are increasingly being sought as experts on a myriad of emerging global issues, such as microplastics, forced migration, globalisation and sustainable consumption. These are just some of many examples where Geographers in Ireland are having global impact. The undermining of the importance of Geography in the School curriculum may compromise this in the future. Geography plays an essential role in the evolution of societies, their ideas, places and environments and this geographical training is vital for Irish students in an ever-changing Europe. It is vitally important that Geography be reinstated as a core subject on the Junior Certificate curriculum.

Yours sincerely,

Dr PÁDRAIG CARMODY, Trinity College Dublin; Prof

JACKY CROKE, University College Dublin

Dr KIERAN HICKEY, University College Cork

Prof GERRY KEARNS, Maynooth University

Dr KEVIN LYNCH, NUI Galway

Prof Des McCAFFERTY, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick