

WHAT IS PISA?

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment of the skills and knowledge of 15-year-olds. PISA is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Participating countries work together to produce a student assessment that is valid, relevant and authentic.

The PISA assessment is carried out in three-yearly cycles and assesses skills in three areas: science, reading and mathematics.

The first cycle, in which the main focus was on reading, took place in 2000. In 2003, the main focus was on mathematics. In 2006, it is on science.

The assessment domains are defined in a framework document. The framework describes content, processes and contexts of each domain.

In each cycle, nationally representative samples of students are assessed in each country.

WHY IS PISA IMPORTANT?

PISA provides information on important public policy issues such as:

- How Irish students perform on key domains (e.g. mathematics, reading and science) relative to students in other countries.
- The extent to which the Irish education system is successful in preparing young adults for full participation in society.
- The nature and extent of associations between school and student factors and achievement outcomes.
- Students' access to, and usage of, computers.

Previous international assessments have concentrated on curricular knowledge. PISA is different in that it aims to assess students' performance on "real-life" tasks that are considered important for their future lives.

Because PISA 2006 is the third PISA assessment, it will also be possible to report changes in achievement since 2000.

THE PISA 2006 ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed in their schools. The assessment will be administered by trained test administrators. Students will be asked to complete the following tasks:

- The PISA 2006 test* which is a written assessment that examines student achievement in science, mathematics and reading, and includes some questions about student attitudes to, and interest in, science. *Duration: approximately 2 hours.*
- The PISA Student Questionnaire* which asks students about their backgrounds, engagement in science in school and outside of school, attitudes to the environment, learning strategies, educational and occupational aspirations, and familiarity with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). *Duration: approximately 40 minutes.*

Principals of participating schools will be asked to complete a short *School Questionnaire* about school resources, management, staffing and climate, particularly as they relate to science instruction.

Teachers of Junior Certificate science in participating schools will be asked to complete a *Teacher Questionnaire* concerning instructional practices and the implementation of the revised Junior Certificate science syllabus. This is a nationally developed questionnaire.

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT PISA 2006?

Science will be the major focus of the 2006 assessment, allowing an in-depth examination of students' achievements across a wider range of content areas than was possible in either 2000 or 2003.

PISA 2006 will offer a second opportunity to examine changes in achievement in mathematics, reading and science since 2000, allowing for more confident interpretations about trends to be drawn.

PISA 2006 coincides with the first examination of the revised Junior Certificate science syllabus in Ireland and will be particularly useful in aiding the exploration of issues surrounding this syllabus. To this end, a detailed investigation of the revised syllabus compared to PISA is

planned. It is also planned to seek teachers' views on matters relating to implementation of the syllabus.

The inclusion of attitudinal items in the test booklets alongside the test items represents a novel way of assessing attitudes to science. These are designed to assess student interest in science and support for scientific research.

COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN PISA 2006

56 countries/regions are expected to participate in PISA 2006 (all 30 OECD countries and 26 "partner" countries):

Argentina*	Indonesia*	Romania*
Australia	Ireland	Russian Federation*
Austria	Israel*	Serbia and Montenegro
Azerbaijan*	Italy	Slovak Republic
Belgium	Japan	Slovenia*
Brazil*	Jordan*	Spain
Canada	Korea	Sweden
Chile*	Kyrgyzstan*	Switzerland
Colombia*	Latvia*	Taipei-China*
Croatia*	Liechtenstein*	Thailand*
Czech Republic	Lithuania*	Tunisia*
Denmark	Luxembourg	Turkey
Estonia*	Macao-China*	United Kingdom
Finland	Mexico	United States
France	Netherlands	Uruguay*
Germany	New Zealand	* Partner countries
Greece	Norway	
Hong Kong-China*	Poland	
Hungary	Portugal	
Iceland	Qatar*	

WHO IS IMPLEMENTING PISA?

PISA is implemented on behalf of the OECD by an international consortium of institutions. The lead institution is the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Key decisions are made by the PISA Governing Board. Each OECD country has a voting representative on this Board.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PISA IN IRELAND

In Ireland, the Educational Research Centre (ERC) and the Department of Education and Science are jointly implementing the project. Implementation is guided by a National Advisory Committee. Current members are:

Joreen McMorris	(Department of Education and Science, Committee Chair)
Gerry Shiel	(Irish Representative on the PISA Governing Board, ERC)
Eemer Eivers	(PISA National Project Manager, ERC)
Declan Kennedy	(University College, Cork)
Bill Lynch	(National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)
Tom Mullins	(Education Department, University College, Cork)
Elizabeth Oldham	(Education Department, Trinity College, Dublin)
Alison Graham	(Science Department, Sandford Park School, Dublin)
Nick Sofroniou	(ERC)
Rachel Perkins	(ERC)
Carly Cheevers	(ERC)

Other partners are kept informed of PISA activities through regular correspondence.

To prepare for the 2006 cycle, a field trial was conducted in each participating country in 2005. In Ireland this involved 35 schools and 1600 students. The purpose of the field trial was to refine survey instruments and procedures.

The main assessment will take place in Ireland in March 2006, and will involve approximately 5,500 students in a representative sample of approximately 160 schools. Both schools and students will be randomly selected.

PUBLICATION OF PISA 2006 RESULTS

The OECD plans to release an international report on PISA 2006 in December 2007. A national report for Ireland will be released at the same time as the international one.

All information collected in the survey is treated as confidential. Results are reported as summary statistics for large groups of schools and students only, and it will not be possible to identify individual schools or students from any published material.

Reports for PISA 2000 and PISA 2003 are available at <http://www.erc.ie/pisa/> (national reports) and at <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/> (OECD reports).

PISA 2003 PUBLICATIONS

Education for life: The achievements of 15-year-olds in Ireland in the second cycle of PISA – summary report presents a summary of key findings, conclusions and implications of the outcomes of the PISA 2003 assessment in the Irish context. It is available for download as an Acrobat document from <http://www.erc.ie/pisa/>.

The Second National PISA Symposium was organised to reflect on the outcomes of PISA 2003 in Ireland, in terms of their implication for practice, research and policy development. Brochure and copies of presentations are available for download from <http://www.erc.ie/pisa/>.

Learning for tomorrow's world - First results from PISA 2003 is the OECD international report on initial results of PISA 2003. Its summary report and underlying data are available at <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>.

Problem solving for tomorrow's world - First measures of cross-curricular skills from PISA 2003 is produced by the OECD and provides information on the international outcomes of PISA 2003 in problem solving literacy. Its summary report and underlying data are available at <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>.

The PISA 2003 assessment framework: Mathematics, reading, science and problem solving knowledge and skills describes the conceptual framework for PISA 2003 and gives a description of the assessment domains.

All OECD publications can be ordered online at <http://new.sourceoecd.org>.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON PISA

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<http://www.erc.ie/pisa/>

<http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>

Information Brochure

PISA 2006

OECD Programme for
International Student Assessment

Implementation in Ireland



OECD
PISA



Educational Research Centre
Foras Taighde ar Oideacha