



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curraim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Draft Leaving Certificate Physical Education

For consultation

February 2025

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Senior cycle

Senior cycle aims to educate the whole person and contribute to human flourishing. Students' experiences throughout senior cycle enrich their intellectual, social and personal development and their overall health and wellbeing. Senior cycle has 8 guiding principles.

Senior Cycle Guiding Principles	
Wellbeing and relationships	Choice and flexibility
Inclusive education and diversity	Continuity and transitions
Challenge, engagement and creativity	Participation and citizenship
Learning to learn, learning for life	Learning environments and partnerships

These principles are a touchstone for schools and other educational settings, as they design their senior cycle. Senior cycle consists of an optional Transition Year, followed by a two-year course of subjects and modules. Building on junior cycle, learning happens in schools, communities, educational settings, and other sites, where students' increasing independence is recognised. Relationships with teachers are established on a more mature footing and students take more responsibility for their learning.

Senior cycle provides a curriculum which challenges students to aim for the highest level of educational achievement, commensurate with their individual aptitudes and abilities. During senior cycle, students have opportunities to grapple with social, environmental, economic, and technological challenges and to deepen their understanding of human rights, social justice, equity, diversity and sustainability. Students are supported to make informed choices as they choose different pathways through senior cycle and every student has opportunities to experience the joy and satisfaction of reaching significant milestones in their education. Senior cycle should establish firm foundations for students to transition to further, adult and higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment, and participate meaningfully in society, the economy and adult life.

The educational experience in senior cycle should be inclusive of every student, respond to their learning strengths and needs, and celebrate, value, and respect diversity. Students vary in their family and cultural backgrounds, languages, age, ethnic status, beliefs, gender, and sexual identity as well as their strengths, needs, interests, aptitudes and prior knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. Every student's identity should be celebrated, respected, and responded to throughout their time in senior cycle.

At a practical level, senior cycle is supported by enhanced professional development; the involvement of teachers, students, parents, school leaders and other stakeholders; resources; research; clear communication; policy coherence; and a shared vision of what senior cycle seeks to achieve for our young people as they prepare to embark on their adult lives. It is brought to life in schools and other educational settings through:

- effective curriculum planning, development, organisation, reflection and evaluation
- teaching and learning approaches that motivate students and enable them to improve
- a school culture that respects students and promotes a love of learning.

Rationale

Leaving Certificate Physical Education (PE) develops the student's capacity to participate in physical education and physical activity in a confident and informed way. In Leaving Certificate Physical Education, students have an opportunity to study physical education for certification. The specification is designed to appeal to students who have an interest in and a commitment to participation and performance in physical activity. Leaving Certificate Physical Education develops the student's capacity to become an informed, skilled, self-directed and reflective performer in physical education and physical activity in senior cycle and in their future life.

The emphasis is on providing students with integrated learning experiences where there is a balance between developing personal performance in selected physical activities and deepening their understanding of the theoretical perspectives that impact on performance and participation in physical activity. These perspectives include learning in the humanities, social sciences and life sciences.

Teaching and learning in physical education supports students in becoming physically educated young people. Students strive to improve their performance in selected physical activities. They learn to apply knowledge and understanding about physical activity to inform how they prepare for, participate and perform in physical activity. Through participation and performance in physical activity, students learn about being personally effective as individual performers but also as part of a team or group. They develop different social skills and competencies as they work in collaboration with others towards a common goal.

Students learn about the importance of physical activity as part of a fulfilling and healthy lifestyle. They examine the factors which influence their own and others' participation in physical activity. They discuss different experiences of physical activity, from recreational participation through to the pursuit of excellence and the value of each experience for health and wellbeing. In physical education, there are many opportunities for students to work as individuals, in groups and in teams where they can develop a deeper understanding of the concepts of fairness and personal and social responsibility. While performance in physical activity is a central part of students' learning in physical education, students are encouraged to undertake roles other than that of performer. In particular, students are encouraged to undertake leadership and coaching roles as part of their learning in physical education.

In physical education, the term physical activity is understood to include all forms of physical activity on a continuum where participation in physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle is at one end and competing to win is at the other end. Students experience physical education as a concurrent process of learning in, through and about physical activity.

Aim

Leaving Certificate Physical Education develops the student's capacity to become an informed, skilled, self-directed and reflective physical activity participant through practical application of knowledge and skills.

Leaving Certificate Physical Education develops students':

- performance in physical activity
- ability to reflect on performance in physical activity
- knowledge and understanding of the factors which influence performance and participation in physical activity
- appreciation of the benefits of physical activity for lifelong health and wellbeing
- capacity to undertake different roles in physical activities
- understanding of the principles underlying ethical participation in physical activity
- awareness of the cultural significance of physical activity and sport in Ireland

Continuity and Progression

Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle Physical Education focuses on developing a physically literate young person in relation to knowledge, understanding, skills and values to facilitate informed, confident and competent participation in physical activity and a commitment to lifelong engagement.

Wellbeing is an area of learning in junior cycle and Physical Education is one of the three pillars of Wellbeing. In Junior Cycle PE students learn how to become a confident and competent participant in physical activity and are motivated to be more physically active. They are also provided with opportunities to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and that of others, while understanding the importance of fair play, working with others, inclusion and safety.

Beyond Senior Cycle

The study of Leaving Certificate PE provides students with an understanding of the benefits of being physically active throughout their lives. It promotes sustained engagement and enjoyment in physical activity as a participant, supporter or coach.

It can lead to many exciting and rewarding careers and builds an excellent foundation for students interested in sport and physical activity, enabling students to participate in the world of work, further education and training. Leaving Certificate PE provides students with a foundation for a wide range of careers in sport and recreation.

Student learning in senior cycle

Student learning in senior cycle consists of everything students learn within all of the subjects and modules they engage with and everything students learn which spans and overlaps across all of their senior cycle experiences. The overarching goal is for each student to emerge from senior cycle more enriched, more engaged and more competent as a human being than they were when they commenced senior cycle.

For clarity, the learning which spans across all of their senior cycle experiences is outlined under the heading 'key competencies'. The learning which occurs within a specific subject or module is outlined under the heading 'strands and learning outcomes'. However, it is vital to recognise that key competencies and subject or module learning are developed in an integrated way. By design, key competencies are integrated across the rationale, aims,

learning outcomes and assessment sections of specifications. In practice, key competencies are developed by students in schools via the pedagogies teachers use and the environment they develop in their classrooms and within their school. Subjects can help students to develop their key competencies; and key competencies can enhance and enable deeper subject learning. When this integration occurs, students stand to benefit

- during and throughout their senior cycle
- as they transition to diverse futures in further, adult and higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment, and
- in their adult lives as they establish and sustain relationships with a wide range of people in their lives and participate meaningfully in society.

When teachers and students make links between the teaching methods students are experiencing, the competencies they are developing and the ways in which these competencies can deepen their subject specific learning, students become more aware of the myriad ways in which their experiences across senior cycle are contributing towards their holistic development as human beings.

Key competencies

Key competencies is an umbrella term which refers to the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students develop in an integrated way during senior cycle.



Figure 1 The components of key competencies and their desired impact

The knowledge which is specific to this subject is outlined below under 'strands of study and learning outcomes'. The epistemic knowledge which spans across subjects and modules is incorporated into the key competencies.

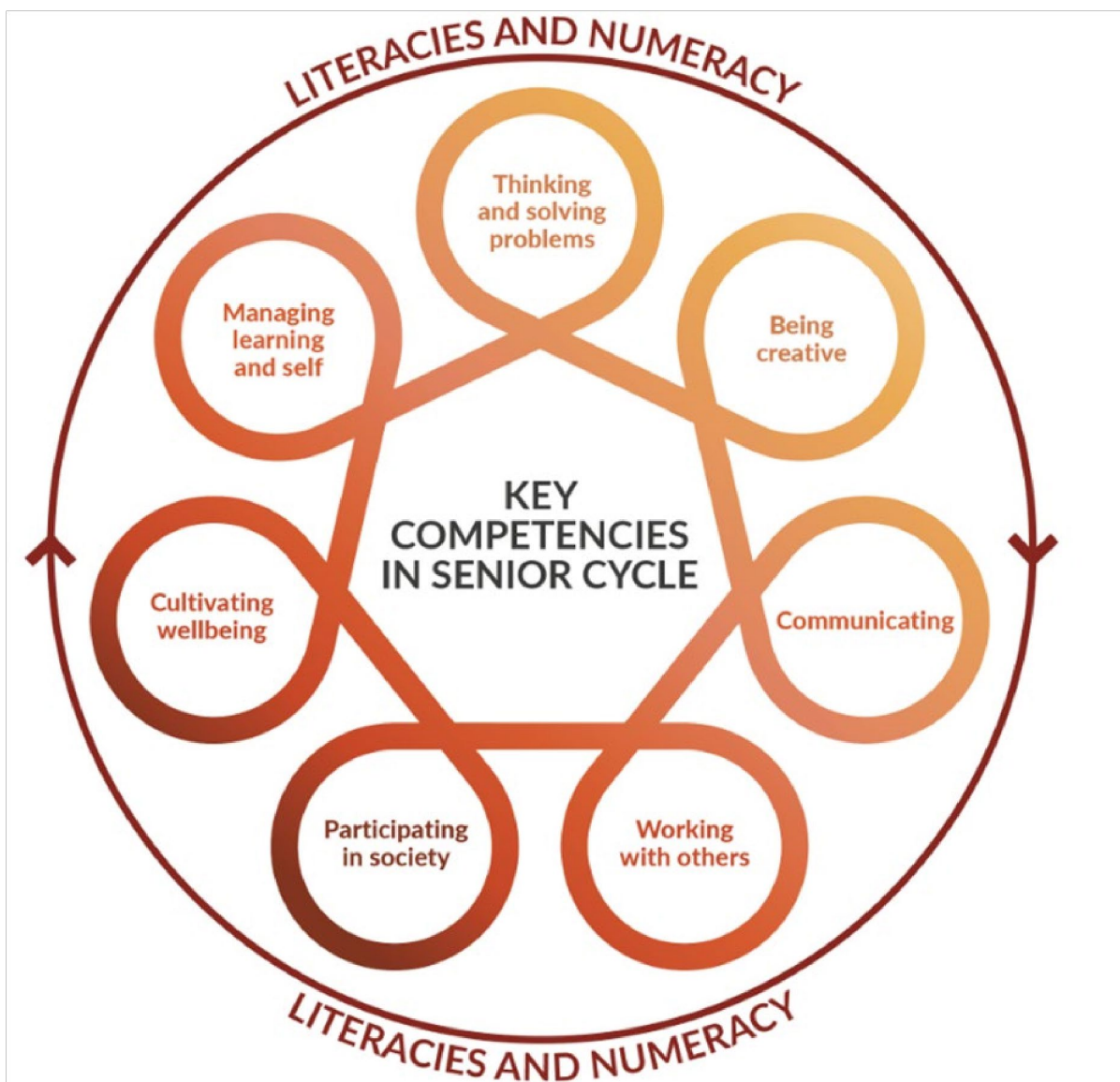


Figure 2 Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy.

These competencies are linked and can be combined; can improve students' overall learning; can help students and teachers to make meaningful connections between and across different areas of learning; and are important across the curriculum.

The development of students' literacies and numeracy contributes to the development of competencies and vice-versa. Key competencies are supported when students' literacies and numeracy are well developed and they can make good use of various tools, including technologies, to support their learning.

The key competencies come to life through the learning experiences and pedagogies teachers choose and through students' responses to them. Students can and should be helped to develop their key competencies irrespective of their past or present background,

circumstances or experiences and should have many opportunities to make their key competencies visible. Further detail in relation to key competencies is available at <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-redevelopment/student-key-competencies/>

The key competencies can be developed in Physical Education in a range of ways.

Through Leaving Certificate Physical Education students develop competencies related to **thinking and solving problems** by engaging in activities that require them to evaluate and adapt their strategies. They learn to assess what techniques are effective and adjust their approaches accordingly. This involves making choices about movement, tactics, and teamwork, to enhance understanding and performance. This competency is further developed through the adaptation of activities, rules and equipment depending on the needs and abilities of themselves and others. Through dialogue with peers, reflective practice, feedback, and repeated attempts, students refine their thinking processes and improve their problem-solving skills in a dynamic and active setting.

Students foster creativity by exploring ways to approach and improve movement and physical activity engagement. Imagining innovative tactics and exploring with various styles to address challenges, students are **being creative**. Embracing creativity allows students to navigate elements of performance and devise unique approaches that benefit the student in pursuit of personal optimum performance in physical activity.

Fundamental to physical education is the ability to work cooperatively by engaging in activities that require teamwork, communication, and collaboration toward shared goals. These experiences deepen students' understanding of how to navigate group dynamics, manage emotions, and appreciate diverse perspectives and abilities within teams. The key competencies of **working with others** and **communicating** are developed as students practice inclusivity, resolve conflicts, and negotiate solutions, fostering respect for each person's individual contributions. Through collaborative challenges and group problem-solving, students enhance both their social-emotional skills and their capacity to succeed in diverse team environments. Students appreciate the importance of rules and engage with ethical considerations as part of their physical activity participation.

Through physical education, students cultivate their overall **wellbeing** by engaging in activities that enhance their physical health, build resilience, and foster a sense of purpose and

belonging. Physical education provides opportunities for students to realise their abilities, set and achieve personal and team goals, and manage life's challenges through teamwork, problem-solving, and perseverance. By learning how to care for their physical and emotional health, students gain the skills to cope with setbacks and seek support when needed. Additionally, they explore how social, economic, and cultural factors influence wellbeing, enabling them to **participate in society** and to contribute to their own and others' health in positive, meaningful ways.

In their engagement with Leaving Certificate Physical Education students develop self-management skills by setting personal goals, reflecting on their progress, and understanding their strengths and areas for growth. Through structured practice and feedback, they learn strategies to improve performance, make informed decisions, and take initiative in their learning. By managing their resources and time effectively, students gain confidence in **managing learning and self** for the pursuit of both physical and personal development, students set goals to plan for improvement. This autonomy not only enhances their abilities but also supports their growth as proactive, resilient students who can apply these skills beyond physical education.

Strands of study and learning outcomes

The Leaving Certificate Physical Education specification is designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time. It sets out the learning in three strands as identified in Figure 3. This learning is experienced through the physical activity areas shown in Figure 4.

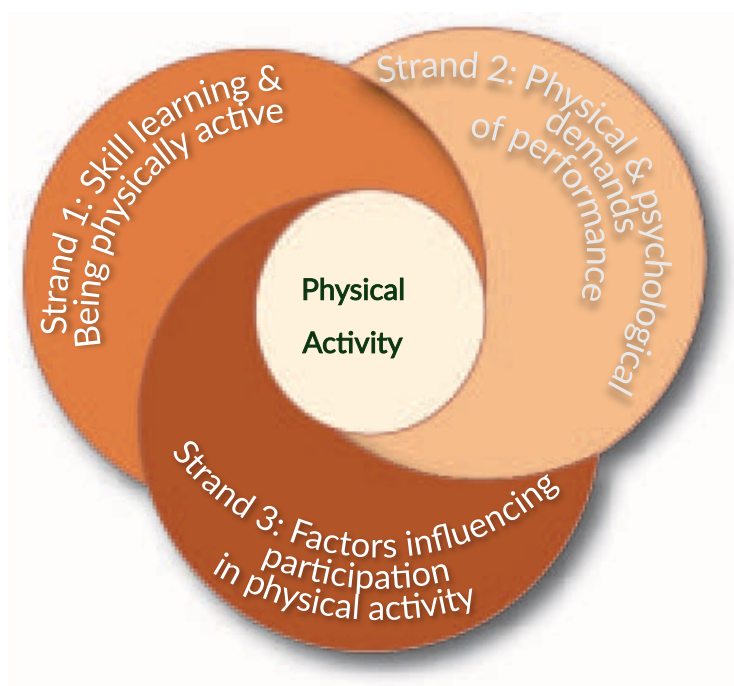


Figure 3: Specification strands

An overview of each strand is provided below. The right-hand column contains learning outcomes which describe the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning. The left-hand column outlines specific areas that students learn about. Taken together, these provide clarity and coherence with the other sections of the specification. To support student and teacher understanding of the learning outcomes, Appendix 1 sets out a glossary of Action Verbs.

Learning outcomes should be achievable relative to students' individual aptitudes and abilities. Learning outcomes promote teaching and learning processes that develop students' knowledge, skills, values and dispositions incrementally, enabling them to apply their key competencies to different situations as they progress. Students studying at both Ordinary level and Higher level will critically engage with Physical Education, but the context, information and results arising from that engagement will be different.

Physical Activity Areas

Students' physically active participation is central to teaching and learning in Leaving Certificate Physical Education. To enable this to happen, students learn about the different theoretical perspectives through their participation in physical activities. These activities are selected from seven distinct physical activity areas (see Figure 4). Selection of these activities is based on the principles of student choice, ability, equity, experience and manageability. Personal exercise and fitness is an integral part of preparing to perform effectively in every physical activity area and is therefore integral to the seven physical activities listed, and should be studied as part of the physical activity areas selected. Students must experience a broad and balanced range of physical activities to achieve the aim of Leaving Certificate Physical Education. Therefore, they must engage with a minimum of 5 of the activity areas. Careful consideration is encouraged when choosing physical activities for each class group, activities must be accessible for students of all abilities within the cohort of students studying LCPE and therefore adaptations and extensions to learning are some of the important considerations necessary.



Figure 4: The physical activity areas

Strand 1 - Skill learning & being physically active

This strand of learning focuses on the processes and principles underpinning skill learning, performance, and participation in physical activity. It examines the stages of learning, factors that influence development of movement competency, and strategies for effective practice, fostering both understanding and application. Emphasis is placed on analysing and improving performance, recognising the characteristics of skills, and exploring the distinctions between innate abilities and learned skills. It integrates aesthetic and artistic dimensions of movement, encouraging creative expression through physical activity. The strand considers the role of physical activity across life stages and addresses inclusivity, access, and strategies for promoting participation, ensuring a holistic approach to understanding and engaging in physical movement and performance.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<ul style="list-style-type: none">stages including beginner, intermediate, advanced	1. describe the stages of skill learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">factors including feedback, practice and practice types such as whole, part, variable, fixed, massed, distributed, random, blocked	2. explain factors influencing skill learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">principles such as variety, progressive, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time, exciting, challenging, recorded	3. evaluate the principles of effective practice 4. design effective practice sessions and schedules for skill learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">characteristics such as kinaesthetic awareness, anticipation,	5. describe the characteristics of a skilled performance

consistency, accuracy in movement pattern/technique	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biomechanical analysis including the use of planes and axes of movement, use of levers • the application of Newtons laws: 1st Law of inertia, 2nd law of acceleration, 3rd law of action/reaction • skill analysis checklists, key coaching points, video analysis software and model performers 	6. analyse the performance of skills in the context of personal performance and that of another's performance including a critical analysis for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motor skills, classification of skills including gross, fine, open, closed, discrete, serial, continuous, internally paced, externally paced 	7. discuss the difference between skill and ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aesthetic and artistic criteria of different physical activities • methods for analysing choreography • creation and participation in a group performance • the opportunities and challenges of individual versus group performances • style, skills, concepts, performance, theme, prescribed music & equipment 	8. appraise and compare aesthetic and artistic criteria in movement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • function and role of cardiovascular/respiratory systems to inform planning and training • measuring/monitoring responses 	9. examine the body's response to physical activity participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stages include infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood participating in physical activity • benefits of physical activity at different stages including: physical health, mental health, social, cultural, economic, environmental 	10. assess physical activity participation across the life stages

Strand 2: Physical and psychological demands of performance

This strand explores the physical and psychological demands in achieving optimal physical activity performance. It explores the components of fitness, principles of training, and recovery strategies, emphasising the need for structured and informed approaches to training design and periodisation. The psychological focuses on factors influencing practice and performance, methods of analysis, and strategies to foster mental preparedness and resilience. By addressing nutrition, hydration, and energy systems, the strand underscores the physiological foundations of performance, while examining the roles of the muscular and skeletal systems in movement. It explores the importance of tailored feedback, planning, and support structures in achieving peak performance. The strand takes a critical look at the structures and provisions for high-performance sport.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• components of health-related fitness and performance related fitness• relevance of fitness components to a range of different physical activities• fitness test battery for particular health and performance related fitness demands of a physical activity• validity and reliability protocols for fitness testing• training methods including: continuous, interval, fartlek, circuit, resistance, plyometrics, methods of stretching, core stability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. examine the components of fitness in terms of physical activity performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• principles of training, including readiness, specificity, progression, overload, rest, recovery, training thresholds (aerobic and anaerobic), reversibility, tedium• FITT (Frequency, Intensity, Time, Type of activity) formula application to improve fitness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. apply effective principles of training to enhance physical activity performance through planning training sessions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> programme design using fitness test data 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recovery strategies, overtraining role and application of periodisation incorporate recovery and periodisation into training program design 	3. discuss recovery strategies and apply principles of periodisation in training programme design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> methods such as, self-assessment tools, observational methods, interview techniques, questionnaires factors include confidence, anxiety, motivation and concentration 	4. analyse psychological preparedness in relation to factors that impact practice and performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the benefits and drawbacks of a range of strategies to enhance psychological factors including: goal setting self-talk; thought stopping; visualisation; relaxation; performance routines 	5. evaluate strategies to enhance psychological factors before, during and after participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using and applying data from testing of psychological factors including; confidence, concentration, motivation, arousal, and suitable strategies for the identified psychological factors 	6. design a personal action plan underpinned by psychological principles to support a positive psychological disposition before and during and after physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different types of feedback and their importance including:- internal, external, knowledge of results, knowledge of performance, concurrent ,terminal, general, specific, frontloading, debriefing 	7. evaluate different types of feedback in enhancing physical activity performance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply feedback methods to support performance 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance related nutritional needs – macronutrients and micro nutrients • timing of nutrition to optimise performance and recovery • nutritional plans for performance • sports supplements – the role, benefits, and challenges of sports supplements such as caffeine, creatine, nitrate, beta-alanine, sodium bicarbonate for improving performance 	8. examine the role of nutrition and hydration in supporting physical performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATP-PC (a lactic) system; anaerobic lactic system; aerobic system • duration, intensity, fuel source, by products and type of physical activity 	9. analyse the role and relative contribution of the human body energy systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prime mover muscle groups and bones, joints and joint actions of the body including the functions of the muscular and skeletal systems with specific reference to movement 	10. discuss the role of the muscular and skeletal systems in human movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factors impacting performance • performance analysis • setting performance goals • improvement plan based on data gathered • programme effectiveness • communication 	11. analyse factors in planning for optimum performance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathways to high performance physical activity including: • financial support through the Sport Ireland High Performance Funding Programme • player development programmes in underage sport • the role of bodies such as Sport Ireland, individual sport National Governing Bodies • national provision and supports Comparison across frameworks – Irish Olympic Committee, Special Olympics Ireland and Paralympics Ireland • impact of support systems – athlete development, performance outcomes in different sporting contexts • provision and support for community engagement in sport 	<p>12. analyse the provision and support for high performance in sport in Ireland</p>
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Strand 3: Factors influencing participation in physical activity

This strand focuses on the broader context of physical activity and performance, emphasising safe practices and the effective organisation of activities. It examines the application of strategies, tactics, and compositional elements across various physical activities, while also addressing the multifaceted demands on officials, coaches, and choreographers. Ethical considerations in physical activity, including fair play and the regulation of performance-enhancing drugs and injury prevention are central themes, promoting integrity and accountability. The strand explores the commercial and societal dimensions of physical activity, investigating the roles of sponsorship, endorsements, mass participation events, and media influence. It explores the impact of technological advancements on physical activity and highlights the opportunities they present for innovation and enterprise, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of sport and physical activity.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• rules and regulations – gameplay, scoring and conduct standards• safety regulations – risk management and emergency protocols• applying rules and regulations to promote a positive experience• the role of warm up and cool down in all practice and performance situations including injury prevention• safe use and maintenance of sports attire, facilities and equipment	1. examine safe practice approaches to performance and the organisation of physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• structures, strategies, tactics and compositional elements such as to outperform opponents, control situations or be creative	2. apply structures, strategies, tactics and compositional elements in a range of physical activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• characteristics of effective official• communication style• conflict management strategies	3. describe the demands of officiating in terms of knowledge, personal fitness, psychological readiness, personal attire and equipment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, personal and technical knowledge of a physical activity • considerations necessary to guide a performer in the pursuit of optimum performance • improvement plan for a performer • strategies to guide a performer's effective use of ongoing reflection about practice and performance • personal performance in the role of coach/ choreographer 	4. investigate the demands on coaches/choreographers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principles of ethical practice in sport; the importance of integrity, respect, fairness and equity • role of the code of ethics in physical activities from the perspective of participants, parents, spectators, coaches and club officials • link between sportsmanship, gamesmanship and engagement in physical activity and sport 	5. examine the principles of ethical practice sport and key factors impacting on ethical practice in sport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different categories of performance-enhancing drugs including affect • implications for the performer and the sport of using performance-enhancing drugs • Irish anti-doping rules • therapeutic use exemption in relation to the use of medicines in sport 	6. discuss performance-enhancing drugs in sport and doping regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of endorsements and sponsorship on participation in the sport and on athletes • messages from sport-related advertising and their implications 	7. assess the influence of sponsorship, endorsements, and merchandising in sport and on physical activity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • code of practice for sponsorship 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reason for the growth of such events • impact of such events on participation in physical activity • impact on sport related tourism • opportunities and challenges 	8. examine the growth of mass participation sporting events and the opportunities for business and enterprise they provide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact on – performers, coaches/choreographers, officials and spectators • optimising performance • personal technology use including - attire, apps, wearables, training tools, assistive technology • performance analysis – data collection, feedback and improvement strategies • future trends 	9. investigate the impact of technological developments in physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media coverage analysis of elite performance and mass participation events • effect of media coverage on participation levels in physical activity; including different gender groups • effect of media representations of body image on participation levels • characteristics of physical activity that give it spectator and media appeal • effect of media coverage on spectator behaviour and the impact this has on sport • strategies for improved coverage 	10. evaluate the role of the media on physical activity and sport

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barriers and supports to participation • measuring/tracking physical activity participation 	11. examine factors that influence access to, inclusion, participation and performance in physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender stereotyping; the characteristics of hegemony; role of media in maintaining gender stereotypes • disability including; adapted physical activity • strategies to address imbalances in levels of participation across different groups • perceptions of physical activity • discrimination and prejudice • different approaches to physical activity promotion from a national and international perspective • strategies to enhance pathways between school and community based physical activity and sport • role of governance in sport in physical activity provision and promotion 	12. evaluate strategies related to physical activity promotion

Teaching for student learning

Active participation in physical activity is central to teaching and learning in physical education. Learning outcomes in physical education require students to set personal performance goals in the selected physical activities and to implement a plan to achieve these goals in order to strive for their optimum performance. Students are engaged in their own learning, work individually and with others and reflect on their learning in, through and about physical activity.

A wide range of practical and inquiry-based teaching and learning activities are appropriate in physical education. These include students participating in different physical activities, applying theoretical knowledge and understanding to practical performance, undertaking roles in addition to player/participant, engaging in class discussions and debate, using multimedia approaches, using simulations, examining case studies, solving problems related to physical activity and reflecting on their own and others' performance and participation in physical activity. These approaches to learning are flexible in nature. They enable students to arrive at different solutions to similar challenges that they face in the pursuit of optimum performance.

The use of assessment for learning approaches in physical education can ensure that students are clear about the learning intentions and the criteria for success. The use of constructive, focused feedback can also support students' willingness to engage fully with new learning situations, promoting resilience, critical thinking and problem-solving ability when progress is slow and demanding. Feedback is an important mechanism to re-energise students' engagement with ongoing practices thereby helping the student to achieve their performance goals.

Students are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that will enable them to become more independent in their learning and to develop a lifelong commitment to physical activity.

Students experience physical education as a concurrent process of learning in, through and about physical activity.

Learning in physical activity refers to experiential outcomes where students are actively engaged in physical activity. Students apply their knowledge and understanding of theoretical

perspectives to their pursuit of physical activity learning performance goals. Students engage in ongoing reflection about their learning and progress in physical activity.

Learning through physical activity refers to instrumental outcomes where physical activity is the medium through which students learn. The focus is not primarily on the outcome or performance but rather on students' personal, physical, social and intellectual learning journey through their engagement in the physical activity.

Learning about physical activity refers to enquiring about how different theoretical perspectives influence performance in physical activity the human body's ability to be physically active. Students make informed decisions about planning and learning what they need to achieve their performance goals. They also learn to question physical activity practices at local, national, and international levels.

Assessment

Assessment in senior cycle involves gathering, interpreting, using and reporting information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and is used for a variety of purposes. It is used to determine the appropriate route for students through a differentiated curriculum, to identify specific areas of strength or difficulty for a given student and to test and certify achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping students and teachers to identify next steps in the teaching and learning process.

As well as varied teaching strategies, varied assessment strategies will support student learning and provide information to teachers and students that can be used as feedback so that teaching and learning activities can be modified in ways that best suit individual students. By setting appropriate and engaging tasks, asking questions and giving feedback that promotes student autonomy, assessment will support learning and promote progression, support the development of student key competencies and summarise achievement.

Assessment for certification

Assessment for certification is based on the rationale, aims and learning outcomes of this specification. There are two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component (AAC). The written examination will be at higher and

ordinary level. The AAC will be based on a brief. Each component will be set and examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

In the written examination, Leaving Certificate Physical Education will be assessed at two levels, Higher and Ordinary (Table 1). Examination questions will require students to demonstrate learning appropriate to each level. Differentiation at the point of assessment will also be achieved through the stimulus material used, and the extent of the structured support provided for examination students at different levels.

Table 1 Overview of assessment for certification

Assessment component	Weighting	Level
Physical Education Project	50%	Common Brief
Written examination	50%	Higher and Ordinary level

Additional assessment component: Physical Education Project

The AAC for LCPE provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding and application of physical education knowledge and skills described in the learning outcomes across the specification. This assessment is intended to integrate with and support ongoing learning, motivating students to engage deeply with the processes of planning, performing, and improving in physical activities while engaging with issues affecting physical activity.

This AAC allows students to engage with physical activity and follow a structured process that includes planning, engaging, performing, evaluating and communicating on and in physical activity. The AAC is designed to give students practical opportunities to apply the key competencies they have developed through their engagement with LCPE such as exploring data, information, patterns, trends, connections and relationships to gain a deeper understanding of their physical activity engagement and performance; making informed decisions and evaluating the short and long term results and consequences; being open to feedback and able to use it to improve their learning; being aware of and

looking after their physical wellbeing; making choices and developing personal learning goals; working with others; and applying their learning to improve physical activity engagement.

Students will engage in physical activity guided by physical activities and themes as set out in the brief provided by the SEC, which will be issued annually by the SEC and will set out the requirements for the students. Upon completion of the AAC students will submit their report to the SEC for marking, in a format specified by the SEC.¹.

Descriptors of quality for additional assessment component

The Descriptors of Quality in Table 2 are intended to provide insights into the broad expectations for students completing the AAC.

In particular, the PE project, through practical application with a physical activity requires students to:

- plan
- engage
- perform
- evaluate
- communicate.

¹ It is envisioned that the AAC will take up to 25 hours to complete. A separate document, Guidelines to support the Leaving Certificate Physical Education AAC, gives guidance on a range of matters related to the organisation, implementation, and oversight of the project

Table 2: Descriptors of quality: Physical Education Project

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Planning	Demonstrate a high level of engagement with planning throughout their AAC and effectively evaluate how their planning contributes to the completion of the AAC; consider multiple perspectives and sources to inform their planning. Their goals and action plans are well-justified, appropriate, and effectively implemented	Engage well with planning throughout their AAC and evaluate how their planning contributes to the completion of their AAC; consider a variety of perspectives and sources to inform their planning. Their goals and action plans are mostly clear and appropriately chosen and implemented.	Limited engagement with planning for their AAC and their evaluation of how their planning contributes to their AAC is minimal; consider few perspectives and limited sources to inform their planning. Their goals and action plans lack clarity and appropriateness.
Physical activity engagement	Demonstrate a high level of commitment to physical activity engagement; consistently apply feedback in pursuit of making progress. Evaluate an extensive range of methods to enhance performance. Demonstrate a high level of safe and ethical practice	Show moderate commitment to physical activity engagement; apply feedback effectively in pursuit of making progress. Apply a good range of methods to improve. Demonstrate a moderate level of safe and ethical practice	Show moderate commitment to physical activity engagement; apply feedback effectively in pursuit of making progress. Apply a range of methods to improve performance although the appraisal of the methods is limited. Safe and ethical practice is limited.
Performance	Execute skills and strategies at a high level, displaying excellent proficiency and understanding. Adapt well to the demands of the performance setting	Execute skills and strategies at a moderate level, showing good proficiency and understanding. Perform with some adaptability.	Execute skills and strategies at a basic level, showing limited proficiency. Display minimal adaptability or awareness during performance.

Evaluation	<p>Demonstrate capacity to evaluate and reflect on how their performance through their engagement with the AAC. Relate clearly their performance to broader concepts in physical education and identify areas of growth and achievable goals for improvement, drawing effectively from their findings or results.</p> <p>Generate a very clear and comprehensive conclusion, including a critical evaluation. Make relevant reference to the relevance of findings or results</p>	<p>Demonstrate some capacity to evaluate and reflect on how their performance through their engagement with the AAC.</p> <p>Reflect on the experience in a meaningful way, identifying key areas of growth. Some connections made to broader concepts in physical Education. Set effective goals for improvement. generate a clear and extensive conclusion including an evaluation. Make reference to the relevance of findings or result</p>	<p>Limited evidence of evaluation or reflection on how their performance through their engagement with the AAC.</p> <p>Engage in limited reflection, making few connections between experience and broader concepts. Struggle to identify areas of growth or set effective goals for improvement.</p> <p>Generate an unclear and limited conclusion, including a limited evaluation.</p> <p>Limited reference to the relevance of findings or result</p>
Communication	<p>Communicate throughout in a clear and comprehensive way, using consistent and coherent language throughout. Employ physical education terminology appropriately and relevantly. Present clear and appropriate data and information and analysis using a range of relevant graphics as appropriate.</p>	<p>Broadly communicate in a clear and extensive way, for the most part, using moderately consistent and coherent language. Employ some physical education terminology appropriately and relevantly. Present adequate data and information and analysis; using relevant graphics as appropriate.</p>	<p>Largely unclear and limited in their communication, using inconsistent and incoherent language. Seldom employ physical education terminology or do so in a way that is inappropriate and irrelevant. Present limited data and information and analysis, limited or no use of graphics.</p>

Written examination

The written examination will consist of a range of question types. The senior cycle key competencies (Figure 2) are embedded in the learning outcomes and will be assessed in the context of the learning outcomes. The written examination paper will include a selection of questions that will assess, appropriate to each level:

- the learning described in the specification
- application of learning through physical activity engagement.

Reasonable accommodations

This Leaving Certificate Physical Education specification requires that students engage with the nature of the subject on an ongoing basis throughout the course. The assessment for certification in Leaving Certificate Physical Education involves a written examination worth 50% of the available marks and an additional component worth 50%. In this context, the scheme of Reasonable Accommodations, operated by the State Examinations Commission (SEC), is designed to assist students who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know to an examiner because of a physical, visual, sensory, hearing, or learning difficulty. The scheme assists such students to demonstrate what they know and can do, without compromising the integrity of the assessment. The focus of the scheme is on removing barriers to access, while retaining the need to assess the same underlying knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions as are assessed for all other students and to apply the same standards of achievement as apply to all other students. The Commission makes every effort when implementing this scheme to accommodate individual assessment needs through these accommodations.

There are circumstances in which the requirement to demonstrate certain areas of learning when students are being assessed for certification can be waived or exempted, provided that this does not compromise the overall integrity of the assessment. However, some of the areas of learning in a subject specification cannot be waived because they are core to the subject specification. In Leaving Certificate Physical Education these areas include physical activity engagement and performance. This is because the skills developed in these components are so fundamental and integral to the discipline of physical education.

More detailed information about the scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate Examinations, including the accommodations available and the circumstances in which they may apply, is available from the State Examinations Commission's Reasonable Accommodations Section.

Before deciding to study Leaving Certificate Physical Education, students, in consultation with their school and parents/guardians should review the learning outcomes of this specification and the details of the assessment arrangements. They should carefully consider whether or not they can achieve the learning outcomes, or whether they may have a special educational need that may prevent them from demonstrating their achievement of the outcomes, even after reasonable accommodations have been applied. It is essential that if a school believes that a student may not be in a position to engage fully with the assessment for certification arrangements, they contact the State Examinations Commission.

Leaving Certificate Grading

Leaving Certificate Physical Education will be graded using an 8-point grading scale. The highest grade is a Grade 1; the lowest grade is a Grade 8. The highest seven grades (1-7) divide the marks range 100% to 30% into seven equal grade bands 10% wide, with a grade 8 being awarded for percentage marks of less than 30%. The grades at Higher level and Ordinary level are distinguished by prefixing the grade with H or O respectively, giving H1-H8 at Higher level, and O1-O8 at Ordinary level.

Table 3: Leaving Certificate Grading

Grade	% marks
H1/O1	90 - 100
H2/O2	80 < 90
H3/O3	70 < 80
H4/O4	60 < 70
H5/O5	50 < 60
H6/O6	40 < 50
H7/O7	30 < 40
H8/O8	< 30

Appendix 1

This glossary is designed to clarify the learning outcomes used in the specification. Each action verb is described in terms of what the learner should be able to do once they have achieved the learning outcome

Action verb	Students should be able to
Acknowledge (sources)	expressly recognise sources of information
Analyse	study or examine something in detail, break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure; identify parts and relationships, and to interpret information to reach conclusions
Apply	select and use information and/or knowledge and understanding to explain a given situation or real circumstances
Appraise	evaluate, judge or consider text or a piece of work
Appreciate	recognise the meaning, value or importance of
Assess	judge, evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, quality or value of something
Calculate	obtain a numerical answer showing the relevant stages in the working
Classify	group things based on common characteristics
Collaborate	work jointly with another or others on an activity or project
Compare	give an account of the similarities and (or) differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout
Create	bring something into existence; to cause something to happen as a result of one's actions
Critique	give an informed analysis and assessment of
Deduce	reach a conclusion from the information given
Demonstrate	prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, illustrating with examples or practical application

Derive	arrive at a statement or formula through a process of logical deduction; manipulate a mathematical relationship to give a new equation or relationship
Describe	give a detailed account of the main points of the topic, using words, diagrams and/or images
Devise	plan, develop or create something by careful thought
Discuss	offer a considered, balanced review that includes a range of arguments, perspectives, factors or hypotheses, grounded in appropriate evidence
Evaluate (data/information)	collect and examine data to make judgments and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a conclusion in an inquiry or investigation; identify the limitations of data in conclusions; make judgments about the ideas, solutions or methods
Evaluate (ethical judgement)	collect and examine evidence to make judgments and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a judgement; identify the limitations of evidence in conclusions; make judgments about the ideas, solutions or methods
Examine	look closely at arguments, data, information and/or stories in order to uncover origins, assumptions, perspectives, trends and/or relationships
Explain	give a detailed account supported by reasons or causes
Facilitate	guide a dialogue so that it stays on course and reaches the agreed-upon goals
Identify	recognise patterns, facts, or details; provide an answer from a number of possibilities; recognise and state briefly a distinguishing fact or feature
Illustrate	use examples to describe something
Infer	use the results of an investigation based on a premise; read beyond what has been literally expressed
Interpret (data)	use knowledge and understanding to recognise trends and draw conclusions from given information
Interpret (non-data)	express ideas about the intended meaning of
Investigate	observe, study or examine in detail in order to establish facts, and reach new insights and/or conclusions
Justify	give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion
List	provide a number of points, or facts, with no elaboration

Model	represent an idea, structure, process or system through a variety of means such as words, diagrams, equations, physical models or simulations; use models to describe, explain, make predictions and solve problems, recognising that all models have limitations
Outline	give the main points, restricting to essential pieces of information
Predict	give an expected result of an event; explain a new event based on observations or information using logical connections between pieces of information
Prove	use a sequence of logical steps to obtain the required result
Recognise (data/information)	identify facts, characteristics or concepts that are critical (relevant/appropriate) to the understanding of a situation, event, process or phenomenon
Reflect	give thoughtful consideration to actions, experiences, values and learning in order to gain new insights and make meaning
Research	inquire specifically, through collecting, organizing and analysing evidence in order to draw conclusions
Solve	find an answer through reasoning
Summarise	state briefly the main points of information
Synthesise	combine different ideas to create new or enhanced understanding
Understand	have and apply a well-organized body of knowledge
Verify	give evidence to support the truth of a statement

