NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Draft Leaving Certificate Geography

For consultation

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Contents

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

Geography is the study of the Earth, its peoples and the interactions between them. It is a multifaceted science and humanities discipline which uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore the physical and human world.

The study of Leaving Certificate Geography equips students with relevant and transferrable knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. Through their study, students become more geographically literate and are enabled to understand the interactions, interconnections and implications of decisions that shape our natural and human environments. They are supported in analysing and evaluating economic, environmental and social challenges and responses to these challenges.

In studying Leaving Certificate Geography, students engage with key concepts. They learn to relate their personal geographical experiences to a variety of scales. Students are empowered to actively engage with and apply their learning, through the development of geographical thinking and skills. They pose geographical questions, plan, implement and evaluate geographical inquiries. They analyse, synthesise and communicate real world data and information.

Geography supports the development of skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. These skills enable students to come to evidence-based decisions and judgements, and to identify and apply creative and sustainable responses to complex geographical challenges. Geography helps students develop an informed worldview, equips them to make ethical, future-orientated decisions and enables them to better navigate our increasingly globalised world.

Aims

The aim of Leaving Certificate Geography is to develop students' understanding of the Earth and its people, and their interest in and appreciation of the real-world significance of geography. Students are supported to think like geographers and to apply geographical skills, to better understand the world and to contribute to shaping a more sustainable future from a critically informed perspective.

More specifically, Leaving Certificate Geography enables students to:

- identify, analyse and critically evaluate the interactions between physical and human processes
- develop, use and apply geographical thinking and inquiry skills
- develop understanding of concepts that are key to the discipline of geography
- understand the complexity of forces that impact at a variety of scales
- engage with data and information from a range of reliable sources
- use evidence-based decision-making and judgements to explore creative and sustainable responses to economic, environmental and social challenges.

Continuity and progression

Leaving Certificate Geography builds on the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that stem from the learners' early childhood education through to the junior cycle curriculum. Although Leaving Certificate Geography provides continuity and progression in geographical education, it is not necessary to have studied the subject at junior cycle in advance of studying Leaving Certificate Geography.

Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle Geography aims to enable students to become geographically literate, to stimulate their curiosity and create opportunities to engage with their local environment and wider world. Students develop knowledge, skills, values and behaviours that enable them to explore the physical world, human activities, how they interact with the world, and to recognise interconnections, interactions and implications. They are empowered to explore and understand the world through a geographical lens and are encouraged to make valuable and ethical contributions to their communities, localities and countries through the development of transferrable skills, including critical thinking, collaboration and communication.

Students' study of geography is complemented by the learning and experiences in other junior cycle subjects and short courses, for example in Business Studies, History, Science, and in Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE).

Beyond senior cycle

Through the study of Leaving Certificate Geography, students are better equipped to deal with daily life. They strengthen their spatial understandings and awareness, gain intercultural competence, and appreciate and benefit from their local geographies. In developing their geographical thinking, they improve their awareness and analysis of the realities of the world, from local to global levels. Through the application of their geographical skills, they are better able to realise solutions for a sustainable future.

As a subject that complements other disciplines and imparts transferrable knowledge, skills, values and dispositions, geography builds an excellent foundation for students moving into further education and training, higher education and the world of work. Leaving Certificate Geography provides students with a foundation for a wide range of exciting and rewarding careers including architecture, agricultural science, construction, data analysis, education, engineering, enterprise, environmental heritage, horticulture, politics, resource management, renewable energy, sciences, technology, tourism and urban planning.

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.

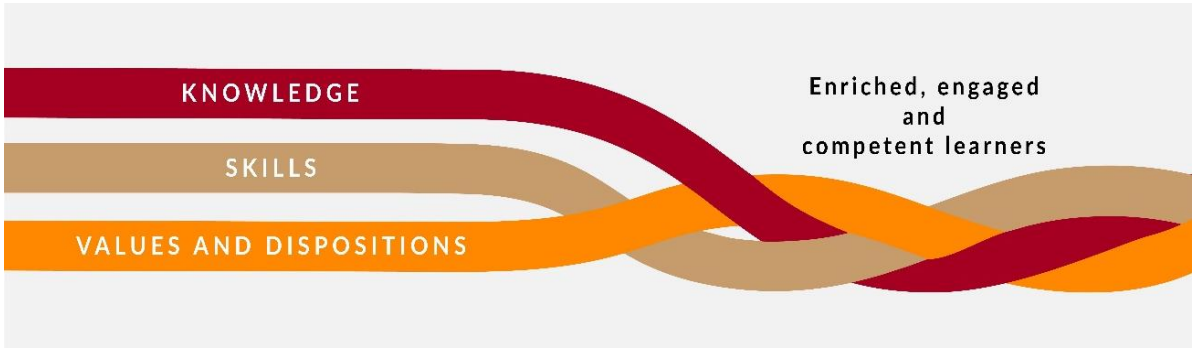

Figure 1 The components of key competencies and their desired impact

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 Leaving Certificate Geography in a range of ways.

For example, students develop competencies related to **thinking and solving problems** in their analysis of patterns, such as patterns of flooding or the distribution of climate zones. An emphasis on the collection, interpretation, analysis and synthesis of geographical data enhances the young person's ability to identify trends or develop new ideas. Through issue management, students learn to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges, such as urban planning or conflict, and to develop responses that balance economic, environmental and social factors.

In their study of Leaving Certificate Geography, students are supported to develop the competency of **participating in society** through engagement with issues of relevance to young people, such as land-use or migration. They develop and express their own ideas based on evidence, while understanding the impact of choices. Students also develop their capacity to exercise their voice in discussions about local, regional, national and global challenges, such as those related to the physical environment, globalisation or conflict. This builds their capacity to critique and challenge the status quo, to advocate and influence the shaping of transformative responses towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

In exploring diverse topics such as geomorphology, settlement and the European Union, students deepen their understanding and capacities relating to **communicating**. Students are encouraged to analyse and interpret a wide range of geographical data and information, to ask critical questions to understand different viewpoints, emotions, values and complex geographical issues. As they engage with information in various formats, such as maps, photographs and graphs, they adapt their understanding and communication style to suit different contexts. Whether expressing their informed insights about the effects of volcanoes, debating responses to urban issues or speculating on sustainable responses to a range of geographical challenges, students practice informing, arguing and persuading effectively.

Strands of study and learning outcomes

This Leaving Certificate Geography specification is designed for a minimum of 180 hours of class contact time.

There are four strands in the Leaving Certificate Geography specification: a unifying strand, Applying geographical thinking and skills, and three contextual strands, Where we live – the physical environment, Where we live – the human environment, and How we live – the connected environment. It should be noted that students will encounter and apply the disciplinary learning outlined in the unifying strand in an integrated manner as they engage with learning in and across the three contextual strands.

Figure 3 outlines the structure of the Leaving Certificate Geography strands

- Applied geographical thinking and skills (unifying strand)
- Where we live – the physical environment (Strand 1)
- Where we live – the human environment (Strand 2)
- How we live – the connected environment (Strand 3)

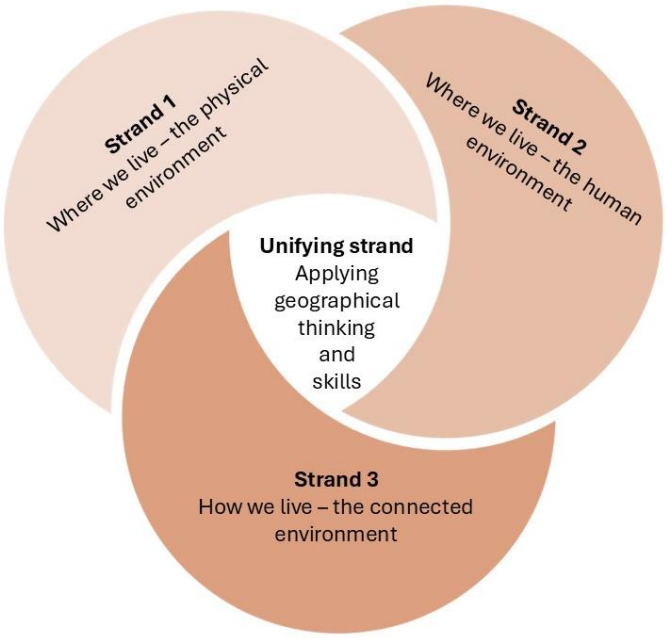

Figure 3 Leaving Certificate Geography strands.

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 geography, but the context, information and results arising from that engagement will be different.

A narrative overview of each strand is provided below, followed by a table. 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. While the learning outcomes are numbered, this is for ease of identification and does not imply a hierarchy of approach. 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. Appendix 1 sets out a glossary of action verbs used in the learning outcomes.

Applying geographical thinking and skills

Applying geographical thinking and skills is a unifying strand which extends the Junior Cycle Geography concept of Geoliteracy and the contextual elements of processes, patterns, systems and scale; geographical skills; and sustainability.

Students will encounter and apply the learning outcomes outlined in the unifying strand in an integrated manner throughout their learning in the three contextual strands: Where we live – the physical environment (Strand 1), Where we live – the human environment (Strand 2), and How we live – the connected environment (Strand 3).

The unifying strand supports students to develop their disciplinary knowledge including their understanding of the nature of geographical knowledge and how this knowledge is generated and communicated through inquiry. Through the learning outlined in the unifying strand, students will develop an understanding of the impact of geographical thinking in the real-world, and the potential contribution that geography can make to understanding and responding to economic, environmental and social challenges. They will develop their capacity to pose geographical questions, utilise geographical skills and methodologies to engage with and generate data and information; plan, carry out, evaluate and communicate geographical inquiries.

Applying geographical thinking and skills: Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<u>Geography in the real world</u> • the scope of the discipline of geography (specialisations in geography) • the importance of a geographical perspective and geographical questions (including: What is it? What is it like? Why is it there? How did it happen? What impact does it have? How should it be managed?) • the adaptability and transferability of geographical skills	U1 appreciate the nature, breadth and value of geography

• geographical thinking and skills, including those related to inquiry and geospatial technologies, in economic, environmental and social planning and decision-making	U2 recognise the application and contribution of geographical thinking and skills in the real-world
<u>Key concepts in geography</u>: • concepts including: — interactions — interconnections — implications — pattern — place — power and influence — process — scale — spatial distribution — sustainability — systems	U3 demonstrate understanding of key concepts in geography
<u>Geographical inquiry and skills</u> • desk-based and fieldwork research, including ethical, safety and sustainability considerations • geographical data and information including: — primary and secondary data — qualitative and quantitative data	U4 formulate geographical questions U5 plan and conduct real world geographical inquiries U6 research geographical data and information using appropriate methodologies U7 analyse and synthesise geographical data and information from a range of appropriate sources

— maps at a variety of scales, aerial photographs, satellite imagery and animations — graphs, charts and statistics — geospatial datasets	
• the effectiveness of geographical inquiry including the inquiry question(s) or focus, methodologies and sources	U8 evaluate the effectiveness of geographical inquiry
• communication formats including maps, graphs, charts, sketches, diagrams, statistics, geospatial datasets • ethical considerations including cultural awareness, legal requirements, appropriate citation and referencing	U9 communicate geographical understanding, results, conclusions and recommendations effectively and ethically

Strand 1: Where we live - the physical environment

Strand 1 is concerned with physical processes and systems and human interactions with these. Students will deepen their study of this content through the settings specified in the table below and through other relevant local, national and/or international settings as appropriate. Throughout their study of Strand 1, students will encounter and apply the disciplinary learning outlined in the unifying strand in an integrated manner.

In Strand 1, students build their knowledge of the processes of tectonic activity and appreciate the potential beneficial and detrimental outcomes of natural hazards. They evaluate the effectiveness of management strategies in preparing and responding to earthquakes and volcanoes. This strand also provides an opportunity for students to consider the rock cycle and human consumption of natural resources. Students will examine surface processes, developing their awareness of fluvial, coastal and glacial environments, impacts and management responses. They will deepen their understanding of weather through the study of atmosphere and the influence of the ocean on weather processes. They will explore climate zones, the influence of climate on Ireland's biome, and consider a range of sustainable responses to climate change.

Strand 1: Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<u>Tectonics</u> • plate tectonics including plates, formation of plate boundaries, plate movements, sea floor spreading, convection currents • types of plate boundaries: constructive, transform, destructive • processes including convection currents, subduction, sea floor spreading, plate formation, plate deformation and slab pull	1.1 explain plate tectonics and the processes that occur at different types of plate boundaries

• two different examples of mountain ranges, one in Ireland and one in another setting	1.2	examine the formation of mountain ranges through tectonic processes
• processes that result in volcanic activity and their resultant landforms in relevant settings for each type	1.3	analyse the processes that result in volcanic activity at constructive and destructive plate margins and at hotspots
• positive and negative impacts (hazards and benefits) of volcanic activity in one Global North and one Global South setting	1.4	investigate the socio-economic and environmental impacts of volcanic activity
• causes and effects of earthquakes including different types of plate movement in one Global North and one Global South setting	1.5	discuss the causes and effects of earthquakes
• preparation for and response to earthquakes and volcanoes in one Global North and one Global South setting	1.6	evaluate preparation for and responses to seismic activity
<u>Rock cycle</u> • processes including — endogenic (metamorphism, magma crystalisation) — exogenic (volcanic activity weathering, erosion) — sedimentation	1.7	outline the main processes involved in the rock cycle
<u>Interaction with natural resources</u> • the challenges of extraction, use and management of minerals, fossil fuels, forests and soil	1.8	examine the challenges created by the consumption of natural resources and assess sustainable responses to these challenges

• the negative environmental impact of exploitation • sustainable resource management responses including renewable resources and alternative technologies	
<u>Surface processes</u> • fluvial processes of erosion, transport and deposition	1.9 analyse fluvial processes and their impact on physical and human environments
• strategies including dam construction, flood management and one example of a nature-based strategy • one setting for each fluvial management strategy	1.10 discuss fluvial management strategies
• landforms on the Irish landscape	1.11 identify evidence of glacial and coastal processes in shaping the Irish landscape
• current and future risks, including coastal erosion and coastal flooding	1.12 examine the risk**s** of rising sea levels to human environments
• hard engineering strategies: sea walls, revetments, rip-rap, gabions, groynes • soft engineering strategies: beach nourishment, dune regeneration, managed retreat • hard and soft engineering strategies in relevant settings in Ireland	1.13 assess the impact and sustainability of hard and soft engineering strategies on the human environment

<u>Atmosphere and weather</u> • the five layers (troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere, thermosphere, exosphere) and the characteristics of each	1.14 describe the structure and characteristics of the Earth's atmosphere
• the formation of depressions (cyclones) and anticyclones: — latitude, altitude and proximity to waters — global atmospheric circulation (Coriolis effect) — high and low atmospheric pressure • the behaviour of depressions and anticyclones: — temperature — precipitation — wind	1.15 analyse how depressions and anticyclones form and behave
<u>Climate</u> • climate zones including tropical, temperate, continental, polar and arid	1.16 distinguish between climate zones with reference to setting and characteristics
• climate influences on soils, flora and fauna • the characteristics of Ireland's biome	1.17 analyse how climate influences the characteristics of the temperate rainforest biome
• impacts on physical environment including: — melting frozen landscapes (glaciers, ice caps, permafrost)	1.18 investigate the impacts of climate change on physical and human environments

— thermal expansion (ocean and atmospheric) — changes in location, frequency and intensity of extreme weather events — isostatic and eustatic adjustments • impacts on human environment: — farming practices in Ireland and one Global South setting — climate migration — health including the distribution and prevalence of disease	
• responses including: — mitigation including carbon capture and reducing greenhouse gas emissions — adaptation aimed at reducing vulnerability to climate change including early warning systems, climate resilient infrastructure, climate smart agriculture and climate risk insurance	1.19 research responses to global climate change
• the Paris Climate Agreement and one other significant international climate change related measure • the role of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	1.20 discuss the monitoring of global climate change

Strand 2: Where we live - the human environment

Strand 2 is concerned with human settlement and movement, key aspects of human geography. Students study these aspects through the settings specified in the table below and through other relevant local, national and/or international settings as appropriate. Throughout their study of Strand 2, students will encounter and apply the disciplinary learning outlined in the unifying strand in an integrated manner.

In Strand 2, students consider the influence of place on human activity, and sustainable responses to the challenges facing rural and urban communities in Ireland and elsewhere. Strand 2 also facilitates student learning about population growth and distribution, and the characteristics of the population in Ireland. Students gain awareness of the complex nature of migration, the social, economic and environmental factors affecting migration and the impacts of migration at a range of scales.

Strand 2 Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<u>Human settlement</u> • rural and urban settlements in Ireland	2.1 describe how human settlements can be defined by site, situation and function
• patterns of rural settlement including linear, dispersed, clustered • physical and human factors including soil, drainage, relief, transport and other services, proximity to other settlements	2.2 explain the factors affecting patterns of rural settlement in Ireland
• challenges including those related to the rights of nature, transport and other services • sustainable responses including local and national planning strategies, community-based initiatives	2.3 discuss sustainable responses to the challenges facing rural areas in Ireland

• factors influencing urbanisation: globalisation, employment, services, planning strategies, development plans	2.4	explain the factors affecting urbanisation
• impacts of urbanisation: urban sprawl, informal settlements, services, suburbanisation and counter-urbanisation, gentrification, zoning and land values • sustainable responses including urban planning strategies (renewal, redevelopment), ecocities and smart cities • impacts and sustainable responses in one setting in Ireland and one Global South setting	2.5	discuss sustainable responses to the impacts of urbanisation
<u>Population and migration</u> • factors including healthcare, food, conflict, culture, physical landscape, natural resources in Ireland and one Global South setting	2.6	explain the impact of different factors on population size and distribution
• population characteristics in their local setting, Ireland and one Global South setting	2.7	examine the characteristics of population structure
• policies impacting on birth rates and aging, gender equality and rural depopulation in Ireland and one Global South setting	2.8	analyse policies that impact on population change
• factors including colonial history, conflict, climate change, culture,	2.9	discuss the factors affecting international migration

demography, economics, policies and laws	
• impacts including community relations, diversity, economic contribution, employment, services and resources and remittances • impacts on Ireland as a host and donor country, including with reference to local setting	2.10 explain the impacts of migration

Strand 3: How we live – the connected environment

Strand 3 is concerned with agriculture and fisheries, tourism, globalisation and trade, development and geopolitics. Students will engage with learning in this strand through the settings specified in the table below and through other relevant local, national and/or international settings as appropriate. Through their study of Strand 3, students will encounter and apply the disciplinary learning outlined in the unifying strand in an integrated manner.

In Strand 3, students consider the importance of agriculture in Ireland, and the impact of EU policies on both agriculture and fisheries. They study tourism in Ireland and build their understanding of mass tourism. Students consider the factors influencing globalisation and the impact of globalisation on an economic activity in Ireland. They engage with models and measurement of development, and with the Government of Ireland's development assistance and cooperation programme. In their study of geopolitics, students explore water scarcity as a specific issue contributing to geopolitical tensions and encounter other examples of geopolitics in action including a territorial dispute.

Strand 3 Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
<u>Agriculture and Fisheries</u> • cooperatives, market centres and mechanisation • economic, environmental and social sustainability in Irish agriculture • changing agricultural practices including intensification, organic approaches and urban food production	3.1 examine the importance and evolving nature of agriculture in Ireland
• the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)	3.2 discuss the impact of EU policies on agriculture and fisheries in Ireland
<u>Tourism</u> • patterns and trends including visitor numbers and revenue, attractions and services	3.3 assess patterns and trends associated with tourism in Ireland

• positive and negative economic, environmental and social impacts of mass tourism in the Mediterranean • the future of mass tourism and sustainable alternatives	3.4	investigate the evolution and impacts of mass tourism
<u>Globalisation and Trade</u> • factors influencing globalisation: trading blocs, multinational corporations (MNCs), innovation and finance, information and communications technology and transport	3.5	explore the factors influencing globalisation
• factors including access to workforce, raw materials, services, markets, government trade and tax policies • impacts including the mobility of modern economic activities	3.6	investigate the factors influencing one MNC to establish a base in Ireland and assess the impact of globalisation on that MNC
<u>Development assistance and cooperation</u> • models including Protectionism, Modernisation and Sustainable Development • measures including Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Income, the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index	3.7	discuss models and measures of development
• HDI dimensions (long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living) • economic, environmental and social factors including climate change, colonial history, conflict and peace, debt, geography, community development, government policies and trade	3.8	analyse the factors that impact on HDI dimensions

• HDI dimensions and impacting factors in one Global North and one Global South setting		
• humanitarian assistance in response to one humanitarian crisis • overseas development cooperation in one Global South setting	3.9	research the Government of Ireland's humanitarian assistance and overseas development cooperation programme
<u>Geopolitics</u> • geopolitics as the interrelationship between geography, demographics, economics, environment and politics	3.10	describe the term geopolitics using examples
• opportunities and challenges presented by the four EU freedoms (free movement of goods, capital, services, and labour)	3.11	analyse the four freedoms of the European Union (EU)
• water scarcity as a cause and impact of geopolitical tensions • proposed or realised responses to water scarcity	3.12	assess water scarcity as a factor contributing to geopolitical tensions
• a territorial dispute: land, maritime or airspace • the actors involved in the chosen territorial dispute • the causes and impacts of, and proposed or realised responses to the chosen territorial dispute	3.13	investigate a territorial dispute

Teaching for student learning

In Leaving Certificate Geography, the student experience is underpinned by the learning in the unifying strand: Applying geographical thinking and skills. This means that the disciplinary knowledge, skills, values and dispositions outlined in the learning outcomes in the unifying strand will be deliberately planned for and integrated into the students' experience of learning in the three contextual strands.

The unifying strand incorporates possibilities for a wide range of learning and teaching approaches, including those that foster the development of a geographical way of looking at the world. Through these pedagogies students will be supported to see the relevance of and apply key concepts in geography, pose geographical questions, and engage in the examination and generation of geographical data and information including maps, photographs and images, graphs, charts, statistics and geospatial datasets.

Learning and teaching approaches that support students to plan, carry out, analyse and synthesise, evaluate and communicate geographical inquiries will be utilised throughout. Through effective integration of this learning across the specification, and by prioritising learning outdoors and working in the field, students will have opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts. In turn, through these practical experiences, abstract concepts will become more tangible, and students will deepen their capacity to employ geographical thinking and skills when considering geographical challenges and responses.

Students are at the centre of Leaving Certificate Geography. Beyond the integration of the learning outcomes in the unifying strand, linkages also exist within and between the three contextual strands, and these will be explored in a manner that is accessible for and relevant to all students. An emphasis on outdoor learning and fieldwork in local settings will support student access and interest in relevant and engaging geographical learning, Inclusion will also be achieved by ensuring that content is relevant to the experiences and lives of all students. The use of a variety of geographical tools and resources, including geospatial technologies, will make learning in Leaving Certificate Geography more accessible and dynamic.

Students will be encouraged to engage with geographical thinking and interrogate knowledge, to give and receive feedback and incorporate or adapt the ideas encountered. Students will be supported to access the learning appropriate to their individual and diverse needs. Levels of demand in any learning activity will differ as students come with different ideas and levels of understanding. The use of strategies such as adjusting the level of

competency required, varying the amount and the nature of teacher intervention, and varying the pace and sequence of learning will promote inclusivity.

In Leaving Certificate Geography, students will have opportunities to work individually and collaboratively, both in class and outdoors. Peer learning and assessment will enhance their critical, analytical and geographical skills alongside their interpersonal and communication skills. Ongoing and constructive teacher and peer feedback, as well as structured opportunities for reflection on learning will be woven into the learning process. Reflection will support students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset.

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 learners. By setting appropriate and engaging tasks, asking questions and giving feedback that promotes learner 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 comprising of an Applied Geography Project. The written examination will be at higher and ordinary level. The Applied Geography Project will be based on a common brief. Each component will be set and examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

In the written examination, Leaving Certificate Geography 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
Applied Geography Project	40%	Common brief
Written examination	60%	Higher and Ordinary levels

Additional assessment component: Applied Geography Project

The Applied Geography Project provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate evidence of their learning from across the specification, that is, to apply and showcase the learning set out in the unifying strand in the context of one or more of the three contextual strands. The senior cycle key competencies and geographical skills, embedded in the learning throughout Leaving Certificate Geography, will be applied through the students' engagement with the Applied Geography Project.

The Applied Geography Project is designed to naturally integrate into the flow of learning and teaching, exploiting its potential to be motivating for students.[1] Engagement with the Applied Geography Project also supports students to see the relevance of geography in their lives.

To complete the Applied Geography Project, students will conduct an inquiry in line with the contents and requirements of the SEC brief. This will involve completing research into an area related to the contents of the brief. They will plan and carry out their inquiry. They will gather and analyse data which will contribute to their learning and facilitate them to draw and communicate informed conclusions.

Applied Geography Project brief

Students complete their Applied Geography Project in response to the common brief issued by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). This brief will be published annually by the SEC. As well as setting out the specific requirements of the Applied Geography Project, the brief:

[1] It is envisaged that the AAC will take up to 20 hours to complete. Further details will be provided in the *Guidelines to support the Applied Geography Project*.

- will support students in considering areas related to the brief which they may wish to explore
- will support teachers in planning for learning and teaching
- may support students in gathering resources which they may draw upon as they complete their AAC.

Upon completion, students will produce an individual report on their Applied Geography Project in a format prescribed by the SEC.

Schools have a high degree of autonomy in planning and organising the completion of the Applied Geography Project. A separate document, *Guidelines for the Applied Geography Project*, provides support on a range of matters related to the organisation, implementation and oversight of this Additional Assessment Component.

Descriptors of quality for the additional assessment component

The descriptors below relate to the learning achieved by students in the Applied Geography Project. In particular, the project requires students to engage with:

- Planning and conducting their inquiry
- Analysis and communication
- Evaluation and reflection.

Table 2: Descriptors of quality: Applied Geography Project

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	**Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement**	**Students demonstrating a low level of achievement**
Planning and conducting their inquiry	engage thoroughly with relevant concepts. Consider and engage effectively with a wide range of data. Choose and effectively employ	have good engagement with relevant concepts. Consider and engage with a range of data. Choose and employ data collection methodologies that	have limited engagement with concepts. Consider and engage in a limited manner with a range of data. Have poorly chosen data collection

	data collection methodologies that are appropriate and justified.	are appropriate with some effectiveness.	methodologies that are employed with limited effectiveness.
Analysis and communication	engage in detailed analysis of their findings. Communicate throughout in the most clear and comprehensive way, using consistent and coherent language. Employ geographical terminology appropriately and relevantly. Present clear and appropriate data, information, and analysis, using a range of relevant graphics as appropriate.	engage in analysis of their findings. Broadly communicate in a clear and extensive way throughout, for the most part, using moderately consistent and coherent language. Employ some geographical terminology appropriately and relevantly. Present adequate data and information and analysis, using relevant graphics as appropriate.	engage in little to no analysis of their findings. Are largely unclear and limited in their communication, using inconsistent and incoherent language. Seldom employ geographical terminology or do so in a way that is inappropriate and irrelevant. Present limited data and information and analysis, with limited or no use of graphics.
Evaluation and reflection	engage in considered evaluation and reflection throughout the project and have a detailed consideration of how their findings apply in a context other than the focus of their inquiry.	engage in some evaluation and reflection throughout the project and have some consideration of how their findings apply in a context other than the focus of their inquiry.	engage in limited evaluation and reflection at times during the project and have limited consideration of how their findings apply in a context other than the focus of their inquiry.

Written examination

The written examination will consist of a range of question types. The senior cycle key competencies (Figure 2, page 6) 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 unifying strand and the three contextual strands
- the application of geographical thinking to real-world challenges and responses.

Reasonable accommodations

This Leaving Certificate Geography 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 Geography involves a written examination worth 60% of the available marks and an additional component worth 40%. 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.

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 Geography, 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 Geography 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: Glossary of action verbs

This glossary is designed to clarify the learning outcomes. 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
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
Appreciate	recognise the meaning of, have a practical understanding of
Assess	judge, evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, quality or value of something
Communicate	use appropriate formats to share meaning, exchange or present information with an audience
Conduct	organise and carry out; perform an activity
Demonstrate	prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, illustrating with examples or practical application
Describe	develop a detailed picture or image of, for example, a structure or a process, using words or diagrams where appropriate; produce a plan, simulation or model
Discuss	offer a considered, balanced review that includes a range of arguments, perspectives, factors or hypothesis, grounded in appropriate evidence
Distinguish	break down or separate concepts, characteristics or materials into parts or components, determining how the parts or components relate to one another, how they interrelate, or how the parts or components relate to an overall structure or purpose
Evaluate	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 judgements about the idea, solutions or methods
Examine	look closely at arguments, concepts, 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
Explore	observe, study, in order to establish facts

Formulate	express the relevant concept(s) or argument(s) precisely and systematically
Identify	recognise patterns, facts, or details; provide an answer from a number of possibilities; recognize and state briefly a distinguishing fact or feature
Investigate	observe, study, or make a detailed and systematic examination, in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions
Outline	give the main points; restrict to essentials
Plan	devise or project a method or a course of action
Recognise	identify facts, characteristics or concepts that are critical (relevant/appropriate) to the understanding of a situation, event, process or phenomenon
Research	inquire specifically, using involved and critical investigation
Synthesise	to draw together, in written or other form, different ideas, data, information and/or knowledge to create a new idea or deeper understanding