# Senior Cycle Learning Programmes: Level 1 and Level 2

Programme Statement

For consultation

February 2024

# 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.

# Programme Statement: Overview

The Senior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme and the Senior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme have been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as follow on programmes for students who are progressing from Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) at junior cycle. The goal of the senior cycle programmes is to prepare students for life beyond school, enabling them to be lifelong learners and to live more independently. The Level 1 and Level 2 programmes at senior cycle are personalised programmes that are tailored to the individual learning needs of the student, which is necessary to achieve the best possible outcomes for the student.

The Programme Statement aims to support teachers, educators and school management in planning and designing senior cycle programmes at Level 1 and Level 2 which are responsive to each student's profile of strengths, needs and abilities. The Programme Statement:

- provides an overview of the Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes
- outlines the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that students will develop in senior cycle
- supports the process of identifying the student whose learning profile would be best suited to accessing the Senior Cycle Level 1 and/or Level 2 Programmes
- outlines the assessment and reporting arrangements for each programme.

# Who the Learning Programmes are designed for

## Level 1

The Senior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme (SCL1LP) is designed for a distinct group of students. They are likely to have significant global developmental delay across a number of areas, including learning, communication, language and adaptive skills.

This group of students often have complex, multiple cognitive and functioning needs. They may have difficulty understanding the world around them and their place in it. They may also find expressive and receptive communication challenging. Students may display significant motor impairment, sensory impairment or complex health care needs. Some students may display one or more of these impairments as these needs are all inter-related.

Students with this level of need may be in special schools, or special classes in mainstream post-primary schools and are likely to have a formal diagnosis. Students following a SCL1LP will likely have engaged with L1LPs at junior cycle.

## Level 2

The Senior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme (SCL2LP) is designed for students whose cognitive profiles prevent them from accessing the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) programme, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA). They are likely to have moderate global developmental delay across a number of areas, including learning, communication, language and functioning skills.

Students following the SCL2LP will likely have engaged with the Level 2 Learning Programme at junior cycle. If attending a mainstream school, the student will be identified as being on the Support for Few level of the Continuum of Support (CoS).

Schools must consult with the parents/guardians and the students themselves to discuss if the SCL2LP is appropriate for them. Parents/guardians must be made aware of the academic, curricular and further education implications where the student decides to follow the SCL2LP.

The student's learning profile included in their Student Support File (SSF) will provide the collated evidence and information to indicate if they are best suited to pursue the SCL2LP.

### Student Support File

The Student Support File (SSF) is used to collate all relevant information relating to the student. It is structured to provide a complete, comprehensive and holistic picture of the student, documenting their progress, strengths, needs and interventions. It helps to ensure continuity of support for a student and will enable parental engagement in the student's learning. The SSF identifies:

- specific special educational needs (SEN)
- the student's learning profile
- the teaching and/or assistive technology resources required to support the student
- strategies and interventions to support the student.

Gathering information to identify students' strengths and needs involves the use of a broad range of formal and informal assessment approaches. Formal assessments can include standardised assessments, accessing external agencies to provide an assessment, and assessments such as those that focus on developmental and adaptive functioning skills. Informal assessments can include criterion-referenced assessments, teacher-designed assessments or any assessment that is individualised and targeted to identify a student's strengths and specific areas of need. Feedback and advice from external agencies on school-based assessments can also be sought to support the identification of the student's profile. Using a broad range of assessment approaches is necessary as the student may present with needs across a number of areas and they may be inter-related. Using the information from different sources assists with the creation of a student's profile which provides the evidence to support the decision for a student to access a SCL2LP or SCL1LP.

The short-term and long-term goals that form part of the Student Support Plan (SSP) are included in the overall SSF. The SSF is a live, workable document that is used to facilitate and support tracking of student progress and their transfer from junior cycle to the most appropriate programme for the student at senior cycle and beyond school.

Prior to making the decision that a Level 1 or Level 2 Senior Cycle Learning Programme is suitable for a specific student, schools will engage in a robust, collaborative information-gathering process, guided by the Continuum of Support Framework, to collect and collate information and documentation from the student's special education teacher, class teachers, parents and external professionals, as relevant. This information forms part of the SSF and helps ensure that there is an appropriate progression plan for the student, following completion of their junior cycle programme. This includes a plan for senior cycle, and transition beyond school, including adult services, further education and/or employment. This information is also recorded in the student's SSF.

The following questions are useful to consider when identifying the senior cycle programme most suitable to a student:

1.  Has the student completed or engaged with Level 1 or Level 2 junior cycle programmes? What other programmes, subjects or short courses has the student engaged with as part of their junior cycle education?

2.  Does the student have a formal diagnosis and/or do the student's school-based assessments consistently fall significantly below the average range of scores? School based assessments are those outlined by the Department of Education (DE) recommended list of assessments: Approved List of Assessments

3.  Have the student's class teachers provided evidence that the student has significant difficulty in accessing the learning in the curriculum at Level 3 in junior cycle, despite support being provided to the student?

4.  Has the SCL2LP and SCL1LP been explained in detail and discussed with the student and parents/guardians to consider their views?

**5.** Has the school consulted with the student and parents to capture their views on progression in senior cycle and their transition beyond school to adult services, further education or employment?

**6.** If the student has already progressed to senior cycle, have the student's class teachers provided evidence that the student cannot access the learning in the curriculum at Levels 4-5?

**7.** Have the views and wishes of the student and their parents/guardians been captured and recorded in the SSF?

**8.** Has the student and their parents/guardians given consent to engage with the SCL2LP or SCL1LP?

## Further information and supports

The Department of Education's Special Education Teacher Allocation Model: Guidelines for Post Primary Schools provide further information on the SSF and identifying needs

Further information on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary schools is available from the Department of Education and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

Information on Student Support Files, assessment of needs and access to and allocation of resources for special educational needs (SEN) is available from the National Council for Special Education.

Information on professional development and support services for teachers and school leaders is available from Oide.

# Key competencies in senior cycle

*Key competencies[1]* 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*

These competencies are linked and blend together; 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.



*Figure 2 The components of literacies and numeracy at Senior Cycle*

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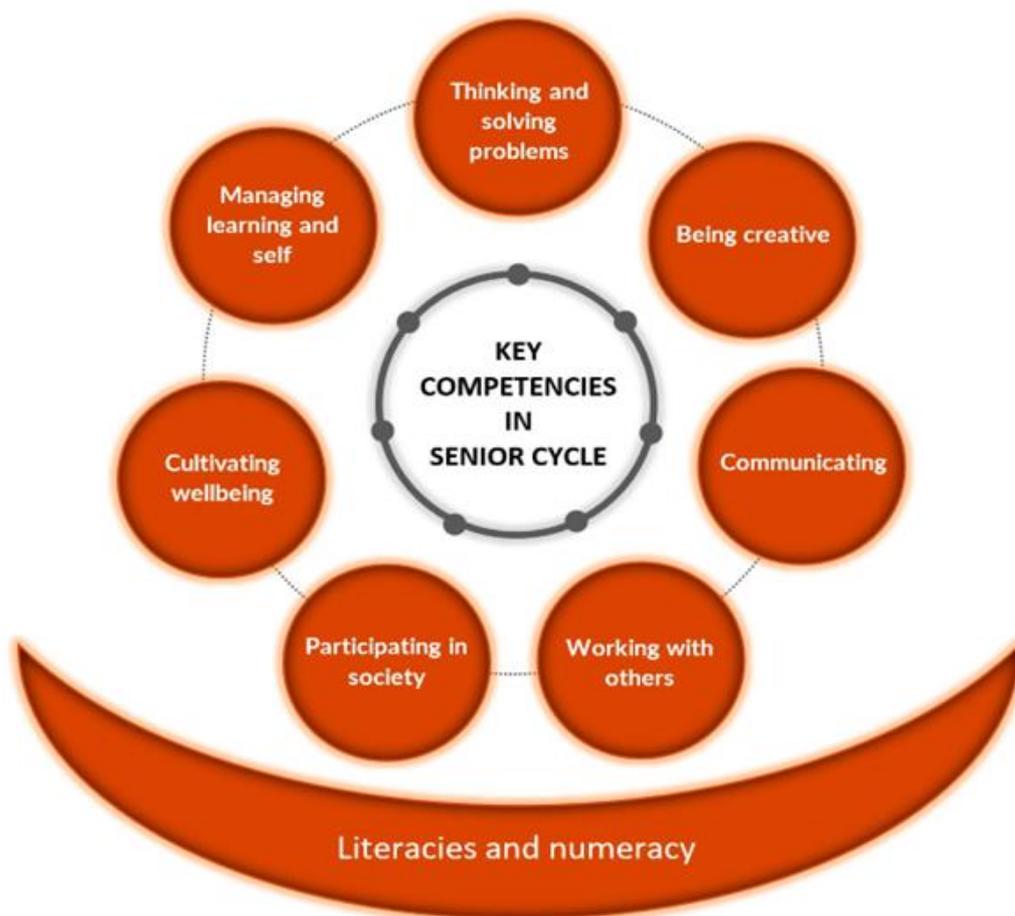
The development of students' literacies and numeracy contributes to the development of competencies and vice-versa. Key competencies are supported when students' literacies and numeracies are well developed and they can make good use of various tools, including technologies, to support their learning.

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/

# Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes: Programme requirements

The SCL1LP and SCL2LP consist of a range of curriculum areas, each designed on a modular basis. A specification is provided separately for each curriculum area and its associated modules. In the case of each module, the specification includes learning outcomes which describe the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students should be able to demonstrate after completing the module. Each specification also includes information to support the assessment of the learning outcomes.[1]

While the curriculum areas and modules are presented as self-contained units, it is intended that when used in learning programmes they will be integrated into and developed in a wide range of learning contexts. Fostering awareness in the student of connections between what they are experiencing and learning in one curriculum area and another curriculum area, or module,  is an integral element of personal growth and contributes significantly to the ultimate aims of supporting lifelong learning and independent living into adulthood.

## Level 1 Senior Cycle Learning Programmes

Across junior cycle and senior cycle, the Level 1 programmes emphasise that learning for the students in question:

- focuses on the student's communication, cognitive, life and functional skills as well as sensory needs that underpin all future learning

- must be meaningful and interesting for them, offering opportunities for them to build on what they can do as well as supporting their identified area(s) of need

- is planned through a holistic approach and takes account of the student's preferred sensory and learning channels and their ways of processing information.

There are six curriculum areas at the heart of the SCL1LP. These curriculum areas are designed on a modular basis and explicitly identify and develop the key areas of learning needed to support

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[1] Information on the assessment of the learning outcomes will be outlined in the relevant specification. It will be developed in consultation with teachers during the introductory phase of each curriculum area/module.

students during their time in school, at home, in engaging with their community and to help prepare them for their future lives.

When designing a SCL1LP for a student, teachers and school management should ensure that modules across all six curriculum areas are provided. Within the modules, teachers should ensure that the learning outcomes engaged with by the student build on their strengths, their interests, and support their identified areas of need. Not all learning outcomes will be appropriate or achievable for every student. Students can engage with learning outcomes at a level and pace commensurate to their ability and identified needs. While a student may not fully realise or achieve an individual learning outcome, they should still be encouraged and supported to make incremental progress within each module.

Each module is designed for approximately 40 - 60 hours of teaching time/class contact time. However, this is not prescriptive as schools are best placed to decide the most appropriate allocation of time per module based on a student's needs and their own school context. The table below outlines the six curriculum areas at the heart of the SCL1LP.

*Table 1: Structure of the Level 1 Learning Programme at senior cycle*

| Curriculum area | Number of Modules | Recommended hours per module | Recommended hours over two years |
|---|---|---|---|
| Numeracy | 5 | 40 | 200 |
| Communication and Literacy | 3 | 60 | 180 |
| Personal care | 3 | 60 | 180 |
| Being part of a community | 3 | 60 | 180 |
| Music and the Arts | 1 | 60 | 60 |
| Being Active | 1 | 60 | 60 |

Learning in SPHE and PE is provided to students through the curriculum areas of Personal Care and Being Active.

## Level 2 Senior Cycle Learning Programmes

There are six curriculum areas at the heart of the SCL2LP. When designing a SCL2LP for a student, teachers and school management should ensure that modules across all six curriculum areas are provided. The table below outlines the six curriculum areas of the Level 2 programme.

*Table 1: Structure of the Level 2 Learning Programme at senior cycle*

| Curriculum area | Number of Modules | Recommended hours per module | Recommended hours over two years |
|---|---|---|---|
| Numeracy | 4 | 60 | 240 |
| Communication and Literacy | 4 | 60 | 240 |
| My Life, My Finance | 2 | 60 | 120 |
| Personal Care | 1 | 60 | 60 |
| Preparation for life after school | 2 | 60 | 120 |
| Electives | 3 | 60 | 180 |

With regard to electives, options include:
- IT skills
- Cooking
- Music
- Drama
- Art
- Digital literacy
- Literature
- Active Living
- Looking after my environment
- Design for sustainability
- Special interest.

Each module is designed for approximately 60 hours of teaching time/class contact time. However, this is not prescriptive as schools are best placed to decide the most appropriate allocation of time per module based on a student's needs and their own school context.

Learning in SPHE is provided through the module on Personal Care and the Senior Cycle SPHE specification. Further information will be provided when work on the Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum is completed. Physical Education can be provided through the module on Active Living or through the Senior Cycle PE Framework. Schools may also provide a separate religious education programme in accordance with their ethos.

# Planning for the Learning Programmes

## Leadership and management

The SCL1LP and SCL2LP have been designed with sensitivity to the variety of contexts in which the student may be attending - post-primary mainstream school, special class in mainstream school or special school. Senior management in schools can support a student's holistic development by providing a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students.

The enactment of Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Programmes is supported:

- when there is active commitment and support from the whole school community
- by effective communication between management, staff, parents/guardians, students and other professionals in matters relating to the programmes
- when teachers' professional learning is promoted
- by cultivating opportunities for co-operation and involvement with the local community.

## Organising the Learning Programmes

As the learning programmes are personalised, organising the programme should revolve around the individual student The student's strengths and specific needs should be identified in consultation with parents/guardians, teachers and the student themselves, where possible. To assist in planning the student's learning programme, Figure 4 offers a schema that outlines the different aspects of the learning programme.
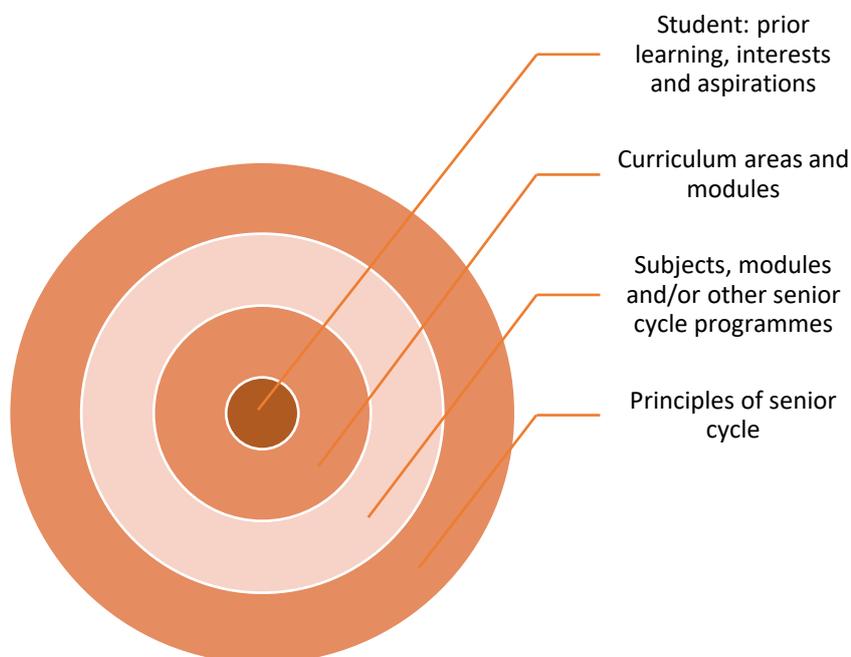


Student: prior learning, interests and aspirations

Curriculum areas and modules

Subjects, modules and/or other senior cycle programmes

Principles of senior cycle

*Figure 4; Schema for planning learning programmes at senior cycle*

In addition, the following steps will assist schools when planning a learning programme for a student following a Level 1 and Level 2 LP in senior cycle:

- Establish a baseline for learning by identifying what the student has already learned. The student's prior learning, special interests, information in the SSF, future aspirations, including transitions beyond school, need to be considered at this stage.

- Identify and select the most appropriate learning within each curriculum area and module for the student and consider opportunities for developing key competencies across these modules.

- Select the most appropriate site for learning for the student. This should include careful consideration of the range of timetabled LCE and LCA subjects and modules, as well as other school, and off-site activities, that may offer a variety of experiences through which the student can achieve the learning outcomes of their L1 or L2 learning programme.

Each programme is designed on a modular basis to support integration into, and implementation within, existing school structures and contexts, in so far as possible. Cross curricular links across the student's learning programme are also encouraged. In terms of timetabling a Level 1 or Level 2 programme for a student in senior cycle in the mainstream post primary school, it is envisaged that most of the student's learning can be supported, where appropriate for the student, within subject classes.

Schools could consider a combination of timetabling approaches to maximise flexibility and the most effective and efficient use of resources within their own context. While the students may pursue their senior cycle programme with students pursuing a curriculum at other levels, the learning occurs for this student commensurate to their own ability. While collaboration and consultation with the class teacher is essential, the special education teaching (SET) class should remain, in so far as possible, within the remit of addressing the student's individual barrier to their learning and their identified needs.

There is no single approach to timetabling which will address every context. School autonomy is encouraged as each school has a unique cohort of students with their own strengths and needs. Some students may have physical, medical as well as cognitive needs. If this is the case, these needs will be prioritised when the school is planning the student's learning programme. There are other timetabling considerations such as Guidance, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE) and Religious Education (as appropriate).

It may not be possible to complete some modules in the SCL1LP and SCL2LP over one year, in which case, the module may extend over two years.

Work experience is an important element of the SCL2LP as it supports some students on their progression pathways after senior cycle. Work experience is encouraged for students but is most beneficial when it is appropriate and meaningful for the student needs, interests and ambitions.

# Teaching and Learning

Students should be given opportunities to demonstrate how learning acquired in modules can be linked to prior learning, and to other modules, to reinforce and progress all learning. However, these opportunities may require varying degrees of scaffolding as each student's engagement will be dependent upon the activity and their individual social, communicative and cognitive skills.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. When planning for teaching and learning each teacher should establish the student's prior knowledge and understanding of the module, identify the learning outcomes the student should try to achieve and what approaches can enable the student to progress their learning. Ongoing assessment can help the teacher to establish how well the student progresses in their learning.

Engagement with learning activities designed to achieve a learning outcome(s) will vary from student to student. Initially, some students may not respond, but through scaffolding, modification and at times, repetition, students can be supported to improve their response to the learning activities. Progress can be complex and not always linear. Students may present different reactions in different contexts and at different times. If a student is engaging with the Level 1 programme, they may be preverbal, and may use eye pointing, vocalisations, gestures or visual supports to communicate. The SSF for the student will be of utmost relevance here as the SSF will have outlined the students' social, communication and cognitive skills. Also, the targets within the SSP may be achievable via the learning programme and the school's daily activities.

Classroom activities and tasks that relate to real world experiences and/or draw on concrete physical demonstrations of real-world scenarios can promote, progress and reinforce students' understanding and learning. The use of concrete manipulatives, materials and role play, where appropriate, is also encouraged.

Teachers can use the classroom, the whole school environment, the student's home and the wider community as sites of teaching, learning and assessment.

Additional considerations when planning for teaching and learning include:

- Identifying opportunities to focus on developing the student's understanding of the world around them, including social, communication and life skills.
- Providing the student with opportunities to use digital technology can further support student learning.
- Identifying opportunities to incorporate areas and interests that motivate the student to learn.
- Providing the student with opportunities to use digital technology can enhance student learning.

# Progression continuum for ongoing assessment

The modules and learning outcomes in the SCL1LP and SCL2LP are designed so that each student can progress their social interactions, their communicative interactions and their cognitive skills commensurate to their own ability.

It is helpful to consider a student's learning being on a continuum and happening over time and that learning is more than an episodic event. To support the teacher in identifying if and to what extent the student is making progress across the modules and learning outcomes, the progression continuum is provided to support the teacher. Movement within the progression continuum may take longer and progress may be more variable depending on the student's strengths and needs. To allow for progression at different rates, students should not be expected to reach outcomes by a predetermined point in time.

The progression continuum tables (see Table 4 for Level 1 and Table 5 for Level 2) indicate where the student's progress is in relation to the learning outcomes. The progression continuum may be used to support teaching, learning and ongoing assessment in the student's daily activities.

## Level 1 Progression continuum

| Attend | Student attends and is present at the activity or event. |
|---|---|
| Apply | Student shows an awareness to, or recognition of, the activity/event including a fleeting focus. |
| Attention | Student pays inconsistent and often brief attention to the activity/event. |
| Acknowledgement | Student begins to respond to, or acknowledge the activity/event, often inconsistently and the response is appropriate to the student. |
| Engagement | Student shows more consistent attention to activities/events. |
| Involvement | Student begins to share, take turns, show enjoyment of the activity/event, express choice. |
| Anticipation | Student begins to anticipate familiar activities/events. |
| Action | Student joins in, gestures, vocalises on activity and others, appropriate to the student's form of communication. |

*Table 4: L1SCLP Progression continuum*

The student may also show progress through:
- higher levels of enjoyment of the activity
- increased use of senses; from nearby senses such as tactile to more distant senses such as visual or auditory senses
- increased use of movement such as body language right through to the use of visuals.

Progress can also be shown by movement. Students may progress from showing resistance through movement to enjoying their interactions, such as:
- a reduction in intervention, support or reinforcement
- when a student demonstrates the achievement more than once
- when a student combines skills or uses skills across contexts

- when a student decides not to respond, having previously done so, is a sign of progression in itself.

**Level 2 Progression continuum**

| Engagement | The student is at an acquiring stage where they are beginning to engage with the learning outcome. |
|---|---|
| Advanced Engagement | Through repetition and support, the student can complete the learning outcome. |
| Competency | The student can achieve the learning outcome independently on several occasions. |
| Advanced Competency | The student is maintaining their level of achievement with the learning outcome. They can achieve the learning outcome even after a break or change.<br>They have achieved mastery in the learning outcome. |
| Proficiency | Student can apply their learning in different contexts, scenarios, with different stimuli and people. |
| Expertise | Student will adapt their learning emerging from a learning outcome to understand or problem solve in new contexts and scenarios. |

*Table 5:  SCL2LP Progression continuum*

# Communication with parents and guardians

Parents/guardians are key partners in supporting a student to successfully engage with their learning programme. Therefore, it is important to ensure that parents/guardians and students are directly involved in the decision-making process of a student pursuing a SCL1LP or SCL2LP.

When the decision is made for a student to pursue a SCL1LP or SCL2LP, it is equally important to establish and maintain constructive relationships with parents/guardians as a means of supporting a student's learning and wellbeing.

Providing parents/guardians and students with opportunities to give feedback on learning outcomes achieved within their home or in the community with their friends and family is also valuable as learning is not limited to the classroom.

# Continuity, progression and pathways

Progression and pathways will, and should, be unique to each student pursuing the Level 1 or Level 2 programmes at senior cycle. Continuity between the Level 1 and Level 2 programmes at senior cycle and the junior cycle L1LPs and L2LPs has been fostered through the design of the curriculum areas and modules.

As the student engages in senior cycle, schools should ensure that they are planning the student's individual pathway in conjunction with the student, parents/guardians and teachers. As students progress to life beyond school they may enter the world of work, further education and training or an alternative, post-school setting.

# 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 assess and certify achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping students and teachers to identify next steps in the teaching and learning process.

Assessment in the Level 1 and Level 2 senior cycle learning programmes is a dynamic form of assessment and is presented in a way that is personal to the student. Assessment will indicate and capture the reality of students' daily lives. Assessment will be an ongoing blend of summative and formative assessment. Home and community are also considered as sources of authentic, vital and rich assessment information.

## Assessment for certification

The evidence of learning for the Level 1 and Level 2 programmes at senior cycle will be gathered in a portfolio, which will be presented for assessment for certification. The learning recognised on the certificate will be at Level 1 and/or Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The certificate will feature all modules successfully completed by the student.

Assessment Criteria are the criteria through which the student's work is assessed. These set out what the evidence should include and convey to demonstrate that the student has successfully achieved the relevant learning outcome/s.

## Gathering evidence for assessment for certification

Evidence of learning can be generated through a wide range of assessment methods and in a variety of forms. Sometimes evidence of learning can be captured by someone other than the teacher, especially when the evidence of the student's learning is being demonstrated outside the classroom. This might include a parent/guardian, a therapist, SNA or other professional working with the student. Evidence of the learning observed should be passed to the teacher.

Students may demonstrate learning in school, the school yard, on a school trip or activity, out in their community or at home. Using the Assessment Criteria teachers will be able to gauge and assess where the student is in terms of the learning outcomes.

## Student Portfolio

The evidence of learning and achievement relating to the student will be gathered on an ongoing basis to create the student's portfolio. A portfolio can be in hard copy and/or electronic form. An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of a student's work created using word processing and other multimedia presentation.

Portfolios provide students with concrete evidence of their progress and achievements, they give the teacher and student the chance to develop a comprehensive profile showing the student's achievements at senior cycle. Digital portfolios into which each student and staff member can input information about the student on a regular basis, are considered an efficient and accessible option. It would be useful to allow parents/guardians to have viewing access to the portfolio.

The portfolio may contain evidence of learning for a student that may have taken place individually or in a group or whole class setting. Evidence within a portfolio can cover a range of achievements, including practical tasks, demonstration of skills, and work placement achievements.

Types of evidence within a portfolio can include, but is not limited to:
- Photographs of work completed by the student
- Photographs or videos of interactions with teachers, SNA, peers, parents or members of the community
- Work samples- written work
- Project work both written and online
- Homework
- Charts, diagrams
- Audio recording or Video recordings
- Other multimedia elements
- Teacher diary entry.

Students may already have developed the practice of collating a portfolio as part of their junior cycle programme. The portfolio is an evolving record of the student's work which will enable the teacher to track progress. Good practices established for gathering evidence at junior cycle can be continued into senior cycle.

# Rewarding achievement

After completing the programme, students will receive a certificate/report[2] recording their achievements during their Senior Cycle Level 1 or Level 2 Learning Programme. This award consists of 16 modules. A student who successfully completes 16 modules will receive the certificate, which is awarded at Level 1 or Level 2 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Each module can be completed and certificated individually. This allows students the opportunity to build on their modules and work towards certification. It is important to note that the completion of each module is an achievement.

## Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria are the criteria through which the student's work is assessed. Teachers use Assessment Criteria, which are set out in the relevant specification for each curriculum area/module, to decide the descriptor of achievement.[3]

When using the Assessment Criteria to assess the level of student achievement in a module, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. The teacher should read the Assessment Criteria until they reach a criterion that best describes the evidence of learning of the student in the module being assessed for senior cycle certification purposes. While it should be noted that none of the criteria imply faultless achievement, evidence of work for certification should closely match the criterion for that descriptor of achievement within the Assessment Criteria. Where it is not clearly evident which criterion should apply, teachers must come to a judgment, based on the evidence from the student's work, to select the criterion that best matches the student's work overall. This 'best fit' approach allows teachers to apply the criterion that 'on balance' describes the work being assessed.

Assessment using the Assessment Criteria is similar to the ongoing assessment that occurs every day in class and, while for certification purposes, can be viewed and used as part of teaching and learning as well as for senior cycle assessment purposes.

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[2] The title of the certificate/report is to be confirmed.

[3] The Assessment Criteria for each curriculum area/module will be developed in consultation with teachers and included in the specifications for the curriculum areas/modules.

# Descriptors of Achievement

There are three potential descriptors of achievement at Level 1 and at Level 2 at senior cycle which can be awarded to students.

## Level 1

The student will be awarded with certification in the Level 1 Learning Programme at senior cycle at three potential descriptors for each module successfully completed.

| Descriptors of achievement | |
|---|---|
| Achieved | The student has demonstrated attention and an ability to attend to the learning described in this module |
| Achieved with Competence | The student has demonstrated acknowledgement, engagement and involvement with the learning in this module |
| Achieved with Distinction | The student has demonstrated anticipation and action with the learning in this module |

*Table 7: SCL1LP Descriptors of achievement*

## Level 2

The student will be awarded with certification in the Level 2 Learning Programme at senior cycle at three potential descriptors for each module successfully completed.

| Descriptors of achievement | |
|---|---|
| Achieved | The student has demonstrated engagement with the learning described in this module |
| Achieved with Competence | The student has demonstrated competency with the learning described in this module |
| Achieved with Distinction | The student has demonstrated proficiency and expertise with the learning described in this module |

*Table 8: SCL2LP Descriptors of achievement*

# Reviewing assessment and learning

Quality assurance measures will be implemented through internal and external validation.

## Internal validation

Assessment review meetings provide a means for internal validation. They enable teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments of student work against assessment criteria. The review process is centred on teachers discussing student work at structured meetings. The collaborative approach will play an important role in helping teachers to develop an understanding of standards and expectations by enabling them to reflect on the evidence of students' work and to share the learning and teaching strategies supporting that work. The objectives of the review process are to achieve:

- greater consistency of teachers' judgement

- greater alignment of judgements with expected standards

- and to assure parents/guardians and others that students are receiving appropriate recognition of their achievements in line with standards and expectations.

Further information on supports for the internal validation process will be provided during the implementation of the Learning Programmes.

## External validation

It is proposed that an external validation system will be provided to schools, which is essential to ensuring the quality and integrity of the assessment processes for certification purposes. It would be the role of the nominated agency to review the internal validation report to ensure that assessment has been undertaken in a quality assured manner, to review the students' assessments and portfolios to ensure that they have been assessed in a fair and consistent manner, and to authenticate that the descriptors awarded are in line with the Assessment Criteria.

Students will receive their qualification after an assessment and validation process. Their qualification is obtained when the nominated agency has determined that a student has achieved the learning outcomes to the given standard.

# Useful links

Government of Ireland (2000) Learning support guidelines (Dublin, Government Publications).

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999). Special Educational Needs: Curriculum Issues, Discussion paper. NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2015) Level 1 Learning Programmes: Background Paper. NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2018). Level 1 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers. NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2022). Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report. NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023). Background Paper and Brief for the development of senior cycle modules for students following Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Special Education (2022) A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Teachers, Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Educational Psychological Service (2010) A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools Resource Pack for Teachers, Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Council for Special Education.
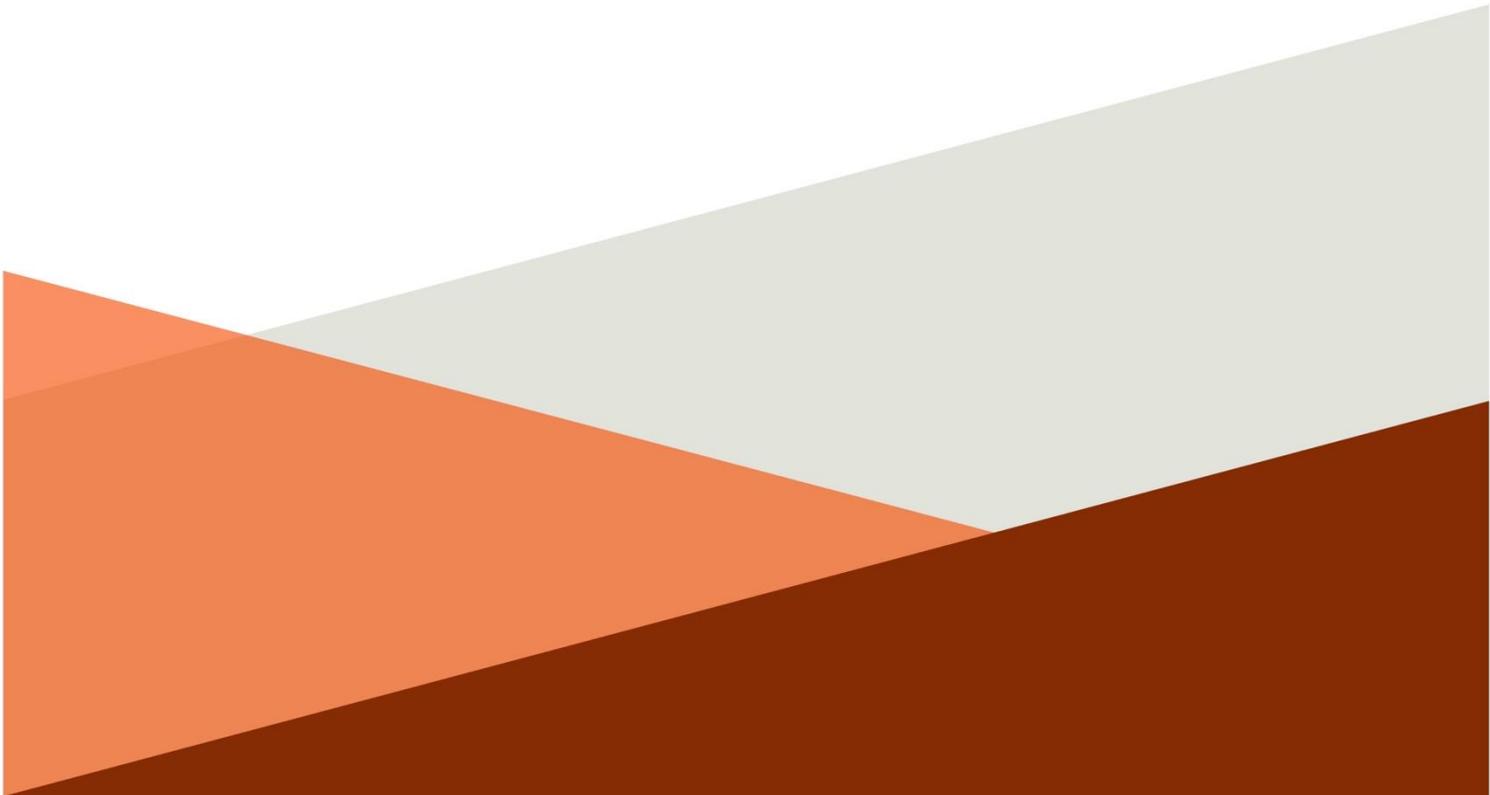
OIDE, Teacher Professional Learning.

# Appendix 1: Glossary of Action Verbs

This glossary is designed to clarify the learning outcomes of the Level 1 Learning Programme and Level 2 Learning Programme at senior cycle.

| Action verb | |
|---|---|
| Attend | Direct attention (visual/tactile/auditory) to focus on a person, object or stimulus |
| Ask | Establish/ find out |
| Calculate | Obtain a numerical answer, showing the relevant stages in the working |
| Check | Compare with the choices of others |
| Choose/Make choices | Indicate a preference from given options using any text |
| Clarify | Express and justify choices |
| Communicate | Vocalise, make gestures, move eye gaze or use of text to convey a message |
| Compare | Express the similarities and/or differences between two or more items or situations |
| Connect | Compare, express in equivalent terms and order |
| Contrast | Implies presenting two different perspectives or positions and showing the differences |
| Construct | To make or form by combining or arranging parts or elements |
| Correct | Address errors |
| Count | There are five principles of counting: one-one, stable order, cardinal, order irrelevance and abstraction. The last number in the count indicates the quantity in a set |
| Create | Be involved in the process of making something new |
| Demonstrate | Show an awareness, skill, or understanding |
| 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 |
| Develop | Progress or improve to become more mature, advanced, or elaborate |
| Distinguish | Recognise the difference between persons, context, concept or object |
| Draw | Track the movement of objects or uses concrete manipulatives to explore structure or pattern |
| Engage | Become involved in a task/process (through looking, touching, smelling, listening or tasting) |
| Employ | Respond to and to communicate with |
| Estimate | Give an approximate value. Evaluate conclusion in an inquiry or investigation; identify the limitations of data in conclusions; make judgments about ideas, solutions or methods |
| Experience | Participates in activities |

| | |
|---|---|
| Evaluate | Conclusion in an inquiry or investigation; identify the limitations of data in conclusions; make judgments about ideas, solutions or methods |
| Explore | Use the senses (in terms of touch, taste, sound, sight etc) to inquire into an item/concept/activity. The student may make new discoveries during this process |
| Express | Convey a feeling, opinion or message through any text*/reactive changes in behaviour |
| Extract | To get, pull, deduce, draw out, usually with special effort, skills or force |
| Follow | Adhere to rules/conventions specific to an environment or activity (e.g. slowing down from a run to a walking pace in a supermarket in response to the teacher giving the instruction verbally and showing a 'walking' symbol) |
| Give | To present voluntarily to or produce something, or to hand something to somebody |
| Handle | Explore an item through touching/feeling it in some way. This may involve body parts other than the student's hands (e.g. feeling fur rubbed on their arm/cheek) if necessary to support the student's physical or sensory needs |
| Identify | Locate and/or specify who or what a person, object or stimulus is |
| Indicate | Change behaviour in a way that identifies/communicates a response to an object, person, environment or stimulus using any text*. This may or may not be intentional communication (e.g. crying in response to a loud noise) |
| Increase | Show an understanding in the difference of value |
| Initiate | Start something. A student that initiates communication/interaction with someone may do so in a wide variety of ways including seeking eye contact, reaching out to the person, vocalising or touching a familiar object of reference |
| Interact | Experience having an effect and/or being affected by an exchange with another person |
| Interpret | Communicate an understanding of information, knowledge or skill. |
| Listen | Focus auditory attention on the experience of sounds. Students may not always pay visual attention to the sound source |
| Locate | To discover the exact place or position of; situate in a particular place and/or within a particular context |
| Maintain | Keep, reflect and/or review |
| Measure | Demonstrate an awareness that attributes such as length, weight, capacity and area can be measured and compared |
| Move | Change position in space with or without support |
| Name | Recognise according to their part-whole relationships |
| Order | Compare and order things by how much of a particular attribute (physical quantity) they have relative to each other. Attributes are compared and ordered using units of measurement |
| Know | To have information, understanding, or familiarity with something or someone |
| Participate | Demonstrate engagement in the learning activity |
| Plan | To devise or project a method or a course of action |
| Predict | Indicate an awareness/knowledge of what will come next based on previous learning and experiences (e.g. when the teacher reaches into a bag of props at a certain point in a familiar story, the student reacts by screwing up and moving their face in anticipation of a water spray that is used at this point of the story) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Prepare | Make something ready for use or presentation |
| Present | Promote or propose an idea; deliver or illustrate evidence; show something for others to examine |
| Provide | To give someone something they need |
| Purchase | Attend to situations where objects are exchanged for money |
| Read | Extract meaning from and demonstrate understanding of any form of text (e.g. looking at an object of reference for 'snack' then immediately turning head towards the snack cupboard expectantly) |
| Recognise | Demonstrate understanding of/familiarity with a person, context, object or stimulus from previous experiences. The student may be able to use knowledge, gained from previous experiences, to identify a person, context, object or stimulus |
| Recognise | Demonstrate an understanding of familiarity with persons, context, concept, or object |
| Record | To keep information for the future either by writing it down or storing it digitally |
| Represent | Show information in different ways |
| Refine | Improve an idea, method, system by making small changes |
| Request | Use any text⋅ to express a desire or need |
| Respond | Change behaviour in some way (movement/shift in eye gaze/respond verbally/communicate through text/demonstrate emotions etc) in reaction to something or someone |
| Round off | Estimation and rounding can help judge the reasonableness of transactions |
| Seek | Search for/look out for something. This requires the student to focus on the activity/task with intention and purpose |
| Select | Make a choice and/or make use of |
| Sequence | A list of object or actions that follow an order. Events in daily routines can be described and sequenced. A timetable is a useful display to show when things happen |
| Show | Express awareness, understanding, knowledge or feelings through actions |
| Sort | Objects and sets can be sorted according to one or more attributes |
| Understand | Interpret and apply learning in a specific context |
| Undertake | Experience and/or engage in role play activities |
| Use | Apply sensory awareness/skills/learning to a practical setting for a given function |
| Write | To make letters, words, numbers or symbols on a surface with an instrument such as a pen or pencil or digital instrument |