



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Curriculum Specification for Leaving Certificate English

For introduction to schools no earlier than September 2027.

Prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

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Senior Cycle

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

Senior Cycle Guiding Principles

Wellbeing and relationships

Inclusive education and diversity

Challenge, engagement and creativity

Learning to learn, learning for life

Choice and flexibility

Continuity and transitions

Participation and citizenship

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

Language is a vital aspect of how we experience and engage with the world. We know our world by naming it. We understand language as a structured system of communication conveyed by speech, writing or gesture. While governed by rules and conventions it is also ever evolving and adapts to new situations and contexts. Language is fundamental to learning, communication, relationships, identity, cultural awareness, empowerment and expression. We explore and understand our world through observing, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. **Leaving Certificate English** builds on the aims of Junior Cycle English and encourages the further development and expansion of the skills of communication, creativity, aesthetic appreciation and critical thinking. These skills will enable students to interpret, compose, discriminate, analyse, evaluate and respond to a range of material so that they can be independent learners who can flourish in the world beyond school in a range of contexts with fluency and confidence.

Language does not exist in a vacuum and all creative acts reflect and influence the context, culture and circumstances of its creation. The English classroom reflects the diverse society in which we live. Students will explore a variety of texts in many forms from historical, canonical texts to contemporary texts. Students will have the opportunity to explore Irish cultural contributions in varied and diverse modes. They will engage with a range of texts that give voice to varied cultural identities, representations and social perspectives. Students will see the world they live in reflected in the texts they engage with, but also, they should explore other lives, times and experiences to develop empathy and an understanding of the world around them. Through close reading, depth of engagement and creatively modelling students will explore a variety of texts. Texts in this instance encompass the wide range of written, oral, visual and digital texts encountered by students in their interaction with the world.

Students will learn how to read, create, interpret and discuss these texts and understand how language varies according to purpose, source, register, audience, context, mode and medium. Through the development of critical literacy, students will interrogate the prevailing circumstances and power structures at work in texts.

The English classroom is an inclusive space for discussion, debate and argument. Oracy in the English classroom is pivotal to the development of the skills and competencies required by students as they develop lifelong learning and prepare for active involvement in the world around them - a world where they will ask critical questions, interrogate opinions, respond and engage empathetically, create imaginatively, formulate reasoned responses and work collaboratively.

Students will have the space to develop and expand their own creativity. The integration of language and literature allows for creative exploration, modelling and reimagining of texts. Through the exploration of many forms of texts, students will be encouraged to develop their own creative voice.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening can be pleasurable activities. The joy of exploration and the pleasure of engagement with literature and language should be embedded in interactions with the specification.

Leaving Certificate English empowers students to be active agents in their own lives.

Aims

The aims of this specification are to develop in students:

- a mature and critical literacy to prepare them for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life in all contexts;
- a knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of language and literature in its many variations;
- an understanding of the power of language to capture a moment, evoke feelings, convey ideas, persuade, challenge, reason and entertain;
- an awareness of the value of literature in its diverse forms for enriching their perceptions, for enhancing their sense of cultural identities, and for creating experiences of aesthetic pleasure;
- a respect and appreciation for language used accurately and appropriately;
- creative skills and capacity to apply these skills in a variety of situations;
- skill, capacity and competency in observing, listening, reading, speaking and writing in a range of contexts and modes for varied purposes and audiences.

Continuity and progression

Leaving Certificate English builds on the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that stem from learners' early childhood education through to the junior cycle curriculum and provides continuity and progression in the development of skills, creativity and knowledge of English language and literature.

Junior Cycle

The Junior Cycle English specification aims to develop students' knowledge of language and literature, to consolidate and deepen their literacy skills and make them more self-aware as learners. It encourages students to be creative through language and to gain enjoyment and continuing personal growth from English in all its forms. It encourages students to develop control over English, using it and responding to it with purpose and effect through the interconnected literacy skills of oral language, reading and writing. Students are encouraged to engage personally with, and think critically about, an increasingly broad range of spoken, written and multimodal texts and, to develop an informed appreciation of literature through personal encounters with a variety of literary texts. Students use their literacy skills to manage information needs, and find, use, synthesise, evaluate and communicate information using a variety of media. Students also gain an understanding of the grammar and conventions of English and how they might be used to promote clear and effective communication. Students at junior cycle also develop their literacy and communication skills through their engagement with other subject areas in the development of subject specific vocabulary, engagement with oral and written presentations and carrying out research tasks.

Beyond senior cycle

The study of Leaving Certificate English serves as an excellent foundation for students transferring to the world of work, further education and training, higher education and lifelong learning. Leaving Certificate English can be of great benefit to students entering a career in journalism, law, communications and can lead to creative opportunities in the Arts such as media production, dramatist, writer, film maker, and poet. Leaving Certificate English also provides a space for cultural appreciation and development that will benefit students throughout their lives. The ability to communicate effectively, discriminate information and critically analyse enables students to become agentic adults engaged with the world.

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.

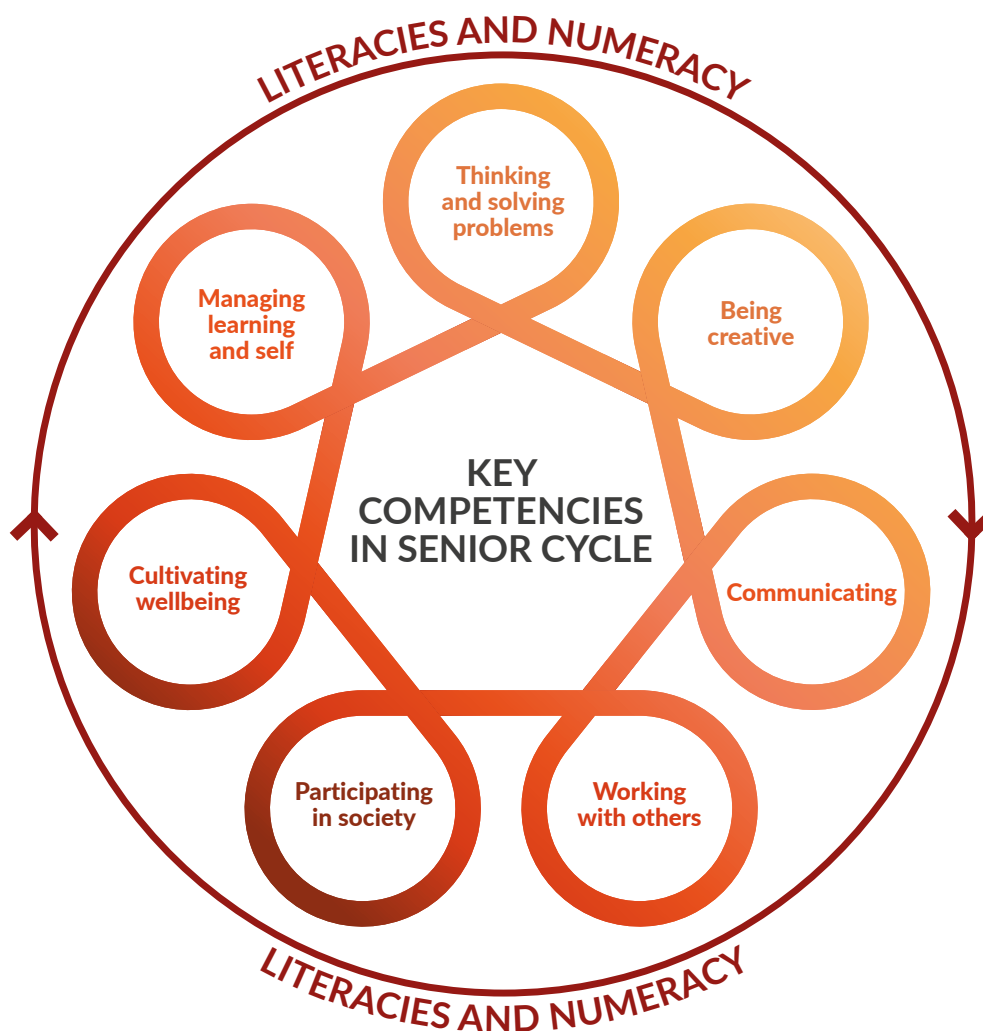


Figure 2: Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy

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 English in a range of ways.

Being creative

Being Creative is central to the experience of studying Leaving Certificate English. Students through their exploration of and learning from creative works develop a range of strategies and processes to develop their own creativity. They develop an awareness and appreciation for creative acts and explore ways of responding, analysing, reflecting and creating individually and collaboratively. Students are given space to nurture their creativity and develop their own creative voice in various written and oral formats.

Communicating

Communicating is foundational to the study of English. Students of Leaving Certificate English deepen their understanding of various forms of communication in written and oral formats. Through their analysis and response to various forms of communication they mediate meaning, examine varied approaches for different formats, audiences and situations and develop a critical understanding of how meaning is created. A critical approach to information, misinformation and disinformation is fostered in students. Through their experiences in English, students are encouraged to be open to diverse perspectives and worldviews and to use their knowledge and understanding in an empathetic, ethical and responsible way. Students develop skills and competence in oral and written formats to enable them to communicate effectively.

Participating in society and Working with others

In the study of English students engage in developing and expressing their own ideas. The study of literature allows students to investigate societal issues, both historical and current, and to reflect on their role and agency in relation to societal challenges. The development of a critical literacy allows students

to reflect on values, perceptions and actions encountered and learn to critique, challenge and transform the society in which they live. In the English classroom, students are encouraged to work co-operatively in pairs or groups. In doing so, students take on different roles; set and achieve shared goals; navigate differences of opinion and approach; interact ethically; and reflect on their experiences.

Thinking and solving problems

Throughout their engagement with the learning outcomes in English, students gather knowledge, ideas, theories and concepts from different sources; analyse, synthesise and evaluate these ideas; explore different options and create their own solutions. They are encouraged to ask questions and seek challenges to given interpretations. They make connections across different learning, knowledge and experiences and are open to differing points of view.

Cultivating wellbeing and Managing learning and self

Students in Leaving Certificate English are encouraged to set personal learning goals, reflect on and evaluate their own learning and have a sense of self-efficacy and experience achievement. Through their engagement with the varied texts and sources on the course, students appreciate, celebrate and understand diverse identities and cultures. In this exploration, students are encouraged to develop and express their own personal identity, values and beliefs and contribute to an inclusive, supportive classroom space. They reflect on their own learning, being open to feedback and using it to improve their learning. Through listening, speaking, discussion and collaboration, student agency and self-efficacy are developed both individually and in collaboration with others.

Strands of study and learning outcomes

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

This Leaving Certificate English specification consists of four strands: Exploring, Creating, Analysing and Comparing. It is not envisaged that these strands are undertaken in a linear fashion, but that the learning in each strand will aid and develop the learning in the other strands. The work of the English classroom is often symbiotic and learning in one area can lead to discussion and debate that can enlighten learning in another area. Engaging in exploration of one text can lead to opportunities for creative writing, analysis and comparison. The learning outcomes specified will not be achieved in a single encounter but will be developed by students in their recurring encounters with texts in varying ways, allowing students to develop skills and competencies relevant to this course. The integrated study of language and literature is central to the English specification; students through their engagement with a variety of texts and forms will have the opportunity to develop their language skills, critical analysis skills and creative voice.

The opportunity for extended writing development is built into the structure of the specification. The assessment of learning outcomes will be through the Comparative Oral, submission of the Writing Task and a terminal written examination.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening are four cross-cutting skills developed in the English classroom from primary level through to further and higher education. Listening to other views and perspectives allows for greater understanding, collaboration and empathy. Reading widely for comprehension, analysis, comparison and pleasure is recognised as one of the fundamental aspects of English that this specification seeks to embed across all of the strands. Students are expected to formulate and develop their thoughts through discussion and debate. Empowering students to communicate effectively through the written and spoken word, nurturing their creative voices and developing their skills to critically engage with the world around them are the foundational aims of this specification. The strands and the cross-cutting skills are illustrated in the diagram below.

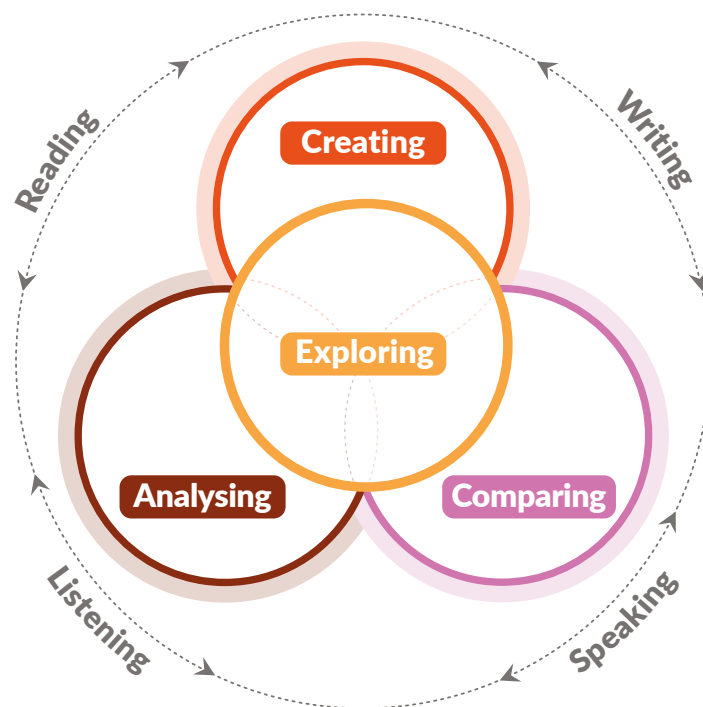


Figure 3: Structure of the strands in LC English

An 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. 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.

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 all of the learning outcomes as set out in Leaving Certificate English, but the context, information and results arising from that engagement will be different.

Ordinary level	Higher level
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students engage with all of the learning outcomes recognising different genres, analysing and responding to texts they study and encounter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students engage with all of the learning outcomes undertaking deep analysis and evaluation of, and sustained critical responses to texts they study and encounter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Differentiation for students studying at ordinary level may be achieved through the selection of texts from the prescribed lists. Some texts may be identified as suitable for study at ordinary level only. Students at this level study a smaller subset of the poetry texts available for study at higher level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Differentiation for students studying at higher level may be achieved through the selection of texts from the prescribed lists where texts that may present greater cognitive challenge may be chosen for study. Students studying at higher level will engage with a wide range of poetry texts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students will demonstrate competence in the accurate and appropriate use of language and compose effectively in a range of straightforward genres supported by their textual knowledge and awareness of register, audience and purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students will demonstrate competence in the accurate and appropriate use of language and compose effectively in a range of straightforward and complex genres supported by their textual knowledge and awareness of register, audience and purpose.

Table 1: Differentiation of learning at ordinary and higher level

Appendices 1 and 2 set out a glossary of action verbs and a glossary of terms used in the Learning Outcomes.

Strand 1: Exploring

In this strand students will develop their understanding of texts and how different texts use forms, formats, narrative tools, textual devices, thematic structures, language, etc. Students will explore a variety of texts to develop their understanding of settings, context, character development, authorship, purpose, etc. Students will examine a range of material from traditional canonical literature (drama, poetry, prose); literature from an Irish perspective; 20th and 21st century texts from a diverse range of authors; a variety of media including film; and non-literary texts.

In this strand, the emphasis is on developing the vocabulary of textual exploration, looking at the use of various stylistic features, perspectives, contexts, registers and purposes, and developing responses to texts. Students will have the opportunity to explore writing and speaking in a variety of styles and modes in response to these texts. The exploration of texts should aim to foster the enjoyment and pleasure that listening, speaking, writing and reading can bring.

Strand 1 Learning outcomes

Students learn about

- comprehension strategies to help to analyse, synthesise and evaluate textual content and explore possible meanings and intentions.
- the audiences and purposes of a text through exploration of a variety of texts including poetry, prose, drama scripts, newspaper articles, speeches, podcasts, visual texts, etc.
- bias, misinformation and disinformation.
- how the use of language features, conventions, grammar, mechanics, syntax, register and structures can vary according to the purpose and audience.
- aesthetic features and qualities of texts.
- a diverse range of texts including traditional canonical texts, literature from an Irish perspective, 20th and 21st century texts, texts from a variety of media including film texts.
- elements of texts such as setting, character development, context, purpose, audience, thematic development, mood, tone etc.
- writing and speaking in a variety of styles and modes such as discursive essays, speeches, scripts, poetry, etc.

Students should be able to

1. read and listen to a range of texts for enjoyment, comprehension and deeper understanding.
2. investigate and use language features and devices in texts for various purposes and audiences.
3. develop language competence for effective communication in a variety of contexts for different purposes and audiences.
4. explore elements of texts and how these elements are developed.
5. explore writing and speaking in a variety of styles and modes.

Students learn about

- formulating considered, supported responses to texts using their knowledge of oral and writing skills.
- different ways of responding to texts such as critiquing, analysing, responding creatively, parodying, comparing, challenging, debating and discussion.

Students should be able to

6. develop a range of written and spoken responses to texts.

Strand 2: Creating

In this strand students will develop their creative voice. They will do this through expanding their skills in drafting, developing and producing creative texts in a variety of genres for specified audiences and purposes. In order to develop these skills students will examine and interrogate examples of creative writing in various forms including short stories, speeches, multimodal texts, scripts, persuasive writing, discursive articles, podcasts, poetry etc., identifying the intended purpose and audience of the texts and the efficacy of the text.

Through the exploration of these texts and creative modelling, students will be encouraged to find their own creative voice. The stages of the creative process (planning, preparation, production and evaluation for example) will form part of the development of these creative pieces. Opportunities for group work, oral presentations, discussions, extended writing and audio pieces, should form part of the intrinsic pedagogy for this strand.

Strand 2 Learning outcomes

Students learn about

- various communication styles, conventions, media and modes including:
 - short story
 - fiction
 - drama script
 - poetry
 - speech writing
 - discursive essay
 - personal essay
 - audio texts including podcasts
 - interview
 - visual and multimodal texts
 - etc.
- exploring and using a range of writing starters, idea prompts and creative modelling techniques as strategies to support the creative process.
- using strategies and supports to draft, edit and proof their writing which may include peer assessment, group writing projects, etc.
- using reflective tools to evaluate their work and the work of others.

Students should be able to

7. create, develop and produce written and oral pieces as an individual and in collaboration with others for various purposes and audiences.
8. express their own personal voices through their written and oral texts.
9. use strategies and supports for planning, drafting, editing and proof reading to create appropriately sequenced, accurate and coherent texts.
10. evaluate their work and the work of others.

Strand 3: Comparing

In this strand students will build on their understanding and analysis of texts developed in the other strands. They are expected to compare at least two texts from the prescribed list. The comparison may be based on a thematic similarity, genre, style, context, etc. The prescribed list may include novels, novellas, plays, films, documentaries, etc. Students will undertake a systematic and meaningful comparative study of the texts chosen.

Engagement with the texts for comparative analysis will, by its nature, be different from the in-depth treatment expected in a single text study. Students will engage with the texts in a comparative manner which may include examining: contrasting ways themes and concepts can be explored across the texts; the contextual, historical and social influences on the texts; the ways identities, places and groups are presented differently; or, the different ways a story is told.

Strand 3 Learning outcomes

Students learn about

ways to examine and compare the texts which may include:

- the contrasting ways themes and concepts can be explored or developed in a variety of texts.
- the contextual, historical and social influences on texts.
- the ways identities, places and groups are presented differently in different texts.
- how a story is told in different ways by examining exposition, tension, climax, resolution, characterisation, etc.
- identifying and comparing ideas and concepts across texts.
- developing insightful ideas through comparative analysis.
- applying a critical lens to readings of texts.
- developing supported responses.
- using communicative competence to engage in two-way interaction to discuss complex ideas relating to the comparative study.

Students should be able to

11. examine and compare a number of texts in systematic and meaningful ways.
12. formulate coherent, considered and supported comparative oral and written responses to a selection of texts.

Strand 4: Analysing

In this strand students will engage in the in-depth analysis of a range of texts. This will include a single text from a prescribed text list and a range of poetry from a prescribed poetry list, but will also allow the students to analyse a variety of written and oral texts. This strand should include a critical analysis of literary and non-literary texts, allowing students to consider the role of textual analysis in exploring the purpose and impact of a range of texts.

The prescribed single text list will provide a variety of texts including plays and novels from various time periods. The textual study will build on the learning in the other strands. Students will be expected to analyse

a text in relation to various aspects of the text including character development, use of literary genre, thematic considerations, aesthetic style, context, etc. Students should apply a critical lens to readings of texts and, through textual analysis and critical reading, formulate supported opinions on the texts studied, orally and in writing.

The study of a range of poetry will endeavour to introduce students to poetry from a wide variety of poets, periods and perspectives. Students are expected to engage with and be able to comment on the form, theme and style of the poetry studied, formulating supported opinions on these works.

Strand 4 Learning outcomes

Students learn about

- conventions such as narrative devices, literary conventions and forms used in plays, novels and non-literary texts and the purpose of their use.
- poetic conventions for different genres of poetry.
- aspects of textual analysis including
 - character development
 - setting
 - context
 - themes
 - use of genre or conventions
 - challenging or subverting those conventions
 - language features
 - narrative structures
 - purpose or viewpoint of the text
 - tension, climax, resolution.
 - etc.

Students should be able to

13. develop an understanding of the context, conventions, purpose and forms of a range of texts.
14. analyse and critique a range of aspects in the single textual study.

Students learn about

- Aspects of poetic analysis including:
 - theme
 - structure
 - style
 - poetic intent
 - context
 - genre
 - etc.
- formulating and developing coherent responses to texts.
- using in-depth textual analysis to support a response.

Students should be able to

- 15. analyse and critique the poetry prescribed for the course.
- 16. formulate considered, supported oral and written responses.

Teaching for student learning

Leaving Certificate English is student-centred in its design and builds on the experience of the students in their development of language competence and their appreciation of literature. Learning in this subject should be grounded in the engagement with a range of texts, literary and non-literary, both oral and written.

In the English classroom, the four cross-cutting skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening form the bedrock of the learning experiences. Language is experienced through various forms, both orally and in written format. Students should be encouraged to engage with all of these formats to better understand, critique and create texts of their own.

Students should be afforded time and space to observe, listen, read and engage with texts; discuss them with their peers; argue and debate opinions; listen to alternate perspectives; and, actively engage with critical analysis.

The pedagogies and learning approaches used in the English classroom should be student centred and allow for the developmental growth of the students. Pedagogies should include reflective, collaborative and integrative approaches. Reflecting on learning should be structured and provide prompts for the students to consider in relation to texts they have encountered, performances they have observed and work they have developed. Peer to peer evaluation, group discussion, and collaborative work should be structured and valued in the English classroom. Pedagogy in the English classroom should foster critical thinking, creativity and communicative competence. Texts should be explored as constructs to be evaluated and interrogated particularly in an age of misinformation and disinformation.

Creativity has a natural home in the English classroom. All students should be encouraged to explore and experiment with their own creative voice. In modelling work, peer assessment and feedback processes, students can develop their own forms of expression for a variety of audiences and purposes. For creativity to be nurtured, the English classroom should be a safe space where different ideas and multiple viewpoints can be explored and experimented with. Failure can be seen as part of the learning journey and creative risk-taking can be supported by constructive feedback offered by teachers and peers. Developing student confidence to share ideas is central to the teaching and learning in the English classroom and the development of an inclusive, respectful environment should foster open discussion. Pedagogy around the creative processes and the drafting and editing of texts should make use of appropriate supports and prompts used in an ethical and informed manner.

There should be a focus on developing higher-order thinking and metacognition, making use of dialogic questioning to do so.

Universal design for learning allows students to engage with material in a variety of ways and have opportunities to present their work through various means and actions. As an equitable space, the English classroom should allow students to find a variety of ways and means to engage with texts and evidence their learning.

Varied formative and summative assessment strategies will support learning and provide effective feedback for student development. Appropriate, engaging and relevant tasks should engage students as learners and, appropriate feedback can promote student autonomy and action, supporting student learning as well as summarising achievement.

Requirements

The approach to the study of English in this specification requires students to engage with texts from a variety of contexts, genres, styles and media. Students should encounter texts from a variety of periods, authors, representations and perspectives. Teachers are required to ensure that students encounter works from an Irish perspective, understood in its broadest sense. The selection of texts to be explored in any classroom is not limited by the lists prescribed for assessment purposes, and texts should be selected that are culturally responsive, relevant and of interest to the students in the class. In the development of a mature and critical literacy, students should be involved in the selection of texts and given agency to exercise autonomy in their learning.

For the comparative oral, a list of prescribed texts including film texts, will be published by the Department of Education and Youth to aid planning for teachers and students. At least two texts from this list will be required in their comparative oral.

For the single textual study, a prescribed list of plays and novels will be published by the Department of Education and Youth from which one text will be selected for study.

The prescribed list published by the Department of Education and Youth will provide a list of poetry for study in any given year. The list will consist of a selection of poetry that may be grouped by individual poet, era, thematic area or style. Students at higher level will be required to study a representative selection of poetry from the poets or groupings available on the prescribed list. Students at ordinary level will be required to study the smaller subset of the poems prescribed.

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 can support and improve 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 three assessment components: a written examination and two additional assessment components comprising a Comparative Oral and a Writing Task. The Comparative Oral will be a common assessment. The Writing Task will be based on a common brief.

In the written examination, Leaving Certificate English will be assessed at two levels, Higher and Ordinary (Table 2). 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. Each component will be set and examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Assessment component	Weighting	Level
Comparative Oral	20%	Common assessment
Writing Task	20%	Common brief
Written examination	60%	Higher and Ordinary Level

Table 2: Overview of assessment for certification

Additional Assessment Component: Comparative Oral

Communicating is one of the key competencies central to the redevelopment of senior cycle. This competency is about meaningfully interacting with others and effectively communicating ideas, insights and opinions to a variety of audiences and for different purposes. The Additional Assessment Component, the Comparative Oral, provides a means to authentically assess the development of these effective communication skills. The Comparative Oral will assess communicative proficiency in line with the learning outcomes in this specification. In doing so, a range of learning outcomes will be assessed across all four strands, but the focus of the Comparative Oral will allow for the evidencing of learning in Strand 3: Comparing.

Authentic engagement in comparative analysis requires students to engage with their texts on multiple levels. Through this engagement students make connections, gain insights, synthesise and evaluate ideas. To evidence their skills in comparative analysis as set out as outcomes in Strand 3, students will investigate, explore and compare at least two texts from the prescribed list and develop their insights for

discussion with the examiner. Students will have the opportunity to apply the key competencies they have developed through their engagement with Leaving Certificate English such as being creative, thinking critically and solving problems, managing learning and self, and communicating as they engage in this component.

The Comparative Oral will:

- Focus on the student's ability to engage in meaningful, two-way communication, using English appropriately and effectively to negotiate meaning.
- Involve a discussion on the comparative insights gained from the texts selected for Strand 3: Comparing. During the Comparative Oral the comparisons and insights developed by the student will be the focus of discussion with the examiner.

A separate document, Guidelines to Support the English Comparative Oral, gives guidance on a range of matters related to the organisation, implementation and oversight of this AAC.

Descriptors of quality for the English Comparative Oral

The descriptors below relate to the learning achieved by students in the Comparative Oral. In particular, the Comparative Oral requires students to:

- Engage in two-way discussion and communicate ideas effectively
- Discuss supported insights gained from the comparison of texts

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Engage in two-way discussion and communicate ideas effectively	Will be able to articulate complex opinions, ideas and insights.	Will be able to articulate some complex opinions, ideas and insights.	Will articulate some ideas and insights.
	Will demonstrate a very good level of fluency and coherence using appropriate language.	Will demonstrate a good level of fluency and coherence using appropriate language but with some lapses.	Will demonstrate a limited level of fluency with some lapses of coherence.
	Will be able to actively listen and respond effectively with clear focus.	Will be able to listen and respond appropriately with focus.	Some responses may not be focused.
Discuss supported insights gained from the comparison of texts	Will demonstrate a deep understanding of the comparative links between their chosen texts.	Will demonstrate a good understanding of the comparative links presented between their chosen texts.	Will demonstrate a low level of familiarity with the comparative links between their chosen texts.
	Will use references to the texts that are well-chosen and support the points made very effectively.	Will use references to the texts that are for the most part well-chosen and support the points made.	Will use references to the texts that rarely offer appropriate support.
	The development of ideas is logical and convincing.	The development of ideas is mostly logical and generally cohesive.	The ideas discussed lack cohesion or development.

Table 3: Descriptors of quality: Comparative Oral

Additional Assessment Component: Writing Task

Being Creative is one of the key competencies central to the redevelopment of senior cycle. The Writing Task provides an opportunity for students to evidence their learning throughout the course but in particular, the learning set out as outcomes in Strand 2: Creating, in the development of their creative voice. The development of a creative voice in this instance takes a broad view of creativity to include all formats and genres of writing.

The development of a creative voice takes time and crafting. Engagement in the crafting of a creative piece of work will allow students time and space to enter the process of writing; to conceptualise their ideas in response to a brief; and to consider and develop their ideas using their drafting and process skills. The Writing Task is designed to give students practical opportunities

to apply their knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. Students will have the opportunity to apply the key competencies they have developed through their engagement with Leaving Certificate English such as being creative, thinking critically and solving problems, managing learning and self and communicating as they engage in this component. Engagement with this component will also allow for an authentic engagement with the process of writing and the development and evolution of ideas.

In response to a brief by the SEC, the students will develop ideas and planning for their writing task and produce a final piece of work. A separate document, Guidelines to Support the English Writing Task, gives guidance on a range of matters related to the organisation, implementation and oversight of this AAC.

Descriptors of quality for the Writing Task

The descriptors below relate to the learning achieved by students in the Writing Task. In particular, the task requires students to

- Produce a creative response that engages with the task outlined in the brief
- Demonstrate an ability to sustain a coherent response
- Use language effectively to communicate ideas and insights
- Present effectively work that is accurate and appropriate to the task.

	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Engagement with the task	Engage with the set task with a clear aim and understanding of genre, displaying originality and freshness of ideas. Reflection and evaluation show clear evidence of engagement.	Engage with the set task with some evidence of an aim and understanding of genre, some originality or freshness of ideas. Reflection and evaluation show some evidence of engagement.	Engage with the set task in a limited way with some understanding of genre, lacking originality or freshness of ideas. Reflection and evaluation show limited evidence of engagement.
Sustain a coherent response	Sustain a coherent response, sequencing ideas effectively; display control of register and shape of response.	Mostly sustain a coherent response; ideas are mostly effectively sequenced, some control of register and shape of response.	Response is not always coherently sustained; limited control of shape or register of response.
Use language effectively	Use language that is managed and controlled effectively to achieve clear communication appropriate to the task and register. Vocabulary, syntax, phrasing, energy, style and fluency appropriate to the task is evident throughout.	Use language that is mostly well managed and controlled to achieve effective communication appropriate to the register and task. Vocabulary, syntax, phrasing, energy, style and fluency are mostly evident throughout the task.	Use language that is limited in its management and control, effective communication is not always achieved. Vocabulary, syntax, phrasing, energy, style and fluency are not always evident.
Presentation of work	Demonstrate mechanics of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation) that are accurate and appropriate to the task.	Demonstrate mechanics of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation) that are mostly accurate and appropriate to the task.	Demonstrate mechanics of language (grammar, spelling, punctuation) that have limited accuracy appropriate to the task.

Table 4: Descriptors of quality: Writing Task

Written examination

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

- the learning described across the four strands of the specification;
- engagement with the analysis of the single text;
- engagement with the analysis of the selection of poetry prescribed;
- the ability to comprehend and communicate effectively.

Reasonable accommodations

This Leaving Certificate English 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 English involves a written examination worth 60% of the available marks and two additional components worth 20% each, totalling 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. However, some of the areas of learning in a subject specification cannot be waived because they are core to the subject specification.

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.

Leaving Certificate Grading

Leaving Certificate English 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.

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

Table 5: Leaving Certificate Grading

Appendix 1: Glossary of Action Verbs

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.
Compare	Give an account of the similarities and (or) differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.
Create	Bring something into existence; generate, design, make, construct, devise or shape something.
Critique	Give an informed analysis and assessment of.
Develop	Evolve an idea or concept for planned work.
Evaluate	Collect and examine evidence to make judgments and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a judgement; identify the limitations of evidence in conclusions; make judgments about the ideas, solutions or methods.
Examine	Look closely at arguments, data, information and/or stories in order to uncover origins, assumptions, perspectives, trends and/or relationships.
Explore	Observe, probe, delve into, study in order to establish facts or develop an opinion or stance.
Express	To represent, produce or give expression to ideas developed.
Formulate	Create or prepare methodically or systematically.
Investigate	Observe, study or examine in detail in order to establish facts, and reach new insights and/or conclusions.
Listen	Give attention to or the active engagement in comprehending aural presentation.
Produce	Make, create or put together.
Read	Give attention to or the active engagement in comprehending written presentations.
Use	Apply knowledge or rules to put theory into practice.

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

Concept/term	Understanding
Audio Texts	Texts captured in audio format. This may include radio broadcasts, radio plays, audio books, podcasts, interviews, documentaries, travelogues, blogs, etc.
Comprehension strategies	In reading, listening or observing to comprehend, a number of strategies or mental processes may be used to understand text. There are many different strategies available but they must be taught explicitly. Some strategies include: literal (creating images, skimming, scanning, questioning), inferential (comparing, connecting, inferring, predicting) or evaluative (synthesising, determining importance, summarising and paraphrasing).
Communicative competence	Communicative competence refers to the learner's ability to communicate successfully in a given situation. It encompasses not only grammatical correctness but the ability to use language effectively in different social contexts, including the ability to negotiate meaning and convey messages effectively. It can include linguistic/grammatical competence but also include strategic competence (overcoming language gaps, achieve conversational fluency, modify text to suit the audience), sociolinguistic competence (sociocultural use and rules of discourse) and discourse competence (how ideas are connected through patterns of organisation, cohesive and transitional devices), (Hymes, 1972 ¹ ; Canale & Swain, ² 1980).
Contextual, historical, social influences	There are many different influences that can have an impact on the creation and interpretation of a text. Writers and readers may be influenced by their personal context (their life, times and experiences), historical context (the events of the time when the text was written, read or set), social context (the societal norms and expectations prevalent when the text was written, read or set), literary context (what other writers are producing or have produced in a particular style or period).
Creative modelling	In order to develop creative writing skills in students, it helps to explore models of what that creativity – both process and product – looks like. Through exploring different styles and formats of written and oral texts, students can evaluate and emulate the creative style. This process can include observational learning, task and performance modelling, metacognitive modelling, and peer modelling.
Critical lens	Applying a critical lens to literary analysis is a way of looking at a text with a particular focus. The same text can be examined from various viewpoints or through various lenses. There are many different critical lenses that can be applied but some of the more common lenses would be: ethical lens, class, gender, race/ethnicity, historical, socio-economic, psychoanalytic, etc.
Critical literacy	Critical literacy builds on the ideas of Freire ³ (1973), Foucault (1980), Shor ⁴ (1999) and Janks ⁵ (2012). It questions power relations, discourses and identities, challenges the status quo and is underpinned by social justice principles. It encourages readers to be active participants in the reading process, engaging with the text in a critical and reflective manner.

¹ Hymes, D. H. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In Pride, J. B., & Holmes, J. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 269-293. Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.

² Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing, *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.

³ Freire, P. (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury.

⁴ Shor, I. (1999). What is Critical Literacy? *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice*, 1 (4), 1- 31.

⁵ Janks, H. (2012) The importance of critical literacy, *English Teaching Practice & Critique*, 11(1): 150-163.

Digital texts	Digital texts can be audio, visual or multi-modal texts produced through digital or electronic technology which may be interactive and include animations and/or hyperlinks. It can include movies, websites, e-books, apps, etc.
Genre	Genre is a category used to describe the primary content and/or style of the text. Genre can describe the style of writing (poetry, essays, novels, plays etc.) or the content (historical fiction, science fiction, horror, tragedy, romance, western, thriller, mystery, etc.). Texts may contain features of different genres combined or subverted by the author.
Language/ linguistic competence	Language competence and linguistic competence refer to the use of language through expression and interpretation of concepts, feelings, facts and opinions in order to engage in written and oral discussions. It can include competence in vocabulary, spelling, semantics, syntax, phonology and other language elements.
Language features and devices	Language features or devices (also known as linguistic techniques or figurative devices) can be used by an author to influence the response of the reader or help to communicate an idea or point of view. Devices or features can include similes, metaphor, allusion, hyperbole, contrast, comparison, analogy, assonance, imagery, irony, repetition, personification etc.
Literary conventions	Literary conventions are the elements of a literary work that help to define its genre. These elements can be tropes, arcs, clichés, motifs or devices that help an audience identify the genre of the text. Genre conventions can include specific settings, characters archetypes, plot structures and stylistic choices. For example, detective novels will have a hero vs. villain dynamic, a mystery to be solved, clues gathered, various suspects, misdirection, twists, denouement; horror will have scary scenes, villains, jump scares, foreshadowing, confusion, unsettling atmosphere, etc. Conventions can be played with by authors, where traditional tropes or features are used in unusual ways or subverted by the author.
Poetic conventions	Poetic conventions are established practices or techniques commonly used in certain poetic styles. Conventions such as poetic forms (sonnet, sestina, limerick, haiku, etc.) give poets and readers a structure and shared set of expectations that can enhance the understanding and appreciation of a poem. Different poetic genres may have associated conventions; ballads often have a refrain, deal with deep emotional content, are often tragic and have a regular rhyming scheme; elegies are poems of mourning focusing on death and sorrow; odes are lyric poems that celebrate a person or object, etc. Conventions can apply to various poetic features or devices including rhyme, metre, stanza, layout, etc. Poetic conventions can change over time and reflect changes in literary trends, societal norms and artistic movements. Poets can also subvert the conventions associated with a certain style or form of poetry.
Reflective tools	There are many different tools and frameworks available to scaffold the reflective experience. Brookfield ⁶ (1995) suggests looking at the same situation through various lenses, Schon ⁷ (1991) advises reflection in action (at the time) as well as reflection on action (after the event). The 5R framework consists of Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning and Reconstructing. The CARL framework consists of Context, Action, Results, Learning. Whatever framework is adapted in the classroom it should provide scaffolding and prompts for student engagement in the reflective process that will evolve over time.
Text(s)	All products of language use - oral, written, visual, digital or multimodal - can be described as texts. Multimodal texts combine language with other systems for communication such as print text, visual images, soundtrack and the spoken word.
Universal Design for Learning	Universal Design for Learning is an approach to learning, teaching and assessment design that supports the varied competencies, strengths and needs of students. The three UDL principles support student learning by providing multiple means of engagement, representation and, action and expression ⁸ .

⁶ Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

⁷ Schon, D. A. (1991). *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

⁸ Source: <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>



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