An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Curriculum Specification for Leaving Certificate Physical Education

For introduction to schools in September 2026.

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

Contents

Senior cycle 2

Rationale 4

Aims 5

Continuity and progression 6

Student learning in senior cycle 6

Key competencies 7

Strands of study and learning outcomes 10

Physical Activity 12

- Strand 1: Skill learning, participation and performance 14
- Strand 2: Physical and psychological demands of performance 16
- Strand 3: Factors influencing participation in physical activity 18

Teaching for student learning 20

Assessment 21

Reasonable accommodations 24

Appendix 1: Glossary of action verbs 26

Appendix 2: List of physical activities 28

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. Buildings on junior cycle, learning happens in schools, communities, educational settings, and other sites, where students' increasing independence is recognised. Relationships with teachers are established on a more mature footing and students take more responsibility for their learning.

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

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

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

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

Rationale

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

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

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

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

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

Aims

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

Leaving Certificate Physical Education develops the students':

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

Continuity and progression

Junior Cycle

Junior Cycle Physical Education focuses on developing a physically literate young person in relation to knowledge, understanding, skills and values to facilitate informed, confident and competent participation in physical activity and a commitment to lifelong engagement. Wellbeing is an area of learning in junior cycle and Physical Education is one of the three pillars of Wellbeing. In Junior Cycle PE students learn how to become a confident and competent participant in physical activity and are motivated to be more physically active. They are also provided with opportunities to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and that of others, while understanding the importance of fair play, working with others, inclusion and safety.

Beyond senior cycle

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

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

Student learning in senior cycle

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

For clarity, the learning which spans **across** all of their senior cycle experiences is outlined under the heading 'key competencies'. The learning which occurs **within** a specific subject or module is outlined under the heading 'strands of study and learning outcomes'. However, it is vital to recognise that key competencies and subject or module learning are developed in an integrated way. By design, key competencies are integrated across the rationale, aims, learning outcomes and assessment sections of specifications. In practice, key competencies are developed by students in schools via the pedagogies teachers use and the environment they develop in their classrooms and within their school. Subjects can help students to develop their key competencies; and key competencies can enhance and enable deeper subject learning. When this integration occurs, students stand to benefit

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

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

Key competencies

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

Figure 1: The components of key competencies and their desired impact

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

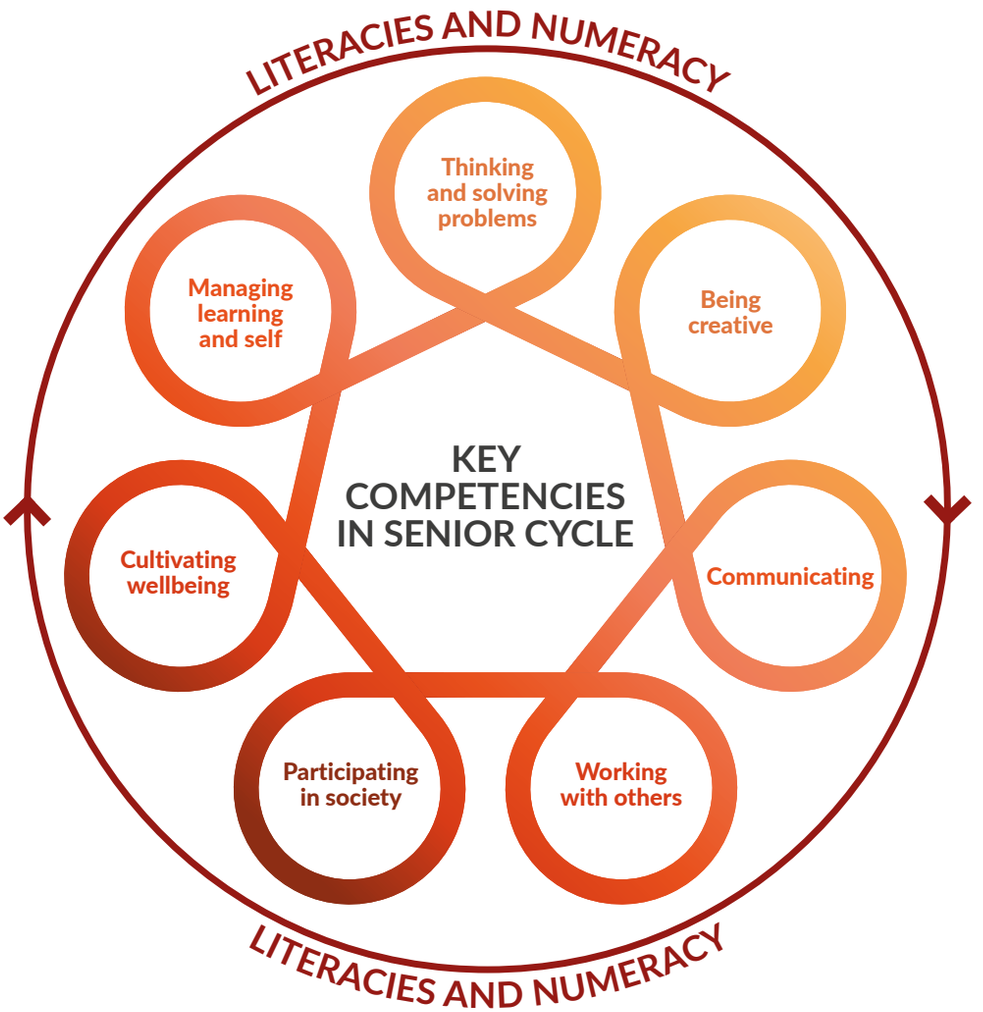

Figure 2: Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy

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

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

The key competencies come to life through the learning experiences and pedagogies teachers choose and through students' responses to them. Students can and should be helped to develop their key competencies irrespective of their past or present background, circumstances or experiences and should have many opportunities to make their key competencies visible. Further detail in relation to key competencies is available at **https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/senior-cycle-redevelopment/student-key-competencies/**

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

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

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

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

Cultivating wellbeing is developed through physical education, as students engage in activities that enhance their physical health, build resilience, and foster a sense of purpose and belonging. Physical education provides opportunities for students to realise their abilities, set and achieve personal and team goals, and manage life's challenges through teamwork, problem-solving, and perseverance. By learning how to care for their physical and emotional health, students gain the skills to cope with setbacks and seek support when needed. By examining the role of physical activity within the framework of inclusivity and accessibility across various life stages, students enhance their comprehension of human rights and responsibilities, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. Thus enabling them to develop the key competency of **participating in society**.

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

Strands of study and learning outcomes

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

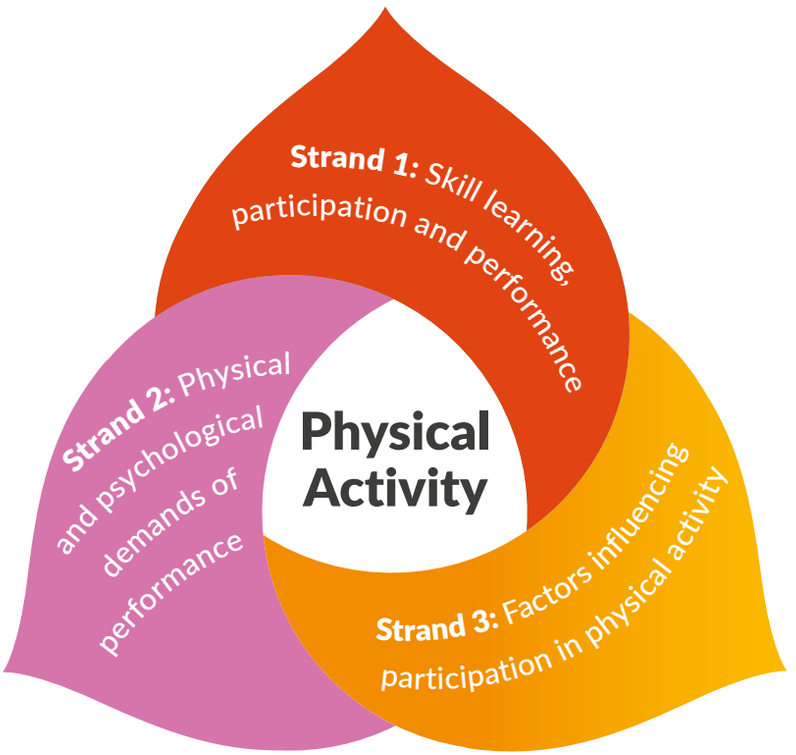

Figure 3: Specification strands

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

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

Ordinary level	Higher level
• Students engage with a broad range of knowledge, primarily concrete in nature, with some engagement in the application of key concepts.	• Students engage with a broad range of knowledge, including deeper engagement with key concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas.
• Students demonstrate understanding and application of key ideas across all areas of study.	• Students demonstrate deeper understanding and more effective application of key ideas across all areas of study.
• Students develop and use a moderate range of skills to explore, perform, analyse and reflect on learning.	• Students develop and use a broad range of skills, including higher-order thinking skills, to explore, perform, analyse and critically reflect on learning.
• Students gather and use information to support understanding and communicate findings clearly.	• Students gather, interpret, and synthesise information to support understanding and communicate findings effectively and with insight.

Table 1: Design of learning outcomes for ordinary and higher levels

Physical Activity

Active participation in physical activity is central to learning in Leaving Certificate Physical Education. Students are expected to engage in a broad range of physical activities that are used not only as the focus of learning but also as a context for exploring key theoretical concepts. Learning is grounded in movement, and students gain knowledge and understanding by applying theory in practical, meaningful ways. The core concepts relating to physical activity are:

- skill and technique
- tactical/compositional components
- physiological demands including components of fitness
- psychological preparedness
- nutrition.

Students learn these core concepts through a broad range of physical activities which should reflect students' interests, abilities, and experiences, while also considering school context, facilities, available resources and the six designated physical activity areas outlined below in Figure 4.

For the purpose of the Additional Assessment Component (AAC), students must select from the list of eligible activities provided in Appendix 2.

Students are not expected to develop a high level of expertise across all physical activities. While they should focus on one or two areas, they will still engage with a broad range of activities to ensure they achieve the learning outcomes outlined across the three strands.

The range of experiences in Leaving Certificate Physical Education should ensure that students:

- participate regularly and actively in physical education classes
- develop a broad range of movement skills, strategies and concepts
- apply theoretical learning through a variety of practical experiences
- engage in physical activities that challenge and motivate them
- make connections between health, fitness, and performance across different activity types.

Physical activity is integrated into Leaving Certificate Physical Education lessons, with learning designed to combine movement and theory supporting the relevant connections. Lessons are planned to enable progression in skill development and knowledge acquisition, encouraging students to reflect on performance, set goals, and improve their understanding of physical education from both a practical and theoretical viewpoint.

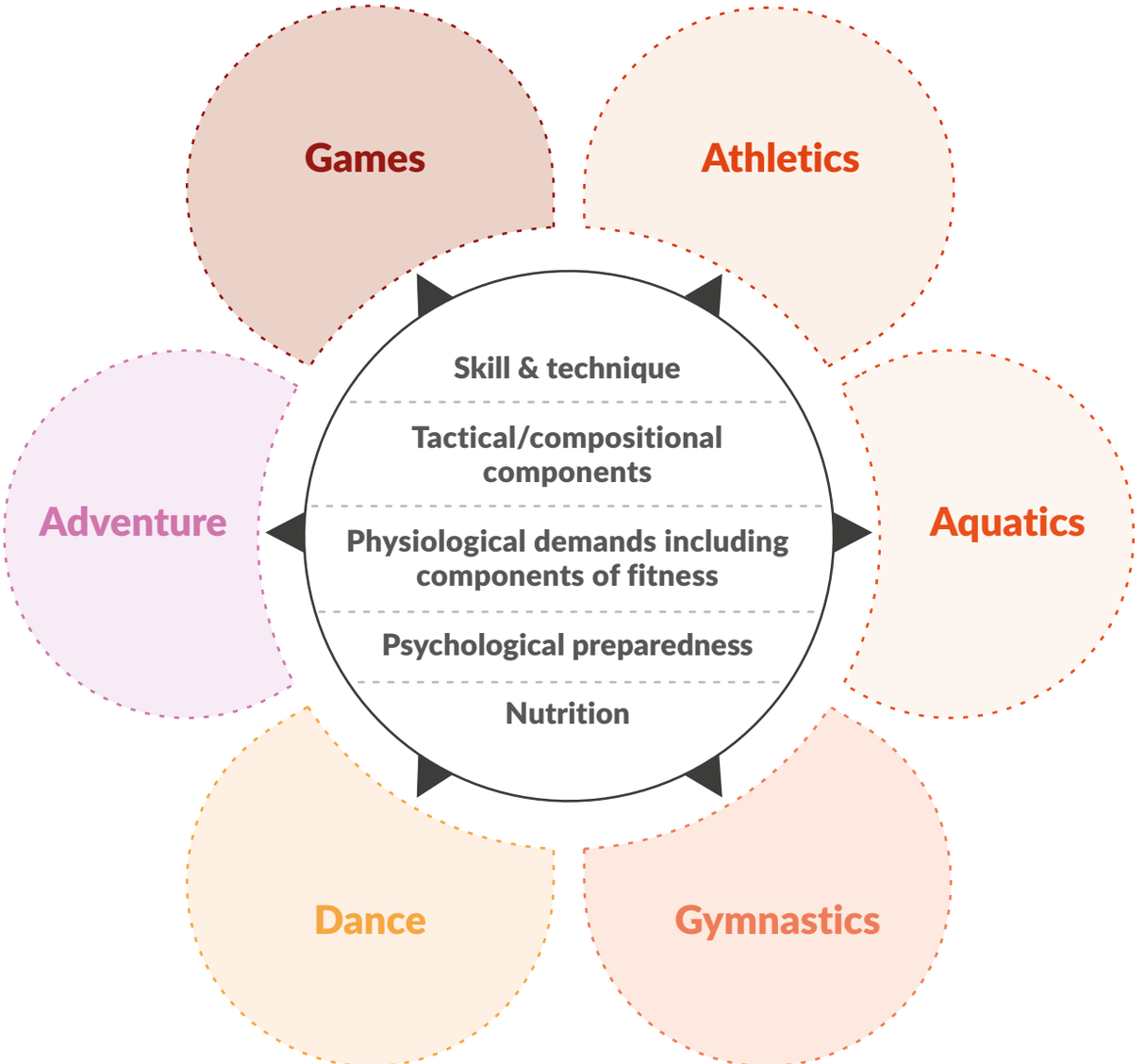

Figure 4: The physical activity areas and core concepts

Strand 1: Skill learning, participation and performance

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

Strand 1: learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• stages of skill learning including; beginner, intermediate, advanced	1. describe the stages of skill learning
• factors including; feedback, practice and practice types including; whole, part, variable, fixed, massed, distributed, random	2. investigate factors influencing skill learning
• principles including; variety, progressive, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time, exciting, challenging, recorded	3. design effective schedules and practice sessions underpinned by principles for pursuit of performance in a selected area
	4. evaluate the principles of effective practice
• refine skill and techniques • apply tactics/decision making • classification of skills including; gross, fine, open, closed, discrete, serial, continuous, internally paced, externally paced	5. demonstrate sport skills, tactical awareness/decision making in varied physical activities
• characteristics including; kinaesthetic awareness, anticipation, consistency, accuracy in movement pattern/technique	6. identify the characteristics of a skilled performance
	7. discuss the difference between skill and ability
• the application of Newton's laws of motion: 1st Law of inertia, 2nd law of acceleration, 3rd law of action/reaction • skill analysis checklists, key coaching points, video analysis software and model performers • economy of movement • creative application of skill	8. analyse the performance of skills including a critical analysis for improvement

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• creation and participation in a group performance • aesthetic and artistic criteria of different physical activities • methods for analysing choreography	9. appraise and compare aesthetic and artistic criteria in movement
• function and role of cardiovascular and respiratory systems • measuring and monitoring responses including; heart rate, breathing, and body temperature	10. investigate the body's response to physical activity participation
• stages including infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood participating in physical activity • benefits of physical activity at different stages including; physical health, mental health, social, and economic	11. assess being physically active across the life stages

Strand 2: Physical and psychological demands of performance

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

Strand 2: learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• components of health-related fitness and performance related fitness • relevance of fitness components to a range of different physical activities • appropriate testing of health and performance related fitness • validity and reliability for fitness tests conducted • training methods including; continuous, interval, fartlek, circuit, resistance, plyometrics, and stretching	1. apply the components of fitness in terms of physical activity performance
• principles of training, including; readiness, specificity, progressive overload, rest, recovery, reversibility, tedium • FITT (Frequency, Intensity, Time, Type of activity) formula	2. apply principles of training to achieve optimum performance
• recovery strategies and overtraining • role and application of periodisation • incorporating recovery and periodisation into training programme design	3. discuss recovery strategies and apply principles of periodisation in training programme design
• factors including confidence, anxiety, motivation and concentration • methods including; self-assessment tools, observational methods, interview techniques, questionnaires	4. analyse psychological preparedness in relation to factors that impact practice and performance
• the benefits and drawbacks of a range of strategies to enhance psychological factors including; goal setting; self-talk; thought stopping; visualisation; relaxation; performance routines • different types of feedback and their importance including; intrinsic, extrinsic, knowledge of results, knowledge of performance, concurrent, terminal, positive, and negative	5. evaluate strategies to enhance psychological factors before, during and after participation including types of feedback

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• using and applying data from testing of psychological factors including; confidence, concentration, motivation, anxiety, and suitable strategies for the identified psychological factors.	6. investigate the use of personal action plans underpinned by psychological principles to support a positive psychological disposition before, during, and after physical activity
• performance related nutritional needs – macronutrients, micronutrients and hydration • timing of nutrition to optimise performance and recovery • nutritional plans for performance • sports supplements – the role, benefits, and challenges of sports supplements including; caffeine, creatine, nitrate, beta-alanine, sodium bicarbonate for improving performance	7. examine the role of nutrition in supporting physical performance
• ATP-PC (alactic) system; anaerobic lactic system; aerobic system (oxidative system) • duration, intensity, fuel source, by products and type of physical activity	8. analyse the role and relative contribution of the human body energy systems during performance
• relevant muscle groups and bones, joint actions of the body • functions of the muscular and skeletal systems with specific reference to movement • biomechanical context including the use of planes and axes in anatomical movement	9. recognise the role of the muscular and skeletal systems in human movement
• factors impacting performance • performance analysis • setting performance goals • improvement plan based on data gathered • programme effectiveness • communication	10. analyse factors in planning for an optimum performance in physical activity
• pathways to high performance physical activity • player development programmes in underage sport • the role of bodies including; Sport Ireland, individual sport National Governing Bodies at local, national and international level	11. analyse the provision and support for high performance sport in Ireland

Strand 3: Factors influencing participation in physical activity

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

Strand 3: learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• rules and regulations • safety regulations • the role of warm up and cool down in all practice and performance situations including injury prevention • safe use and maintenance of sports attire, facilities and equipment	1. examine safe practice approaches to performance and the organisation of physical activity
• structures, tactics and compositional elements including; to outperform opponents, control situations or be creative	2. apply structures, tactics and compositional elements in a range of physical activities
• requirements including; knowledge, physical fitness, psychological readiness, personal attire and equipment • characteristics of an effective official • communication styles • conflict management strategies	3. describe the requirements of officiating
• physical, personal and technical knowledge of a physical activity • considerations necessary to guide a performer in the pursuit of optimum performance • strategies to guide a performer's effective use of ongoing reflection about practice and performance	4. explore the role of coaches/choreographers
• principles of ethical practice in sport; the importance of integrity, respect, fairness and equity, code of ethics • link between sportsmanship, gamesmanship and engagement in physical activity and sport	5. examine the principles of ethical practice sport and key factors impacting on ethical practice in sport

Students learn about	Students should be able to
• different categories of performance-enhancing drugs • implications for the performer and the sport of using performance-enhancing drugs • Irish anti-doping rules and enforcement • therapeutic use exemption in relation to the use of medicines in sport	6. discuss performance-enhancing drugs in sport and doping regulations
• impact on – performers, coaches/choreographers, officials and spectators • optimising performance • personal technology use to optimise performance	7. discuss the impact of technological developments in physical activity
• effect of media coverage on participation levels in physical activity; including different gender groups • influence of media portrayal of body image on participation levels • messages from sport-related sponsorship and their implication for participation • strategies to enhance media coverage	8. appreciate the role of the media and sponsorship on physical activity and sport
• barriers and supports to participation • measuring/tracking physical activity participation • physical activity promotion • lifestyle physical activities • cultural factors; attitudes, values and traditions	9. examine factors that influence access to, inclusion, participation and performance in physical activity and how they impact lifelong participation.
• gender stereotyping • adapted physical activity • strategies to address imbalances in levels of participation across different groups based on tracking participation • barriers and supports • strategies to enhance pathways between school and community based physical activity and sport • impact of mass participation events	10. evaluate strategies related to physical activity promotion

Teaching for student learning

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

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

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

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

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

Learning in physical activity refers to experiential outcomes where students are actively engaged in physical activity. Students apply their knowledge and understanding of theoretical perspectives to their pursuit of physical activity learning performance goals. Students engage in ongoing reflection about their learning and progress in physical activity.

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

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

Assessment

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

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

Assessment for certification

Assessment for certification is based on the rationale, aims and learning outcomes of this specification. There are two assessment components: a written examination and an additional assessment component (AAC). The written examination will be at higher and ordinary level. The AAC will be based on a brief. Each component will be set and examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

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

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

Table 2: Overview of assessment for certification

Additional assessment component: Physical Education Project

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

This AAC allows students to engage with physical activity and follow a structured process that includes planning, engaging, performing, evaluating and communicating on and in physical activity. The AAC is designed to give students the opportunity to apply and demonstrate the learning they have developed within the specification in a structured process. Students demonstrate an understanding of their physical activity engagement and performance; making informed decisions and evaluating the short and long term results and consequences; being open to feedback and able to use it to improve their learning; being aware of and looking after their physical wellbeing; making choices and developing personal learning goals; working with others; and applying their learning to improve physical activity engagement.

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

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

Descriptors of quality for additional assessment component

The Descriptors of Quality in Table 3 are intended to provide insights into the broad expectations for students completing the AAC.

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

- planning
- engagement
- skill proficiency and analysis
- evaluation
- communication.

Component	Students demonstrating a high level of achievement	Students demonstrating a moderate level of achievement	Students demonstrating a low level of achievement
Planning	Demonstrate thorough and well-structured planning based on the assigned project brief. Clearly justify goals using appropriate needs analysis. Show strong alignment between planning and all phases of the project.	Engage in planning with generally appropriate goals and a basic needs analysis. Show some alignment between planning and later project phases.	Show limited or unclear planning. Goals lack justification or are not aligned with project demands. Minimal evidence of needs analysis.
Engagement	Display consistent, purposeful engagement in the physical activity area. Apply feedback effectively and adapt plans to improve performance across assigned brief. Show evidence of safe and ethical participation.	Show regular engagement in the physical activity area and attempt to apply feedback. Demonstrate some progress across brief. Follow basic safety and ethical practices.	Demonstrate inconsistent engagement in the physical activity. Little to no use of feedback or adaptation. Safety and ethical considerations are poorly addressed.
Skill Proficiency and Analysis	Select and perform appropriate skills with precision and control. Provide insightful analysis using relevant criteria and tools. Demonstrate a deep understanding of performance demands.	Perform selected skills with general control and accuracy. Offer basic analysis using some performance criteria. Show developing understanding of performance.	Perform skills with limited control or accuracy. Analysis is weak, unclear, or missing. Show minimal understanding of skilled performance.
Evaluation	Critically reflect on planning and engagement. Clearly connect experience to PE concepts and performance goals. Use evidence to support conclusions and propose improvements.	Reflect meaningfully on aspects of the project. Make some connections to PE concepts. Identify general areas for improvement.	Provide limited or superficial reflection. Few or no links made to PE concepts. Struggle to evaluate or identify ways to improve.
Communication	Communicate clearly and effectively using appropriate PE terminology. Present data and analysis using relevant tools. Demonstrate coherence across all sections.	Communicate with some clarity. Use of PE terminology is inconsistent. Present basic data and analysis, with some structure.	Communicate in a disjointed or unclear way. Limited use of PE language. Data presentation is minimal or confusing.

Table 3: Descriptors of quality: Physical education project

Written examination

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

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

Reasonable accommodations

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

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

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

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

Leaving Certificate Grading

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

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 4: Leaving Certificate Grading

Appendix 1: Glossary of action verbs

Action verb	Students should be able to
Acknowledge (sources)	expressly recognise sources of information
Analyse	study or examine something in detail, break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure; identify parts and relationships, and to interpret information to reach conclusions
Apply	select and use information and/or knowledge and understanding to explain a given situation or real circumstances
Appraise	evaluate, judge or consider text or a piece of work
Appreciate	recognise the meaning, value or importance of
Assess	judge, evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, quality or value of something
Calculate	obtain a numerical answer showing the relevant stages in the working
Classify	group things based on common characteristics
Collaborate	work jointly with another or others on an activity or project
Compare	give an account of the similarities and (or) differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout
Create	bring something into existence; to cause something to happen as a result of one's actions
Critique	give an informed analysis and assessment of
Deduce	reach a conclusion from the information given
Demonstrate	prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, illustrating with examples or practical application
Derive	arrive at a statement or formula through a process of logical deduction; manipulate a mathematical relationship to give a new equation or relationship
Describe	give a detailed account of the main points of the topic, using words, diagrams and/or images
Design	devise, create and/or realise according to a set of steps or a plan
Devise	plan, develop or create something by careful thought
Discuss	offer a considered, balanced review that includes a range of arguments, perspectives, factors or hypotheses, grounded in appropriate evidence
Evaluate (data/ information)	collect and examine data to make judgments and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a conclusion in an inquiry or investigation; identify the limitations of data in conclusions; make judgments about the ideas, solutions or methods
Evaluate (ethical judgement)	collect and examine evidence to make judgments and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a judgement; identify the limitations of evidence in conclusions; make judgments about the ideas, solutions or methods
Examine	look closely at arguments, data, information and/or stories in order to uncover origins, assumptions, perspectives, trends and/or relationships
Explain	give a detailed account supported by reasons or causes
Facilitate	guide a dialogue so that it stays on course and reaches the agreed-upon goals
Identify	recognise patterns, facts, or details; provide an answer from a number of possibilities; recognise and state briefly a distinguishing fact or feature
Illustrate	use examples to describe something

Infer	use the results of an investigation based on a premise; read beyond what has been literally expressed
Interpret (data)	use knowledge and understanding to recognise trends and draw conclusions from given information
Interpret (non-data)	express ideas about the intended meaning of
Investigate	observe, study or examine in detail in order to establish facts, and reach new insights and/or conclusions
Justify	give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion
List	provide a number of points, or facts, with no elaboration
Model	represent an idea, structure, process or system through a variety of means such as words, diagrams, equations, physical models or simulations; use models to describe, explain, make predictions and solve problems, recognising that all models have limitations
Outline	give the main points, restricting to essential pieces of information
Predict	give an expected result of an event; explain a new event based on observations or information using logical connections between pieces of information
Prove	use a sequence of logical steps to obtain the required result
Recognise (data/ information)	identify facts, characteristics or concepts that are critical (relevant/appropriate) to the understanding of a situation, event, process or phenomenon
Reflect	give thoughtful consideration to actions, experiences, values and learning in order to gain new insights and make meaning
Research	inquire specifically, through collecting, organising and analysing evidence in order to draw conclusions
Solve	find an answer through reasoning
Summarise	state briefly the main points of information
Synthesise	combine different ideas to create new or enhanced understanding
Understand	have and apply a well-organised body of knowledge
Verify	give evidence to support the truth of a statement

Appendix 2: List of physical activities

The list of physical activities eligible for selection to demonstrate student learning for the Additional Assessment Component (AAC) is outlined below. The skills developed through engagement and performance in physical activity are fundamental and integral to the discipline of physical education.

Activities within the approved list may be adapted to support the meaningful participation of each student. Appropriate adaptations ensure that all students can demonstrate their learning and achievement equitably within the parameters of the specification.

	Activities
Athletics	Running events, throwing events, jumping events
Artistic and Aesthetic	Gymnastics, dance
Aquatics	Swimming strokes, water polo, synchronised swimming
Adventure Activities	Orienteering, kayaking, indoor roped climbing, water-based rowing, cycling (Road, Mountain)
Games – Invasion	Gaelic football (men's/ladies), hurling/camogie, soccer, rugby, basketball, hockey, netball, Olympic handball
Games – Net/Wall	Badminton, tennis, volleyball, table tennis, GAA handball, squash,
Games – Striking/Fielding	Cricket, softball, rounders
Games – Target/Striking	Golf

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Published August 2025.