



Leading the Introduction of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Revised Module Descriptors

Participant Workbook

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Introduction

Revised Module Descriptors

In line with four revised Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) module descriptors are to be introduced to Fifth-Year students in September 2021. Each of these module descriptors can be accessed at www.curriculumonline.ie.

The four revised module descriptors and their timetable for introduction are outlined below.

Revised Leaving Certificate Applied Module Descriptors	Original Implementation Date	Revised Implementation Date	First Leaving Certificate Examination
English and Communications	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Mathematical Applications	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Introduction to Information and Communication Technology	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023
Information and Communication Technology: Specialism	September 2020	September 2021	June 2023

The context for change

The documents on the links below are useful to understand the processes behind and reasons for the adoption of these revised module descriptors:

- Framework for Junior Cycle 2015
<https://www.ncca.ie/media/3249/framework-for-junior-cycle-2015-en.pdf>
- Digital Learning Framework (2017)
<https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/Digital-Learning-Framework/Digital-Learning-Framework-Post-Primary.pdf>
- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011-2020
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Literacy-and-Numeracy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Learning-For-Life.pdf>
- Looking At Our Schools 2016
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf>
- STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026
<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/STEM-Education-Policy/stem-education-policy-statement-2017-2026-.pdf>

- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice:
<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-2018%E2%80%932023.pdf>

Key Messages

Below are the key messages for today's seminar:

Key Messages



Courses in LCA are inherently transdisciplinary, authentic and relevant to the current and future needs of all students

LCA courses support the use of a wide range of inclusive, differentiated, experiential teaching and learning approaches

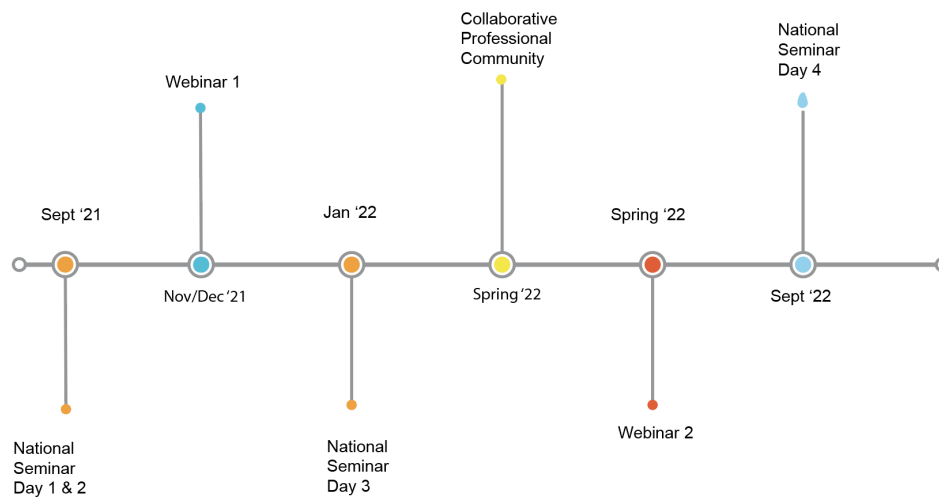
Learning outcomes provide the basis for teaching, learning and assessment in each descriptor

Senior cycle key skills are embedded in the learning outcomes of each module descriptor

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PDST Supports for Introduction of Revised Module Descriptors

Implementation of the revised module descriptors will be supported by a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The provisional CPD schedule can be seen below:



Leaving Certificate Applied Subject Specification CPD

Session 1: 9.30 - 11.00

Vision for Student Learning in LCA

Individual

What is your vision for high quality teaching, learning and assessment in the Leaving Certificate Applied classroom?

School

What is your **shared** vision for high quality teaching, learning and assessment in the Leaving Certificate Applied classroom?

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Reflection
In your opinion, what are the key messages emerging from this session?

Session 2: 11.15 - 1.00

Learning Outcomes Activity

1. Read learning outcomes below
2. Identify associated revised module descriptor
3. Identify relevant Senior Cycle keys skill(s)

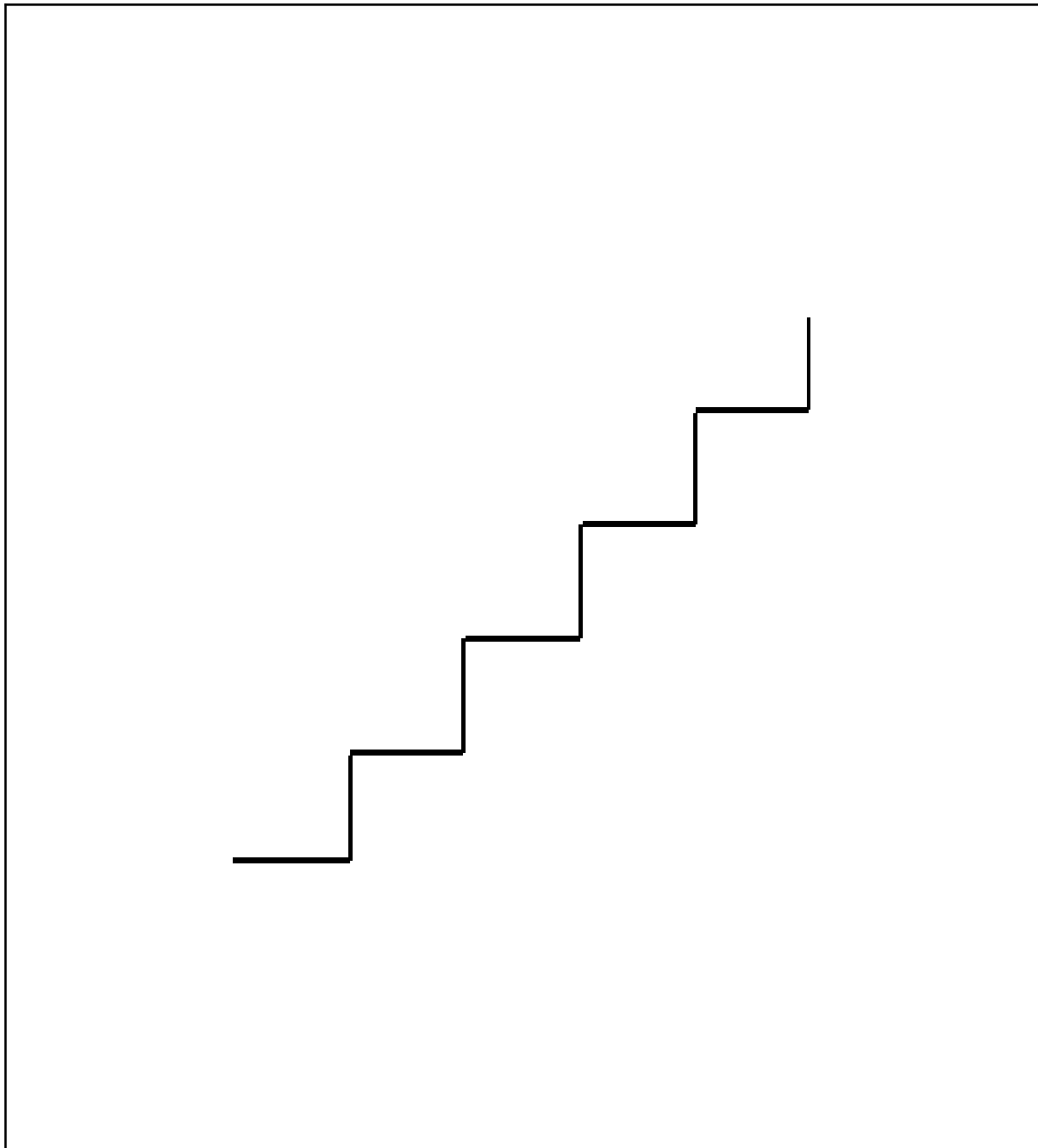
	At the end of....Students will	Module Descriptor	Key Skill(s)
1.	Create and apply formulas and recognise error values in formulas		
2.	Conduct enquiry-led research into a global digital communication platform		
3.	Appreciate the creation of their digital footprint and its consequences both positive and negative		

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Solution Focused Activity	
Challenges Identify three potential challenges from your school to the successful introduction of the revised descriptors	Solutions Record suggested solutions from your group to your identified challenges below
1	
2	

3	

Next Steps
<p>What steps will your school take to support a successful introduction of the revised module descriptors?</p> <p>You may need to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will be involved? • Do we need to consult/inform any member of our school community? • What do we need to learn more about? • What resources are available? • What actions can we take to implement the revised descriptors • What can you as the principal / co-ordinator do to facilitate this?



Extracts from DES Programme Evaluations

The following statements are extracts from a variety of LCA Programme Evaluations which are available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Programme-Evaluation-Reports-List/>

The statements can be used as a stimulus for discussion in identifying opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the revised module descriptors.

Recommendations

Teaching and learning

The template that supports planning for teaching and learning of each LCA module should be further developed to include planning for differentiated methodologies, outcomes, and Assessment.

Teachers should share and use strategies for active learning to ensure consistent high quality teaching and learning, and collaboratively develop a bank of active learning strategies suitable to LCA.

Learning in the majority of the lessons was not differentiated; all students were provided with the same material and tasks regardless of ability. In these lessons there was a need to ensure that the learning tasks and material were differentiated to more accurately meet students' individual needs. It is recommended that the teachers of LCA plan for the further use of differentiated teaching methodologies to appropriately challenge and extend students' capabilities

LCA is well co-ordinated. A good plan with organisational details has been created. Subject plans for the modules offered on the programme are in place and some of these are of a good standard. However, there is a need for the schemes to link the learning outcomes of the modules to specific methodologies so that they can be used more effectively as working documents.

The LCA teachers should collaborate and develop strategies to provide more regular formative written feedback on students' work, which should also encourage students to share in the responsibility for recording oral feedback provided during lessons.

Homework was not assigned in many of the lessons observed and there were limited entries noted in student journals of regular homework being assigned. Teachers of LCA should develop an appropriate assessment policy for the assignment of homework to their LCA students to reinforce in class learning.

Programme Provision and Planning

There is scope to extend the use of formative feedback on student work, with a focus on showing how and where improvement can take place. The co-ordinator, in collaboration with the team of LCA teachers, should discuss and extend assessment strategies for implementation in LCA.

Teachers of LCA should plan for the further use of differentiated teaching approaches to meet the varying learning needs of all students.

The template that supports planning for teaching and learning of each LCA module should be further developed to include planning for differentiated methodologies, outcomes, and

assessment.

Collaborative planning for teaching and learning in LCA requires development. Currently planning is the remit of individual teachers and there are insufficient opportunities for LCA teachers to meet, collaborate and reflect on the quality of learner outcomes.

The role of the core team should be extended to include leadership and evaluation of teaching and learning in LCA. Additionally, a forum for programme teachers to collaboratively plan, needs to be established.

A core team should be established and this team should meet periodically throughout the year. Minutes of meetings should record discussion and actions taken in relation to any strategies and targets devised for the programme,

Commendations

Teaching and Learning

In all lessons observed learning intentions were shared with students. Highly effective learner experiences were noted in a small number of lessons where teachers referred to the learning intentions during lessons and sufficient time was taken to re-visit the intentions and consolidate learning.

Very good learning was noted in lessons when the tasks assigned were appropriately differentiated, with extension activities provided for the better-able students. Highly effective learning was noted when students discussed and reflected meaningfully on what they learned.

Some very good use was made of digital technologies to support learning. Well-chosen film clips and visual presentations facilitated high levels of student engagement in learning.

A range of teaching approaches was noted in the lessons. Successful approaches included, “Think, pair and share”, independent activities, brainstorming and whole-class guided discussion. In the majority of lessons there were good opportunities for collaborative learning.

Lessons were generally very well planned. Teachers chose suitable resources and materials and made very good links to students’ experiences and interests. Cross-curricular planning between different modules was also evident

Students participating in the LCA programme are provided with a wide range of learning opportunities. Very good links have been established with the local community to ensure that the learning experiences provided are relevant to students’ lives.

Programme Provision and Planning

The quality of planning for individual LCA modules is good. In the best examples reviewed, teachers linked appropriate assessment strategies to the desired learning to be achieved. This good practice should be in all module plans.

The senior management team and LCA teachers are very committed to developing the programme. Opportunities for teachers to access continuing professional development are facilitated.

Programme provision and whole-school support for LCA is very good. School management and the programmes co-ordinators share a clear vision for the role and benefits of LCA in the school. Teachers of the LCA programme are facilitated to meet throughout the year.

The range of learning experiences provided by the school in their design of LCA is exemplary. A conscious effort is made to ensure that a wide range of subjects is offered to meet students' needs, interests, abilities, and intended progression routes.

The programme has been running in the school for fifteen years and senior management views it as an important component of the school's curriculum. Students are included in all the various aspects of school life such as sporting occasions, house examinations, award ceremonies and assemblies.

A very high level of care and individualised support is provided to LCA students. Core team meetings are effective in planning an integrated approach to addressing students' needs.

Additional Resources

LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016

A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools

Dimension: Leadership and Management

Domain: Leading Teaching and Learning

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching, and assessment	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school work to promote a learning culture. They have generally high expectations for students and lead staff in striving for improved outcomes. They support reflective practice and promote a culture of improvement.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to increase students' interest in learning.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school encourage teachers to develop their teaching, learning and assessment practices, and to share their practice.</p> <p>They encourage innovation and creativity. They recognise the value of individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school foster a culture in which learning flourishes. They lead the school community to continuously strive for excellence by setting high expectations for students. They promote a culture of continuous improvement by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE very effectively to encourage teaching that is engaging and challenging, and to enable all students to become active and motivated learners.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school expect and encourage teachers to develop and extend their teaching, learning and assessment practices, and to share practices that have proven successful at improving students' learning.</p> <p>They actively promote innovation and creativity. They welcome and celebrate individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>
Foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student	<p>The board of management and principal ensure the provision of a broad curriculum and a variety of learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles are committed to ensuring that all relevant school policies are inclusive, and are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles adhere to principles of inclusion and social justice to promote equality of opportunity for students. They strive to ensure that all members of staff support this ethos.</p>	<p>The board of management and principal foster students' holistic development by providing a very broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles promote an inclusive school community which demonstrably values diversity and challenges discrimination.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles ensure that all relevant school policies are inclusive and are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>Those with leadership and management roles establish clear principles of inclusion and social justice to deliver equality of opportunity for students throughout all aspects of school life. They do so in collaboration with all staff.</p>

education.ie

Digital Learning Framework for Post-Primary Schools

Dimension: Leadership and Management

Domain: Leading Learning and Teaching (p.10)

STANDARDS	STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	STATEMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
Promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching, and assessment	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school encourage teachers to use digital technologies to enhance their learning, teaching and assessment practices, and to share their practice.</p> <p>The school's self-evaluation process includes a vision and mission statement that clearly articulates the potential of digital technologies to enhance learning, teaching and assessment.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school have a shared understanding of why and how the school seeks to integrate digital technologies, and lead the development of effective policies and practices to support technology integration.</p> <p>They promote and encourage the use of digital technology to foster innovation and creativity. They recognise the value of individual and collective contributions and achievements.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school expect and encourage teachers to embed digital technologies in their learning, teaching and assessment practices, and facilitate their sharing of practice.</p> <p>The principal, with those leading the process, uses SSE very effectively to embed digital technologies in a way that is engaging and challenging, and enables all students to become active and motivated learners.</p> <p>The principal and other leaders in the school lead the development of effective policies and practices to support innovation and creativity and embed digital technologies in all aspects of learning, teaching, and assessment.</p> <p>They facilitate teachers on a whole-school basis to critically reflect and experiment with a range of digital technologies, continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their use, and revise their teaching strategies accordingly.</p>
Foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school have effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress and development. They recognise that digital technologies can support systematic monitoring to help pupils reach their full potential.</p> <p>The school takes measures to use appropriate digital and assistive technologies to protect and ensure learners' physical, psychological and social well-being.</p> <p>The school understands how access to digital technologies can create divides and how students' social and economic conditions can impact the way technology is used.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school have highly effective technology-based systems for monitoring students' progress and development. They ensure that these systems are used to help students reach their full potential.</p> <p>The school empowers teachers and learners to manage risks and use appropriate digital and assistive technologies to support their own social, psychological and physical wellbeing.</p> <p>The school understands the risk of exacerbating inequalities experienced by disadvantaged students and takes steps to ensure that special measures are in place to provide for the needs of these students.</p>
Manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school plan for and implement a broad and balanced curriculum using digital technologies that offer new opportunities for learning.</p> <p>They are committed to ensuring that the school curriculum is implemented in a way that provides valuable learning experiences designed to exploit the potential of digital technologies.</p>	<p>The principal and other leaders in the school plan for and implement a broad and balanced curriculum that embeds digital technologies to support communication, collaboration, knowledge co-creation and civic participation. They purposefully ensure that the use of digital technology is embedded across the school curriculum, whereby all students engage with valuable learning experiences.</p>

[education.ie](https://www.education.ie)

NCCA Glossary of Terms (NCCA, 2019)

Glossary

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements in curriculum specifications to describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.

Learning Intentions

A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, that describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning and teaching activities.

Success Criteria

Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success looks like. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.

Ongoing Assessment

As part of their classroom work, students engage in assessment activities that can be either formative or summative in nature. Teachers assess as part of their daily practice by observing and listening as students carry out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, and by considering how they respond to, frame and ask questions. Teachers use this assessment information to help students plan the next steps in their learning. Periodically this assessment will be in more structured, formalised settings where teachers will need to obtain a snapshot of the students' progress in order to make decisions on future planning and to report on progress. This may involve the students in doing projects, investigations, case studies and/or tests and may occur at defined points in the school calendar.

Formative Assessment

Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process, and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress, and to suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. Assessment for learning covers all of the aspects of formative assessment but has a particular focus on the student having an active role in his/her learning.

Summative Assessment

Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.

Features of Quality

Features of quality are the statements in the subject specifications that are used in making judgements about the quality of student work for the purpose of awarding achievement grades for certification. As success criteria are closely linked to learning intentions and based on the day-to-day processes in the classroom, student learning will gradually come to reflect the requirements set out in the features of quality which are used for certification purposes.

References:

Marcus-Quinn, Hourigan & McCoy (2019) *The Digital Learning Movement: How Should Irish*

Schools Respond. The Economic and Social Review, 50, 4, pp.767 - 783)

NCCA Focus on Learning (2019) *Workbook 5: Learning Outcomes*, NCCA: Dublin
https://www.ncca.ie/media/4107/learning-outcomes-booklet_en.pdf

Priestley, M. (2016) *A Perspective on Learning Outcomes in Curriculum and Assessment*, NCCA: Dublin

Priestley, M. (2019) *Learning Outcomes: An International Perspective*. NCCA: Dublin

Smyth, McCoy and Banks (2019) *Student, Teacher and Parents Perspectives on Senior Cycle Education*, ESRI: Dublin.

Tomlinson, (2014), *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*, ASCD:Alexandria, VA USA

Additional reading:

Harris and Jones (2019) *Teacher leadership and educational change*, *School Leadership & Management*, 39:2, 123-126, DOI: [10.1080/13632434.2019.1574964](https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1574964)