

Draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Irish

- Irish medium schools (L1)

Approved for consultation

Contents

Senior cycle	5
The experience of senior cycle	7
Who is this specification for?	9
How does this specification support students in Irish-medium education settings?	10
What language skills are students developing?	10
Rationale	12
Aim	14
Objectives	15
Related Learning	16
Early childhood	16
Primary Language Curriculum	16
Junior cycle	17
Senior cycle	17
After the senior cycle	17
Living Community and Living Society	18
Key Skills of Senior Cycle	19
Key Skills and Language Competencies in this Specification	20
Learning and Teaching	21
Language teaching and the language community	21
Self-awareness as learners	22
Language portfolio	23
Texts	23
Definitions of text in this specification	23
The role of texts in the learning process	24
Selection of texts	25
Course Overview	27

Structure of the specifications	27
Communication	28
Awareness	28
Language Creativity	28
Strands and Learning Outcomes	30
Strand 1: Communication	30
Strand 2: Awareness	33
Strand 3: Language Creativity	34
Assessment for certification	36
Assessment components	36
Leaving Certificate Grading	37
Reasonable Accommodations	38

Senior cycle

Learners in senior cycle are approaching the end of their time in school and are focusing on the directions they would like to take in their future lives. Senior cycle plays a vital role in helping learners to address their current needs as young adults and in preparing them for life in a changing economic and social context.

Senior cycle is founded on a commitment to educational achievement of the highest standard for all learners, commensurate with their individual abilities. To support learners as they shape their own future there is an emphasis on the development of knowledge and deep understanding; on learners taking responsibility for their own learning; on the acquisition of key skills; and on the processes of learning. The broad curriculum, with some opportunities for specialisation, supports continuity from junior cycle. It sets out to meet the needs of learners, some of whom have special educational needs, but who all share a wide range of learning interests, aptitudes and talents.

Curricular components at senior cycle promote a balance between knowledge and skills, and the types of learning strategies relevant to participation in a changing world where the future is uncertain.

Assessment in senior cycle involves gathering, interpreting and using 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 learners through a differentiated curriculum, to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given student and to test and certify achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping learners and teachers to identify and undertake the next steps in the teaching and learning process.

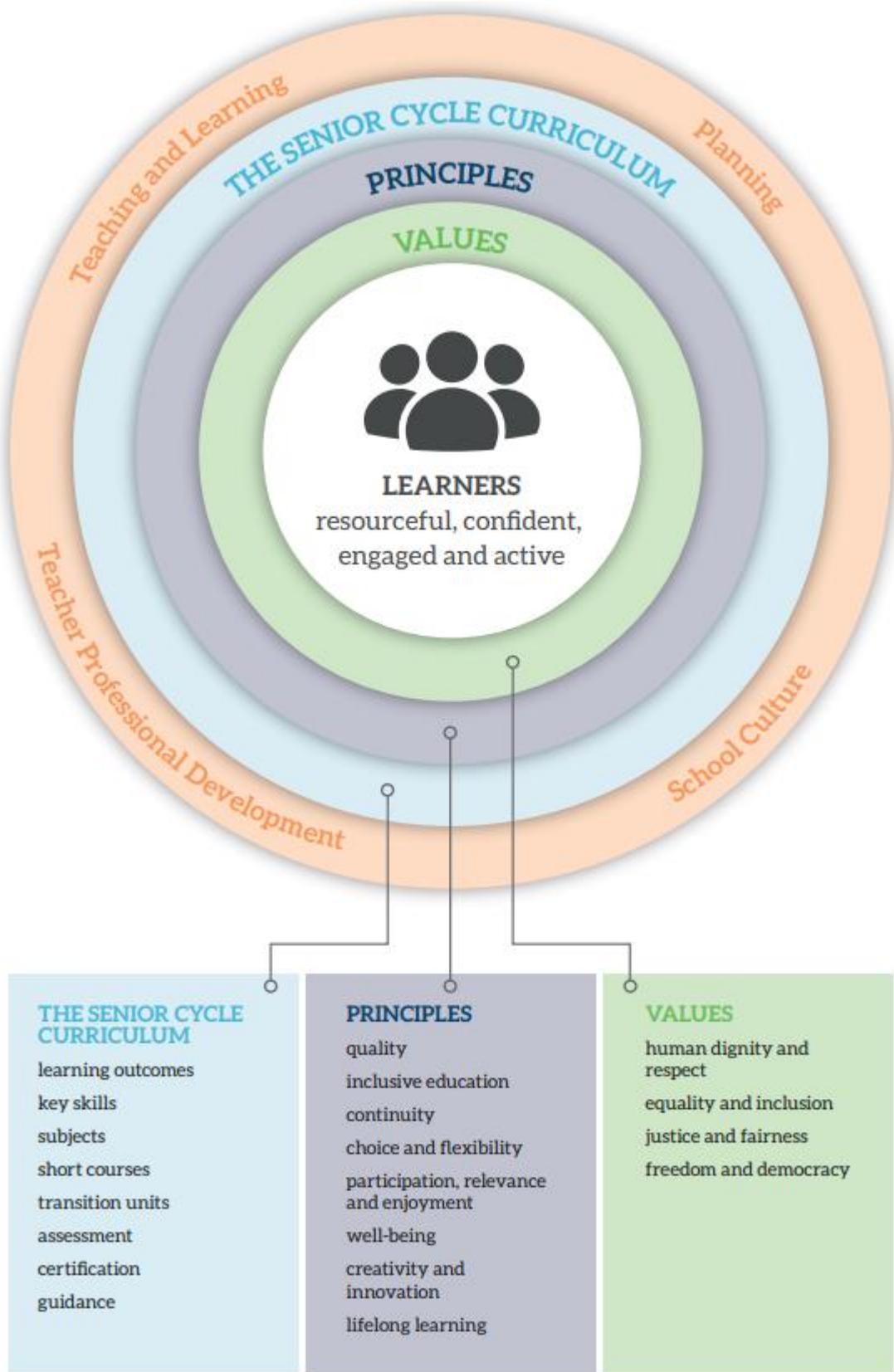


Figure 1: Overview of Senior Cycle

The experience of senior cycle

The vision of senior cycle sees the learner at the centre of the educational experience. That experience will enable students to be resourceful, to be confident, to participate actively in society, to build an interest in learning, and to develop an ability to learn throughout their lives.

This vision of the learner is underpinned by the values on which senior cycle is based. This vision of the learner is realised through the principles that inform the curriculum as it is experienced by students in schools. There are various elements to the curriculum: subjects and courses, embedded key skills, clearly-expressed learning outcomes, and a range of approaches to assessment that support it. The curriculum is the vehicle through which the vision becomes a reality for the learner.

At a practical level, the provision of a high-quality educational experience in senior cycle is supported by:

- effective curriculum planning, development, organisation and evaluation
- teaching and learning approaches that motivate and interest students, that enable them to progress, that deepen and apply their learning, and that develop their capacity to reflect on their learning
- professional development for teachers and school management that enables them to lead curriculum development and change in their schools
- a school culture that respects students, that encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning over time, and that promotes a love of learning.

Senior cycle education is situated in the context of a broader education policy that focuses on the contribution that education can make to the development of the learner as a person and as a citizen. It is an education policy that emphasises the promotion of social cohesion, the development of society and the economy, and the principle of sustainability in all aspects of development.



Figure 2: The vision of the learner

Who is this specification for?

This specification for Leaving Certificate Irish is aimed at native speakers and learners in Gaeltacht schools, and students in the sector that operate through the Irish language (Gaelcholáistí and Aonaid lán-Ghaeilge). In schools that operate as English-medium schools, there will also be the option to provide the L1 specification.

These schools have a varied linguistic landscape. Schools that operate through the medium of Irish (L1¹) cater for students of various linguistic backgrounds, including both native speakers and language learners; some whose primary language is Irish at home, others whose primary language is English at home and those who hail from bilingual/multilingual families.

In this specification, the language needs of both native speakers and T1 learners are taken into account. An enriched language learning experience is particularly important for these students, especially those who are native Irish speakers.

These students use the language on a daily basis, whether in the Gaeltacht community, at home with their families, in the neighbourhood and/or in educational settings. Because of their immediate language environment, these students would have developed production and receptive skills in the language. It is very important that students are provided with a continuous learning experience in the interest of their language development, their access to the rest of the curriculum and their progress in general. This specification caters for the Irish learning needs of students that have completed the L1 Specification for Junior Cycle Irish. This specification aims to develop, enrich and advance language skills.

When embarking on this specification students will enhance their vocabulary and native language variants which have been localised. They learn the importance of using an accurate and rich language. As they are surrounded by the language, they are very familiar with the living culture of Irish and have an opportunity to internalise that culture. This learning is an important step in the senior cycle for students as they grow and develop as competent and active users of the Irish language and preparing for life beyond post-primary.

¹ L1 is the language through which the school operates (English in English-medium schools; Irish in Irish-medium schools.) Irish as L1 refers to the teaching of Irish as the first language in Irish-medium schools. Irish as L2 refers to the teaching of Irish as the second language in English-medium schools.

How does this specification support students in Irish-medium education settings?

This specification supports students who embark on a learning journey through the medium of Irish by facilitating an enriched language learning experience which will enable them to

- enhance language skills
- illustrate analysis skills
- foster and deepen language, cultural and learning awareness
- expand their vocabulary and enrich
- distinguish different accents (those that are different to their own accents)
- approach the language as a system i.e. understanding language patterns
- understand and use appropriate language registers
- demonstrate their creativity and imagination.

In line with the State's policies for the Irish language, *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* (2010), *Gaeltacht Act* (2012) and *A Policy for Gaeltacht Education* (2016), one would expect that these competencies and appreciation would support native speakers in the Gaeltacht to

- exploit opportunities to use the language in the community
- learn through the medium of Irish across the curriculum
- avail of opportunities to innovate
- take an active role in the life of a Gaeltacht community

As part of the *Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* a number of criteria are set out for the Gaeltacht school. At post-primary level, a school recognised as a Gaeltacht School will implement this T1 specification and will encourage students to embrace it.²

What language skills are students developing?

This specification builds on the language skills developed through learning experiences in junior cycle Irish. In the Junior Cycle specifications for Irish, students consolidate and deepen their understanding of Irish. Students are able to communicate in an effective, interactive, confident manner in both formal

² Department of Education and Skills (2016). *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, p. 12

and informal settings in the language community. The fostering and development of awareness is emphasised: language awareness, cultural awareness as well as students' self-awareness as language learners.

This development is enhanced through the strands and the learning outcomes of this specification. Students' communication skills and awareness are developed. The students' creativity, imagination and enjoyment of learning Irish are fostered through learning opportunities that contribute to students' well-being and resilience. Senior cycle key skills are embedded in the learning outcomes and are developed, as appropriate.

All of the languages skills do not have to be at the same level, speaking skills could be at a higher level than writing for example. Students rely on feedback and guidance from teachers, their own self-awareness as language learners and opportunities to use the language to further develop their language skills.

Time allocation

The Irish specification is designed for at least 180 hours of class contact time.

Rationale

This specification supports and guides students on their language acquisition journey by consolidating their language skills and competencies, by cultivating a positive attitude to the language in them, and by enabling them to become active and effective language users. Students have various linguistic backgrounds in multicultural, multilingual settings that can be found in Ireland. It is recognised that dialects add richness and culture to Ireland's linguistic context. The Irish speaking community is very diverse and includes the various linguistic landscapes found in schools that operate through the medium of the Irish language.³ This specification focuses on the language needs of native speakers and learners. These students use the language on a daily basis, whether at home with their families, in the neighbourhood and/or in educational settings.

Students build on all that they have achieved to date whilst on the Senior Cycle quest to acquiring a language, and their personal, social and cognitive development progresses also. This supports students make adept and informed language and learning choices in Irish and in other subjects across the curriculum.

Students are empowered to consolidate language, cultural and learning awareness through enriched language experiences. Students' understanding of the language community culture and the culture of their own local community develops as they reflect on and study the Irish language and elements of Irish culture and heritage. This appreciation encourages students to consider their cultural identity in more general terms; their own identity, their culture, other cultures and other languages. This awareness and understanding supports students to seize opportunities to use the language as members of the language community⁴.

Creative, analytic and thinking abilities are expanded in students through studying texts⁵, including literary and non-literary texts. The canon and wealth of local literature provides students with rich sources of exemplary and regular language usage. They encompass a wide range of subjects and linguistic styles; aspects that help students as they develop their language skills. Public attitudes and/or attitudes of the students themselves are revealed through studying various literary works.

³ These schools cater for students of various linguistic backgrounds, including both native speakers and language learners; some whose primary language is Irish at home, others whose primary language is English at home and those who hail from bilingual/multilingual families.

⁴ Language community: a community in which the target language is spoken as the regular language for communication both inside and outside the home.

⁵ All products of language use, including oral, written, visual, or multimodal media, can be described as texts.

Students are able to manage various demands associated with school and the community as a result of acquiring and using the Irish language. This in turn prepares them to tackle the demands of adult life, employment and/or further education.

Aim

Students' awareness of the Irish language is developed and consolidated through the Leaving Certificate Irish specification while they also expand their competencies and skills as effective language users. Students are empowered to consolidate/strengthen their language and literacy skills, which will support them in making considered language choices in Irish and in other subjects across the curriculum. Students are empowered to assume ownership of their own language learning, something which will stand to them in life.

Objectives

The specification for Leaving Certificate Irish (L1) encourages students to:

- enhance their vocabulary (personal, contemporary, academic)
- understand and demonstrate the difference between spoken and written language
- understand different language registers
- approach the language as a system (i.e. recognising, understanding and using language patterns in Irish and in other languages)
- respect the linguistic richness and culture of the language community
- develop awareness of Irish culture and heritage and show respect for other languages and cultures
- make playful and creative use of language
- seize opportunities to use the language as an active member of the language community
- study a broad range of texts from various genres
- enjoy using the language by their own volition while composing pieces

Related Learning

Early childhood

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. This early learning lays important foundations for later learning. In the early years, children learn through relationships in which love, trust and respect are shown and through discussion, adventure and play. They learn about languages; how and when to use them; they learn how to reflect and to interact with others and with the world around them. They learn how to be creative, adventurous, how to develop sensible theories on the world, and how to make decisions for themselves as learners.

In the 'Communicating' theme the children share their experiences, ideas, opinions and emotions with others in a multicultural environment, increasing their self-esteem and competency in various ways and for different purposes. The framework helps children as they develop the language, providing examples of good use of the language and opportunities to speak and listen to it (this is of particular importance to children who are learning English or Irish as a second language). The theme of Exploring and thinking is about children making sense of the things, places and people in their world by interacting with others, playing, investigating, questioning, and forming, testing and refining ideas.

Primary Language Curriculum

The Primary Language Curriculum (2019) is an integrated curriculum. There are two versions of the curriculum: one which is focused specifically on Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium schools and another which is focused specifically on English-medium schools.

The Primary Language Curriculum supports teaching and learning in English and Irish. The curriculum aimed at L1 schools is for teachers of children of all abilities in all school contexts – Gaeltacht schools, Irish-medium schools and special schools. It is an integrated curriculum that makes connections across and within languages and that seeks to support the transfer of skills between languages. Therefore, the same structure (strands and elements) is used for Irish and English.

The Primary Language Curriculum helps teachers to support children's language learning through the process of teaching, learning and assessment in English and Irish. The curriculum and the Primary Language Toolkit work together to support teachers in providing rich learning experiences in language.

All these features of the Primary Language Curriculum correspond well with the rationale and aims of the specifications for junior cycle Irish. This helps to provide a continuous learning experience for students as they add to their language and learning skills in junior cycle.

Junior cycle

The junior cycle L1 Irish specifications build on the language development achieved during primary schooling. Students' needs and interests are central to these specifications. The learning at the heart of the junior cycle, as specified in the Junior Cycle Framework statements of learning (2015), emphasises the importance of developing students' understanding of language skills and competency. The emphasis placed on self-awareness as a learner as well as cultural, literary and heritage awareness are developed. When embarking on the junior cycle L1 specification students enhance their vocabulary, language accuracy and native language variants.

Senior cycle

Many senior cycle subjects have close links with Irish. Subjects are studied through the Irish language in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools. The skills and competencies that they learn in Irish are very important for their learning in other subjects. The competencies that they learn in Irish are connected to their learning in other subjects. For example, there are many similarities between Irish, other languages and computer science as elements such as recognising patterns, syntax, technical analysis and forming arguments are relevant to all three study areas. Students are able to recognise significant elements of the Irish language from their knowledge of English and other modern languages. Recognising these similarities and differences is an important component of acquiring a language in a correct manner. Studying history, geography or Politics and Society, for example, impacts students' attitudes to culture and heritage. Irish provides students with a context to develop metacognitive skills that will help them when they become responsible for their own learning.

After the senior cycle

This specification encompasses a wide range of transferable competencies and cross-discipline skills such as thinking, creativity and digital media learning. Leaving Certificate Irish supports students to undertake further study of the Irish language in third level institutions or in work places that operate through Irish. The emphasis placed on learning the key competencies in Leaving Certificate Irish supports effective participation of learners in a range of further education opportunities in which self-

direction, leadership and reflection are important. Students are encouraged and develop the self-esteem to participate in society and the community. Given that Irish is an official European language, opportunities as translators and interpreters are available to the students, as well as employment opportunities in a wide range of sectors in Ireland.

Living Community and Living Society

Community links are a valuable resource for schools and students participating in Leaving Certificate Irish. An example of these links is to collaborate with local community groups. Students will gain an appreciation for the Irish community and the effect that language has on people. Students will add local words to their vocabulary through this link. Students' self-awareness is developed and citizenship and active participation in the community in general are encouraged.

Leaving Certificate Irish includes studying and discussing current affairs, igniting an interest and a curiosity in the students, helping them to apply what they have learned to events or real life situations.

Key Skills of Senior Cycle

There are five key skills identified as being central to teaching and learning in senior cycle curriculum. These are: information processing; being personally effective; communicating; critical and creative thinking; and working with others. It is important for all students to develop these key skills in order to achieve their full potential, both during their time in school and in the future. This will allow them to participate fully in society, including family life, the world of work and lifelong learning. The key skills are embedded in this specification's learning outcomes and will be assessed in the context of the learning outcomes.



Figure 4: Key skills of senior cycle

Key Skills and Language Competencies in this Specification

Students develop their language production skills and receptive language abilities through active participation in their own learning. Students develop and improve their communication skills as they take part in collaborative learning, and express their opinions and ideas through conversation, discussion, reading and writing. Students are encouraged to engage in dialogue, and to listen carefully and critically to other peoples' opinions and attitudes. They develop skills to provide information in an appropriate and comprehensible manner by critically engaging with a range of texts from various genres, analysing the texts and by developing writing skills in different areas.

Students engage with linguistic concepts and the language learning process by participating in a range of communication tasks. Students develop information processing, critical thinking and creativity skills by actively completing language tasks. Students' ability to investigate and understand a text develops as they recognise and gather particular information from texts and through creating a range of creative texts.

Students develop an awareness of themselves as language learners as they try and develop learning strategies. This self-awareness empowers students to grow and develop. Students learn how to approach and solve problems as they engage with different language learning strategies.

The 'Awareness' strand allows students to play an active role in their learning by setting goals, developing action plans and receiving and using feedback. Students add to their competencies, skills and values over time as they become familiar with the strands in an integrated manner.

Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning in the 'Language Creativity' strand; opportunities are created for them to demonstrate their linguistic, thinking, creative and innovative capabilities through their own interest areas.

Learning and Teaching

Senior cycle students are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that will enable them to become more independent in their learning and to develop a lifelong commitment to improving their learning. This specification gives teachers in partnership with students the flexibility to use a range of appropriate learning and teaching strategies that are relevant to the various contexts in which the language is used. In this way students' interests and needs are emphasised in the learning and teaching of this specification. Irish is the language of learning and communication in the Irish language classroom. The aim of teaching is the natural acquisition of the language among young Irish speakers.

There are many contexts in which more than one language skill is required. For this reason, the strands are not studied in isolation but the integration of skills and competencies is emphasised. Skill integration occurs when students are able to interact naturally in the language. This approach also allows teachers to provide students with feedback on their progress in various skills.

Literary and non-literary texts are important sources in language teaching and learning. Students develop literacy skills as they become familiar with various texts. Literacy is the capacity to recognise, understand, filter and interpret various forms of communication. Language awareness is an important element of literacy development. This awareness will help students to make informed language choices while manipulating subjects, ideas and concepts across curriculum subjects.

Teachers have expertise or special knowledge of the language and this helps create a rich language input as part of the teaching. When students encounter challenges and difficulties; teachers provide guidance, encouragement, help, feedback and support so that they may progress. Teachers guide students in exploiting opportunities for use and communication in the language environment and encourage a respect for the language and for Irish culture.

Language teaching and the language community

Different opportunities for learning that cater for different language functions and the abilities of each student are created as students engage with the learning outcomes. In this way, students develop the ability to play an active role in the language community in their local area and further afield. The language community has a central role in students' progress. The students' language skills and

competencies are developed through interaction with the language community. The language community provides students with examples of the living language, students observe and imitate elements of this language, which in turn act as a stimulus for them in their acquisition of the language. Students' bilingual/multi-lingual identity is developed when they compare and contrast Irish with other languages.

Fellow students play an important role in learners' progress. Students' understanding of themselves as language learners and users is developed by interacting with fellow students and through contemplation. Students achieve language production by taking advantage of opportunities to communicate with fellow students in group work and in pairs in class and in everyday relationship contexts outside of school.

Self-awareness as learners

Students plan, monitor and assess their own learning and develop a positive attitude regarding their ability to learn by conquering their learning and through autonomous reflection. It is recognised that certain circumstances greatly influence student development as they learn and acquire a language. These include motivation; attitude; self-awareness as a language learner; awareness of personal development; language awareness; rich language input; and opportunities to use the language in the language community (output).

Students take responsibility for their learning by setting goals, developing action plans and receiving and responding to assessment feedback. Balanced and direct feedback can support learners' willingness to fully embrace new learning opportunities, it also develops resilience in the learners when progress is slow and challenging.

This specification aims to support students on their language learning and acquisition journey so that they can become capable, independent and autonomous language users. Students gradually develop their own learning strategies on their language acquisition journey. These various learning strategies support students as they engage in different tasks required for Irish and in other subjects across the curriculum through Irish. They also help students as they engage with the language community.

Language portfolio

Over the two years of Leaving Certificate Irish (T1) students develop a language portfolio. A language portfolio gives students an opportunity to develop a collection of samples of their own work. The portfolio is a feature of the formative assessment that contributes to the students' self-directing and self-reflection skills while on the language acquisition journey. Throughout the portfolio development process, students set personal learning objectives and record their own progress. The students' portfolios comprise a wide range of texts in various formats, and students actively participate in creating and choosing the portfolio. Students partake in conversation and discussion about their portfolio as part of the oral assessment⁶. However, the portfolio itself is not assessed for certification.

Texts

Literary and non-literary Irish texts support the integrated development of students' skills and competencies. All strands are included in that integration.

Definitions of text in this specification

All products of language use, including oral, written, visual, or multimodal media, can be described as **texts**.

A **literary text** is a creative text which demonstrates the state or circumstances of an individual, a story which derives from emotions, life experience and memories of a person. Students' are given an insight to the culture of their own language community and that of other cultures in the literary texts.

A **non-literary text** is a text that is created to share knowledge or information. Literary elements could be evident in a non-literary text.

A **genre** is the type of text made up of many sentences, whether it is oral or written, which was composed with particular objectives. They have particular organisational patterns, depending on their purpose and audience, as well as appropriate language registers.

⁶ Guidance will be provided regarding the composition and use of the portfolio.

The role of texts in the learning process

Literary and non-literary texts of the language are a vital and valuable source for the student. It is through engaging with texts for different goals that student's develop awareness of the various media through which Irish can be used, his language awareness and self as a language learner and which enables him to demonstrate language abilities and his creative ability used in the creation of texts in Irish across a range of genres.

The integration of the manipulation of literary or non-literary texts and the development of language skills and abilities is a basic principle of this specification. Students develop their reading, analytical and learning skills when they manipulate literary and non-literary texts. They practice all of the language abilities/skills: listening, reading, speaking, spoken interaction and writing.

Irish language literature plays a particular role in this specification and is central to the process of the student learning and acquisition of the Irish language. Literature is an important aspect of language learning and contextualisation. Irish language literature is an important resource in giving students an expert insight into elements of the culture and heritage of Ireland and Europe and it adds to their personal development and development of cultural identity.

Skills and competencies

Irish language literature is a learning resource:

- which builds students' vocabulary and richness of expression;
- that provides samples of language accuracy and grammatical traits in the context of the living language;
- that empowers students to undertake independent reading;
- that assists students in developing analytical skills and independent thinking.

Culture and heritage of Ireland and Europe

Irish language literature gives students expert insight and understanding:

- into the culture, history, and heritage of Ireland, in times past and present;
- on elements of the cultural and political heritage of Ireland and Europe;
- on the Irish language itself as a creative medium and as a living community language;
- on the environment and on local, national and international cultural heritage.

Personal development and empathy

The reading of literature nurtures imagination and self-understanding in various ways:

- it provides students with mental and imaginative stimulation;
- it inspires creativity and novel thinking in students;
- it nurtures the development of humanity in students and inspires empathy and emotional sensitivity;
- it challenges students and entices them to understand opposing insights and go beyond the limits of their own experience;
- it awakens an understanding of the beauty of literature itself and the pleasure of reading.

Selection of texts

In order to support the aims of this specification, texts are chosen from a designated list.

The students' role in choosing the texts is extremely important. Teachers help students to investigate the possibilities to choose the most appropriate text. Students choose the texts in partnership with their teachers.

The following guidelines demonstrate the scope of texts and genres that should, at the minimum, be studied as part of Leaving Certificate Irish.

Higher level	
Poetry/verse texts	At least 5 complete poems/songs to be chosen and at least 3 poems by one designated poet
(a) complete play (b) complete visual text (c) 2 complete short stories*	At least 2 to be chosen from (a), (b) or (c)
Prose literature One complete text from the following genres must be studied: novel short stories collection* biography folklore work.	At least one complete text to be chosen

**If (c) is chosen, students must study two complete short stories. If it is chosen to also study a collection of short stories, these two short stories should not be chosen from that collection of short stories.*

Ordinary level	
Poetry/verse texts	At least 3 complete poems/songs to be chosen and at least 3 poems by one designated poet
Complete play / visual text	At least one complete text to be chosen
Complete short story	At least one to be chosen
Folklore story	At least one to be chosen

Course Overview

The 'Communication' strand is the main strand of the specification; the two other strands, 'Awareness' and 'Language Creativity', actively support the Communicating strand to create the students' learning experience. These strands build on students' experiences and learning from the junior cycle. Students' learning experience is deepened and broadened through the integration of the strands. While learning outcomes associated with each strand are specified separately in this specification, this does not imply that the strands are to be studied in isolation. An effort is made to foster, develop and maintain the various skills and competencies by using an integrated approach.

Structure of the specifications

There are three integrated strands in this specification: Communication, Awareness and Language Creativity.

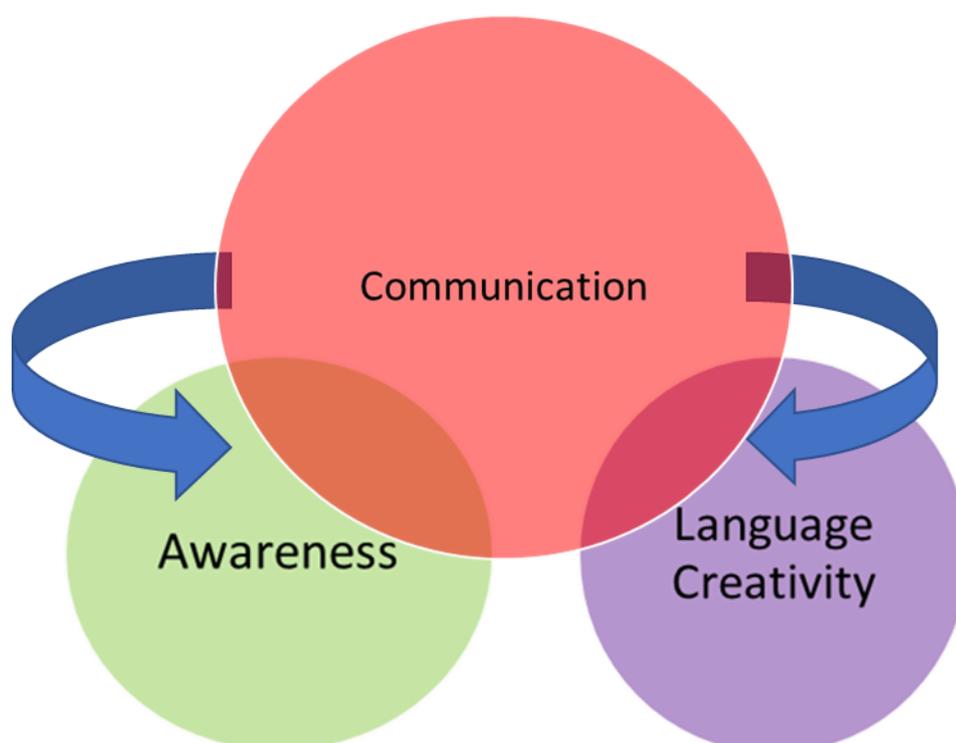


Figure 3: The specification's strands

Communication

The 'Communication' strand is the main strand of the specification, and the two other strands actively support the Communication strand in the language acquisition process. Communication competence consists of students' competencies in the following five key skills: listening, reading, speaking, spoken production, and writing. These are skills required to be an active language user. Students manage to discuss and justify information, ideas and attitudes in an accurate, clear and appropriate manner as they develop communication abilities and competencies.

Awareness

The 'Awareness' strand encompasses language awareness, the learner's self-awareness and cultural awareness. Language awareness is students' knowledge and understanding of correct use, systems, and the natural flow of Irish as a language; this then helps them become more effective and more confident as independent capable language users.

Learners' self-awareness relates to the awareness they have of themselves as language learners. Students add to their understanding of their own learning processes by developing language awareness. They take ownership self-directing their own language learning activities. Students concentrate on their own style and individual attributes. They use suitable learning strategies which enable them to overcome difficulties and challenges relating to the accurate and vibrant use of language, for example, which will help them with their learning.

Cultural awareness helps students develop an understanding of the language community and to place themselves inside the language community and other cultures. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own culture, the culture of the Irish language community, and other cultures by thinking about and studying Irish and elements of Irish language culture and heritage.

Language Creativity

This strand on 'Language Creativity' focuses on developing confident, critical and creative thinkers. Language creativity is an essential lifelong skill that is relevant to every age-group, each level of ability and all communities. This strand encompasses cognitive and social skills, as well as students' attitudes and emotions as they learn. It focuses on developing students' imagination and thought process.

Students express themselves with novel thinking and through creative communication. Students are encouraged to explore and use their own methods of expression that are appropriate and engaging for the target audience, as they partake in relevant learning opportunities.

Intellectual and physical functionality contribute to students' well-being and resilience – essential elements to successful learning. Due to the ever-changing nature of society and the speed at which things change in the workplace, these competencies and skills are essential as students prepare for learning and for life in general.

Learning opportunities based on student interests awaken the students' various capabilities, skills and strengths. Student's imagination and curiosity are roused as they encounter a range of texts and areas of interest. Opportunities are created for students to take a chance and to analyse different solutions to questions. Students are empowered to be innovative so that they can enjoy and progress with their language acquisition. Student learning abilities are encouraged through creative and fun learning experiences and students deepen their ownership of the language acquisition process.

Strands and Learning Outcomes

Strand 1: Communication

'Communication' encompasses the students' abilities in the following five skills: listening, reading, speaking, spoken production, and writing, which are needed to communicate. They are capable of functioning confidently and effectively in the language in communicative interpersonal settings in the language community. They are capable of understanding and using the everyday familiar language at normal speed of their native language community, and of other language users, while communicating. They enjoy communicating and interacting with other users of the language. This contributes to students' language acquisition. They notice rich and accurate language and use that rich and accurate language to speak and write in Irish. They read a wide range of texts, including literary and non-literary texts, that are used in the language community and demonstrate a critical understanding of the subject matter. They compose their own relevant texts for communicating.

There are five elements within this strand and learning outcomes are specified for each element.

Listening

Students should be able to:

- 1.1 understand texts* from various genres** in the main dialects
- 1.2 recognise and understand the stance, attitude and messages from a range of genres**
- 1.3 recognise Irish pronunciation and sounds
- 1.4 recognise the similarities and differences between texts*
- 1.5 understand different language registers
- 1.6 critically choose texts* for particular interests and for a particular objective
- 1.7 respond to texts* from various genres** in the main dialects

Reading

Students should be able to:

- 1.8 use a wide range of authentic literary and non-literary texts* to develop their language capabilities
- 1.9 understand, critically analyse and respond to a wide range of authentic literary and non-literary texts* in various genres**
- 1.10 explore a personal selection of texts* independently for research and pleasure
- 1.11 assess the reliability of sources of information
- 1.12 compare and contrast texts*
- 1.13 read texts* that provide a broader insight to humans and to life in general
- 1.14 create an understanding of various literary texts* and to derive meaning and formulate conclusions on them
- 1.15 develop an understanding on the context in which a text* is written and to explore the writer's voice

Oral Language

Students should be able to:

- 1.16 perform, interpret, demonstrate, narrate, or give a presentation on their subject of choosing from a range of genres** for different target audiences
- 1.17 use rich and accurate Irish in an effective and confident manner in a wide range of subjects
- 1.18 accurately use Irish pronunciation and sounds
- 1.19 develop their spoken language
- 1.20 voice and explain personal opinions and understandings, and justify them in an effective and confident manner
- 1.21 take and express a particular stance in a structured manner

Spoken Interaction

Students should be able to:

- 1.22 actively participate in conversations in different contexts
- 1.23 question, verify and exchange information, opinions and attitudes
- 1.24 enjoy holding conversations with fellow students and with other Irish users
- 1.25 develop language in their areas of interest in order to make conversation with fellow students
- 1.26 manipulate information, opinions, and peoples' attitudes

Writing

Students should be able to:

- 1.27 use the writing process to create texts* in a range of genres**
- 1.28 demonstrate an understanding of accurate Irish syntax
- 1.29 use various sources to support their writing
- 1.30 develop stances and arguments in a structured manner
- 1.31 give a personal response to texts* by other writers from a range of genres and give critical insight into them
- 1.32 effectively use feedback to enhance their writing capabilities
- 1.33 compare different written texts*

* All products of language use, including oral, written, visual, or multimodal media, can be described as texts. See definition on p. 23.

** 'Genre' refers to types of text made up of many sentences, whether it is oral or written, which was composed with particular objectives. See definition on p. 23.

Strand 2: Awareness

In this strand students develop their language awareness, their self-awareness as language learners and cultural awareness as they engage with the learning outcomes. They develop an understanding of how the Irish language works, how languages work and how they learn languages as individuals. This strand provokes the students' thinking and reflection strategies and develops their confidence to use them on a voluntary and spontaneous basis in a range of learning contexts. Students add to their understanding of the language communities and cultures and of a multilingual society. As they are surrounded by the language, the students are very familiar with the living culture of Irish and have an opportunity to make that culture their own. They understand the language's craft and their respect for the language community grows, they relate to it and that encourages them to use the language in the language community. Students develop an understanding of recognising and using appropriate language in specific circumstances.

There are three elements within this strand and learning outcomes are specified for each element.

Language Awareness

Students should be able to:

- 2.1 recognise and discuss accurate, rich input for each of the language skills
- 2.2 recognise and accurately use syntax and grammatical patterns in the language
- 2.3 compare and contrast Irish syntax and grammar with that of other languages
- 2.4 compare and contrast Irish pronunciation and sounds with those used in other languages
- 2.5 use the correct language register for the context of the communication
- 2.6 recognise, understand and correct personal mistakes in speaking and writing Irish
- 2.7 develop an understanding of the value of being bilingual/multilingual
- 2.8 compare and contrast other dialects with their own dialect

The learner's self-awareness

Students should be able to:

- 2.9 set personal learning objectives and take steps to achieve them
- 2.10 recognise and use language learning styles
- 2.11 find, exploit and create opportunities for language use in the language community
- 2.12 deal effectively with feedback as part of their language learning process
- 2.13 reflect on their own progress and share this insight with fellow students
- 2.14 use reliable language resources to develop accuracy, richness and fluency in the language

Cultural awareness

Students should be able to:

- 2.15 choose, research and present on elements of Irish culture through whichever means they choose
- 2.16 understand the evolution, status and context of the Irish language
- 2.17 recognise and explore the language and culture as part of their own identity

Strand 3: Language Creativity

The learning outcomes of this strand enable the student to develop and perform language skills in new and creative ways. This strand focuses on developing confident, critical and creative thinkers. This strand encourages the students to partake in learning opportunities, either by themselves or collaboratively, in a creative and imaginative manner. Cognitive skills are developed which contribute to the students' identity. Students are encouraged to develop, analyse critically and re-assess various ideas.

Students should be able to:

- 3.1 demonstrate an understanding of their personal preferences regarding composition and to share this
- 3.2 creatively use a range of genres** to develop their language skills
- 3.3 enjoy using the Irish language by developing imaginative and creative skills
- 3.4 create texts* by themselves or in a group
- 3.5 demonstrate proficiency of the presented subject
- 3.6 explore, understand and discuss different responses to/opinions on questions
- 3.7 question common opinions to arrive at their own personal perspective
- 3.8 embrace difficulties and try to overcome them
- 3.9 provide an interpretation, demonstration or perform texts* from a range of genres** either by themselves or in a group
- 3.10 critically assess their own performance/demonstration and its impact on the target audience, in order to improve it
- 3.11 develop communication skills (accent, pronunciation, gestures, rhythm) for the performance/demonstration
- 3.12 explain the chosen style for the performance/demonstration
- 3.13 express their opinions and personal perspectives in an effective manner
- 3.14 develop their own personal style or voice
- 3.15 recognise and develop personal opinions, understandings, perspectives and skills that arise while composing
- 3.16 use various techniques and styles to present different messages

Assessment for certification

Assessment in senior cycle takes different forms and is used for a variety of purposes. It is used to determine the appropriate route for learners through a differentiated curriculum, to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given learner and to test and certify language achievement. Assessment supports and improves learning by helping learners and teachers to identify next steps in the language teaching and learning process.

As well as varied teaching strategies, varied assessment strategies will support language learning and provide information 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 language tasks, asking higher order questions and giving feedback that promotes learner autonomy, assessment will support language learning and summarise achievement.

Assessment for certification in Leaving Certificate Irish (L1) is based on the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of this specification. In any year, the learning outcomes to be assessed will constitute a sample of the outcomes from both strands. The key skills of senior cycle are embedded in the learning outcomes and will be assessed in the context of the learning outcomes.

Assessment components

Leaving Certificate Gaeilge (T1) will be assessed through:

- oral examination
- aural examination
- written examination.

Each component will be administered and assessed by the State Examinations Commission. Each component of the assessment will reflect the integrated approach across the three strands set out in this specification.

There are two levels of examination, Ordinary level and Higher level, to which a differentiated allocation of marks will apply, as outlined below in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Assessment component	Higher level
Oral language/spoken interaction	35%
Listening in context	10%
Reading in context and language awareness	15%
Creative composition tasks	20%
Personal response to literary texts	20%

Figure 5: Overview of assessment (higher level)

Assessment component	Ordinary level
Oral language/spoken interaction	35%
Listening in context	10%
Reading in context and language awareness	20%
Creative composition tasks	20%
Personal response to literary texts	15%

Figure 6: Overview of assessment (ordinary level)

Leaving Certificate Grading

Leaving Certificate Irish is graded using an 8-point grading scale at both Ordinary level and Higher level. The highest grade is a Grade 1, the lowest grade a Grade 8. The highest seven grades (1-7) divide the marks between 100% and 30% into seven equal bands, with a grade 8 being awarded for percentage marks of less than 30%.

The grades at Higher Level and Ordinary Level are differentiated by prefixing H or O respectively. This gives H1-H8 at Higher Level, and O1-O8 at Ordinary Level.

Grade	% Marks
A1/G1	90-100
A2/G2	80<90
A3/G3	70<80
A4/G4	60<70
A5/G5	50<60
A6/G6	40<50
A7/G7	30<40
A8/G8	<30

Figure 7: Leaving Certificate grading scale

Reasonable Accommodations

The scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations operated by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) facilitates access to certificate examinations by students who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know because of a physical, visual, hearing and/or learning difficulty. The scheme assists students who have special educational needs to demonstrate what they know and can do in the certificate examinations, without compromising the fairness or integrity of the assessment. It provides accommodations for students with a variety of complex special educational needs including learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioural or other conditions. Support arrangements are provided only to those who need them and the application process is school based. Further information about the scheme is available from the SEC.

