



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curraclain agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Senior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme: Area of Special Interest

Elective Module

Draft for consultation



Introduction

The Senior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme (SCL1LP) consists of a range of curriculum areas, each designed on a modular basis. There are four curriculum areas at the heart of the SCL1LP: Numeracy; Communication and Literacy; Personal Care; and Electives. Area of Special Interest is an Elective Module.

Area of Special Interest consists of one module. It is designed for a minimum of 60 hours of teaching time/class contact time over two years.

Module title	Recommended time in hours
Area of Special Interest	60

Rationale

Area of Special Interest is an elective module that provides students with an opportunity to integrate their personal interests with their learning. An area of special interest is an interest that inspires in students a desire to learn more about it or dedicate more time to understanding and exploring it. It can be a topic students wish to explore further, an activity they enjoy participating in or anything that sparks their interest, enjoyment and confidence. This elective module will support the development of the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions relevant to their area of special interest.

This student-led and student-centred module promotes a sense of ownership for students over their learning and builds students' confidence in their own abilities. Special interests provide for self-expression and creativity. While undertaking this module students can better understand themselves and what motivates them. As students engage more deeply with their area of special interest, they can develop confidence in that area, which can have a positive impact on their sense of self. Students are provided with the opportunity to increase their capacity to manage their learning.

Continuity and progression

This module builds upon students' learning and experiences with the Primary School Curriculum and the Framework for Junior Cycle. In particular, learning through the Area of Special Interest builds upon students' development of the junior cycle key skills of managing self, staying well, communicating, being creative, working with others, and managing information and thinking. The module also promotes development and learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy, language, motor coordination, mobility and leisure skills.

The elective aims to develop students' senior cycle key competencies in being creative, communicating, managing learning and self, thinking and solving problems, and promotes greater independence, as well as providing students with a sense of achievement and confidence in their learning. Students are given opportunities to demonstrate how learning acquired here can be linked to prior learning, to other modules and curriculum areas, wider school activities and life outside of school. Learning acquired here has universal transference across multiple areas of learning. This helps to reinforce learning and progress students' ability to communicate, interact, be creative, to express themselves, to explore their feelings and ideas, the perspectives and worldview of others in a variety of ways. This supports students beyond school and provides them with a sense of achievement and confidence as they transition to the world of work, study or further services beyond school.

Teaching and learning

Exploring an area of personal interest provides an opportunity for students to delve into an area of their choice in greater detail. Students use their strengths to guide their learning. As students engage with their topic or activity through hands on, real world, experiential based learning, they develop their critical and creative thinking, and their ability to work independently and with others. By pursuing their choice of topic or activity and presenting their learning through a format of their choice, students are encouraged to be more curious, independent and creative, ask thoughtful questions and seek solutions.

Teachers can support student engagement with this elective at a level appropriate to each student's strengths, interests and abilities through providing guidance and encouraging them to:

- Explore their interests
- Narrow down their interests to a specific topic, activity or idea to explore further
- Identify what they want to achieve within their chosen topic or activity
- Identify how they wish to present their learning
- Identify possible tools, resources or materials they may need for the area of interest such as digital tools, physical resources, personnel, or experiences such as work experience, trips or guest speakers
- Plan or engage with planning a timeline
- Take on board constructive feedback at each stage, which will highlight their strengths and areas to consider
- Engage in peer learning
- View challenges as opportunities for learning
- Make connections between the stages, the scaffolds, the skills they acquire and their learning
- Celebrate the achievements.

By initiating, planning, carrying out, producing, finalising and presenting their area of special interest, students are provided the opportunity to increase their capacity to manage a broad range of learning in senior cycle and beyond.

Module: Area of Special Interest

Module descriptor

Students develop a deeper interest and understanding of their area of interest by experiencing, participating in and exploring their area of special interest as an individual or within a group. Students produce something, which they present to others. They are supported in managing and organising their work. Students also learn how to shape their thoughts and communicate them. Teachers can support student engagement at a level appropriate to each student.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Students learn how to gather and structure information, initiate and plan their ideas by themselves or with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. identify specific strengths, interests or hobbiesb. choose an area of special interest based on strengths, interests or hobbiesc. set personal learning goalsd. identify resources requirede. create and engage with a plan and timelinef. identify and access sources of relevant information
Organising the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">g. organise informationh. present area of special interest in a format of their choicei. identify new learning acquiredj. identify how the different roles, people and/or resources helped the processk. identify how learning acquired can be applied to other areas.

