



NCCA

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

Senior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme: Area of Special Interest

Elective Module

Draft for consultation



Introduction

The Senior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme (SCL2LP) consists of a range of curriculum areas, each designed on a modular basis. There are four curriculum areas at the heart of the SCL2LP: 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 describes 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. Students will develop 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 upon students' confidence in their own abilities. Special interests provide avenues 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 begin to develop expertise in that area. This helps students develop a positive sense of self.

The applied and experiential nature of this elective allows the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that students develop to be transferred and applied across multiple areas of learning. The experience of self-directing their work can be transformative for students as they learn new ways to plan and organise, work more effectively, individually and in groups, and gain valuable leadership experience that contributes to their holistic development.

Engaging students in their area of special interest contributes to the development of key competencies in senior cycle and vice-versa. When this happens, all learning across senior cycle is supported and the development of important life skills that are essential to student independence is promoted. Students stand to benefit in many ways as they progress in learning pathways and as they transition to life beyond school.

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. It sees students accessing their learning through their strengths. As students engage with their topic or activity through hands on, real world, experiential based work, they develop their critical and creative thinking and their ability to work independently and with others. They learn to analyse and synthesise information, managing their time as they work individually or within a team. Furthermore, 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 and creative, asking thoughtful questions and seeking innovative solutions.

Teachers can support student engagement with this elective 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
- Take on board constructive feedback at each stage, which will highlight their strengths and areas to consider
- Engage in peer learning and review
- View challenges as opportunities for learning
- Make connections between the stages, the scaffolds, and the learning they acquire
- Celebrate their 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.

Students learn about	Students should be able to
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, demonstrating independent thinkingc. set personal learning goalsd. identify resources requirede. demonstrate planning and time managementf. identify and access sources of relevant informationg. review the plan throughout the process and update as appropriate
Reflecting on the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">h. organise and summarise information from different sourcesi. present their area of special interest in a format of their choicej. reflect on their learning, including what they discovered, challenges they faced and how they overcame themk. evaluate how the different roles, people and/or resources impacted on the processl. identify how the area of special interest could be explored further or extendedm. identify how learning acquired can be applied to other areas.

