



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Specification for Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

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

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Senior Cycle

Senior cycle educates the whole person and students' experiences in senior cycle contribute to their intellectual, social and personal development and their overall wellbeing. During senior cycle students develop a stronger sense of their identity, learning with and from their peers, teachers, other adults, and various media. Senior cycle has eight 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 plan and design their senior cycle with the aim of enhancing the educational experience for all.

Senior cycle consists of an optional Transition Year, followed by a two-year course consisting of subjects and modules. Building on their learning in 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. Students are supported to make informed choices as they choose different pathways through senior cycle. Their experiences in senior cycle should establish firm foundations for transition to further, adult and higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment, and for meaningful participation 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.

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. Senior cycle gives every student opportunities to experience the joy of reaching significant milestones in their personal educational journey. Every subject and module students experience should contribute to the realisation of this overall vision for 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 and evaluation
- teaching and learning approaches that motivate and interest students, that enable them to progress and improve and to deepen, apply and reflect on their learning and
- a school culture that respects students and promotes a love of learning.

Rationale

Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a dedicated space and time where students can further develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions needed to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, now and in their future lives. The SPHE specification is grounded in values of respect, equality, inclusivity, responsibility, dignity, compassion and empathy.

During this period of their learning, young people are developing their capacity to think and behave more independently and will experience significant change in their personal, social, emotional and academic lives, some of which can be challenging. The knowledge and skills gained and the values and dispositions nurtured in SPHE can help young people to manage these challenges.

Developing self-awareness and social and emotional skills is a lifelong process. By building on the learning in Junior Cycle SPHE, learning in Senior Cycle SPHE enables students to deepen the core skills of self-awareness, self-management, self-regulation, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. Senior Cycle SPHE also provides an opportunity for students to extend their health literacy skills, as they learn how to access, understand, appraise and use information and services related to health and wellbeing and build their confidence to communicate and act upon this information.

In senior cycle, students develop a greater capacity for reflective thinking and critical questioning. Applying this in SPHE, they can be enabled to reflect upon and critique social/cultural norms and to understand the wider social and economic factors that can influence behaviour and decisions in relation to health, wellbeing and relationships. The SPHE course also enables young people to understand patterns of inequity, discrimination and violence and how these can impact on health,

wellbeing and relationships. By encouraging students to become thoughtful and active agents in their own lives, SPHE plays an important role in fostering self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Senior Cycle SPHE helps students prepare for the transition to life beyond school. It nurtures important life skills and aspects of self-care and self-management that are needed as they move into adulthood and prepare for living more independently. It also recognises that relationships continue to be an important part of their lives and that these too are evolving as they mature.

Alongside supporting young people's personal development and preparing them to be responsible adults, this course develops awareness that everyone is interdependent and that personal decisions and actions have consequences for others, thus fostering a sense of connection with and responsibility for people and communities beyond ourselves.

Through the use of critical and active pedagogies, SPHE provides a safe, supportive and non-judgmental space where students can engage in dialogue and reflection, grow in self-awareness and awareness of others, and identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others.

This specification supports teachers in adopting an inclusive approach in accordance with principles of equality, human rights and responsibilities. This ensures that all students can see themselves, their families and their communities reflected across the learning and can learn to value diversity as part of human life and as a source of enrichment. SPHE thus contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all sexualities, genders, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.

Aim

This course aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will empower students to be healthy, resilient, confident, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful, loving and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.

Continuity and progression

SPHE in Ireland is grounded in an approach that is holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age and developmentally appropriate.¹ A redeveloped SPHE curriculum also provides a progression of teaching and learning from early childhood education to post-primary.

Across all stages of learning, SPHE is developing children's and young people's positive sense of self, and their capacity to care for themselves and others. At each stage, important SPHE themes are revisited, and new themes introduced, thus ensuring both continuity and progression of learning. In revisiting themes, care is taken to allow for deeper engagement relevant to the students' ages, evolving needs and stages of development.

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for children from birth to six years, describes children's learning and development using four themes. These are Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking. Wellbeing is about children being confident, happy and healthy and focuses on both psychological and physical wellbeing.

As set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* (2023), a curriculum area named 'Wellbeing' is part

of the redeveloped primary curriculum. This area supports children's social, emotional, and physical development now and into the future. Incorporating teaching and learning in SPHE and PE, the wellbeing area enables children to develop self-awareness and knowledge, build life skills, develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school, their community, and wider society, and value positive and healthy relationships with others.

Junior Cycle SPHE (2023) has as its aims to *build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives; empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society* (p.5).

Finally, learning in Senior Cycle SPHE supports young people as they manage the demands of life now and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life beyond school. It builds the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values to enable them to flourish both now and in the future.

¹ NCCA, Report on the Review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools (2020).

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 and the competencies they develop as a result is outlined under the heading 'key competencies'. The learning which occurs within the subject or module in question is outlined under the heading 'strands and learning outcomes'. However, it is vital to recognise that key competencies and subject or module learning are developed in an integrated way, both in the design of specifications and 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

- 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 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.

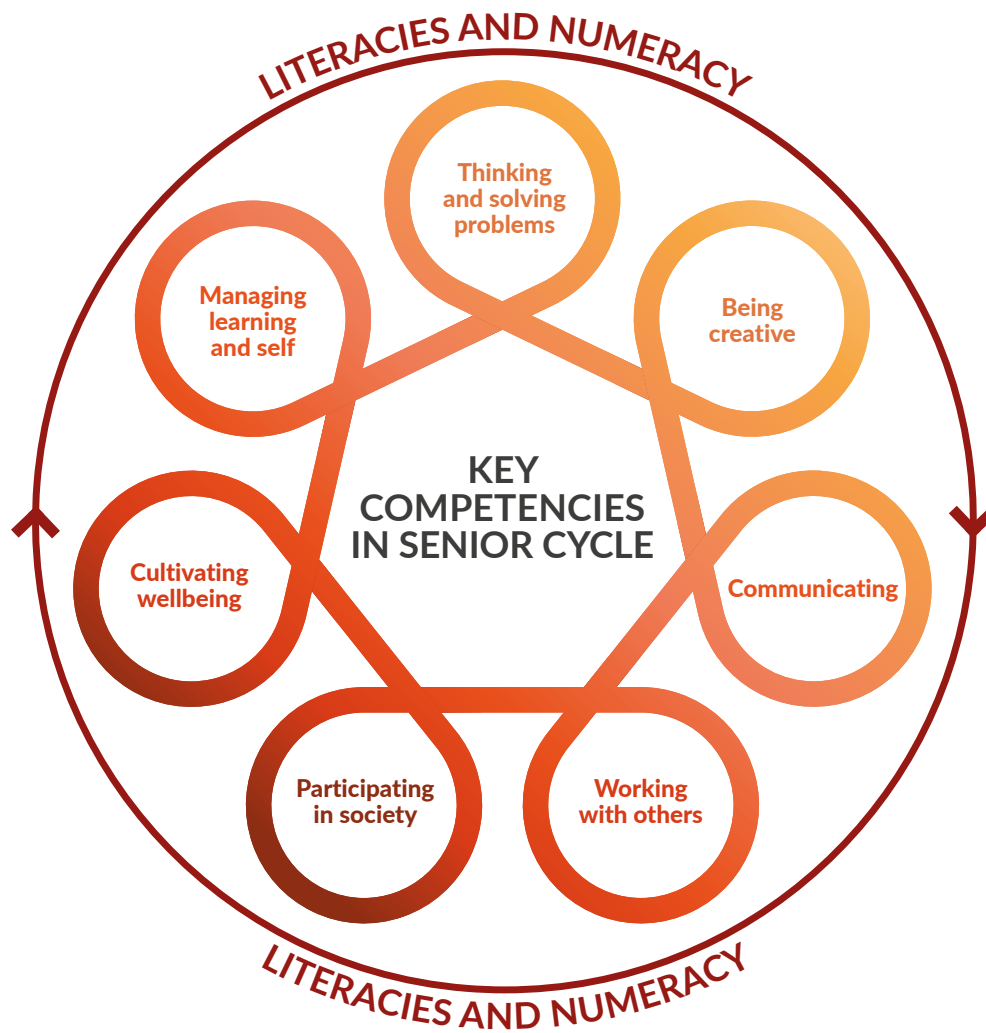


Figure 2: Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy.

These competencies are linked and can be developed together; 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/>

Table 1: Key Competencies and SPHE

Key competencies	Opportunities for learning and development
Thinking and solving problems	Students become more skilful in critical and reflective thinking as they critique social and cultural norms and come to understand the various factors that can influence behaviour and decisions related to health, wellbeing and relationships.
Being creative	Students examine and evaluate options and consequences by engaging with relevant data, experiences and scenarios. This includes being able to accommodate ambiguity and uncertainty as they engage with questions of concern to their lives.
Communicating	Students develop awareness and skills to effectively communicate opinions, feelings and needs in a respectful and empathic manner.
Working with others	Through dialogical and participative learning students engage with different perspectives and appreciate how a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences can enrich their learning.
Participating in society	Students are encouraged to recognise their own rights and responsibilities in relation to their health, wellbeing and relationships as well as an awareness of their social responsibilities. Students gain awareness of the socio-cultural factors that influence their wellbeing and how this is a matter of social justice, requiring both individual and collective responses.
Cultivating wellbeing	Students explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing and learn strategies and techniques to help them take care of themselves and others.
Managing learning and self	Students grow in awareness of their own thoughts, emotions, attitudes and values, and by providing opportunities for reflection, they come to recognise the insights and learning gained.

Strands of study and learning outcomes

This SPHE specification is designed for a minimum of 60 hours of class contact time over the final two years of senior cycle education.



Figure 3: Visual overview of Senior Cycle SPHE

Senior Cycle SPHE is designed around broad learning outcomes that, with careful planning, can enable all students to engage and achieve relative to their individual aptitudes and abilities. The learning outcomes are relevant to all students and further guidance to support planning for a diversity of students in the SPHE classroom can be found on the [SPHE toolkit](#).

The learning outcomes set out below describe the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions that students should be able to demonstrate after a two-year period of learning. This learning is underpinned by three cross-cutting elements which are summarised below.

Thinking critically and empathetically

This element focuses on supporting young people to critically consider their own and societal attitudes, values, norms and behaviours. The purpose is to promote awareness of the influences that shape their decisions and behaviours so that they can make informed choices and act as responsible agents of their own lives. By adopting a socio-cultural critical lens, young people can become critically aware of the wider influences on health/wellbeing and relationships; examine social norms; and discern what lies within their control, what lies beyond their control and strategies for dealing with both. This lens acknowledges that the individual is not solely responsible for their health and wellbeing and builds an appreciation of the wider influences at play. It also creates awareness that how we relate to others has both personal and societal impacts.

Thinking empathetically and being able to demonstrate empathy underpins positive interpersonal relationships. It involves being open to different perspectives, seeking to understand the feelings and experiences of others, and showing compassion. Thinking empathetically is a key feature of critical thinking as it stems from a capacity to seek out alternative ways of seeing our world.

Exercising rights, responsibilities and inclusivity

This element seeks to highlight the importance of adopting a rights-based, inclusive approach as part of learning and teaching in SPHE. This means encouraging young people to recognise their own rights and responsibilities in relation to their health, self-care and relationships; affirming their right to comprehensive health education and health services; and raising awareness of how their interactions and behaviours impact on the lives and rights of others. Hence with rights come personal and social responsibilities. A rights-based approach also supports inclusivity, ensuring that learning and teaching across the strands are reflective of all sexualities, genders, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.

Being health literate

This element involves building young people's knowledge, confidence and comfort to access, understand, appraise and use information about health and services and make decisions for the health and wellbeing of themselves and those around them. Hence, being health literate means more than knowing how and where to access reliable and relevant information. It also involves being able to communicate, assert and act upon that information, including knowing when/how/where to seek out relevant help and services. These skills become even more important as young people move into adulthood.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, spiritual,² emotional and mental wellbeing and the relationships between these. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health.

Students learn about Students should be able to

Factors that influence health and wellbeing generally

- 1.1** explore the determinants of good health
- 1.2** investigate ways a person can influence their holistic health, including physical activity, food, sleep, social connections, positive self-image and connecting with nature, and discuss how these are related
- 1.3** examine social norms, attitudes and beliefs related to alcohol, tobacco/vaping and substance use

Fostering positive mental health

- 1.4** explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, community, peers, school, social media, digital technology, alcohol and mood-altering drugs, and one's self-image and identity
- 1.5** recognise helpful and unhelpful thinking patterns, including negative self-talk, and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
- 1.6** describe and draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health

Coping with emotional or mental health challenges

- 1.7** recognise the signs and symptoms of low mood, stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
- 1.8** discuss ways of responding to low mood, stress and anxiety
- 1.9** explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed

Safely managing social situations

- 1.10** discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

² The spiritual dimension of wellbeing relates to being able to experience a sense of awe and wonder and knowing that life has meaning and purpose. (*Primary Curriculum Framework, NCCA, 2023*)

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students learn about Students should be able to

Healthy relationships

- 2.1** demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating effectively, navigating difficult conversations, preventing and managing conflict and dealing with break-ups
- 2.2** reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity, and those of others, can influence the dynamics of families, friendships and romantic relationships
- 2.3** discuss the need for consent and the importance of care, respect, empathy, trust and mutual pleasure within a sexual relationship.

Gender, culture and social norms

- 2.4** examine how both positive and harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online, and in society and discuss strategies for challenging and changing harmful attitudes and narratives.

Abusive and violent relationships

- 2.5** identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control
- 2.6** explore the root causes and consequences of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), and outline the supports and services available, and protections under the law
- 2.7** investigate the possible influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations and what supports are available for those impacted by pornography
- 2.8** discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape, and what to do and how to seek support if they or someone they know has experienced any of these.

Sexual health

- 2.9** understand the components of sexual health including fertility across the life-cycle, reproductive choices, sexual functioning, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health information and services.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being enabled to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and stick to good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understanding their rights and responsibilities before the law, and building the skills needed to advocate for and express solidarity with those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students learn about Students should be able to

Self-management and self-care skills

- 3.1** consider strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health
- 3.2** demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life
- 3.3** explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times and where to find support.

Rights and responsibilities before the law

- 3.4** summarise accurately their rights, responsibilities and protections before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, consent, alcohol and drug use, their work-place rights and right to access services.

Ways to advocate for and create greater equality

- 3.5** demonstrate the confidence and skills needed to be their own person and be able to advocate for themselves and others, even if it means standing out from the crowd
- 3.6** recognise when people are experiencing discrimination³ and demonstrate the skills needed to express solidarity in a range of situations.

³ The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. These grounds are a useful lens for engagement with this learning outcome.

Teaching for student learning

Teaching and learning in SPHE provides a unique space where students can develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values they need to maintain healthy lives, make healthy choices and build respectful and caring relationships now and for the future.

At the heart of all teaching and learning is the relationship. Building supportive, caring and respectful classroom relationships which allow students to safely engage in dialogue and reflection and grow in awareness of themselves and others, is an essential foundation for effective SPHE.

This requires the teacher stepping out of the role of expert and assuming the role of facilitator; acknowledging that many of the topics addressed in SPHE may be sensitive and complex and may not have easy answers. It also requires adopting an open, non-judgmental disposition and at the same time being able to skilfully question and probe assumptions, behaviours and viewpoints, within youth culture or society at large.

Teaching and learning in SPHE is grounded in values of respect, equality, dignity, inclusivity, responsibility, compassion and empathy.

Overarching features of effective teaching and learning in SPHE

When planning SPHE lessons, it is important to design learning that fosters awareness, dialogue, reflection and action.

Awareness

Awareness is the ability to recognise and understand one's own thoughts, emotions, values and behaviour. It includes understanding how different factors influence our sense of self and how we live our lives, including the influence of family, peers, the internet, gender, culture and social/cultural norms. This also includes an awareness that to be human is to be in relationships and that we all share a common humanity, dignity, rights and responsibilities.

Dialogue

Through dialogical teaching and learning students are facilitated to engage with a diversity of viewpoints; discuss and reflect on their own perspectives, values, and behaviours and those of others; enlarge their

understanding of topics of relevance to their lives; and come to informed, thoughtful decisions based on their personal values, with due regard to their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. Respectful dialogue is aided by presuming a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences in every classroom and seeing this as a resource for learning.

Reflection⁴ and action

This is about students reflecting on what they have learned and coming to their own personal insights and conclusions in response to their learning. It enables students to consider how the learning can inform their choices, behaviour and relationships, and to discern what it means for their lives now or for the future. Learning in SPHE is a 'praxis'; an ongoing process of critical reflection and action, nurtured by dialogue with others.

⁴ Reflection is "the ability to take a critical stance before deciding, choosing and acting, such as, by stepping back from the assumed, known, apparent, and accepted, comparing a given situation from other, different perspectives, and looking beyond the immediate situation to the long-term and indirect effects of one's decisions and actions. This enables individuals to reach a level of maturity that allows them to adopt different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their decisions and actions." OECD, 2020, Technical Report: Curriculum Analysis of the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030.

Further characteristics of effective teaching and learning in SPHE

Effective SPHE teaching and learning in senior cycle:

- involves regular consultation with students to ascertain their needs, questions and concerns and uses this information to plan teaching and learning aligned with the learning outcomes
- uses cooperative and experiential learning methodologies
- provides accurate and age-appropriate information
- is relevant to the real-world experiences of students
- builds personal, social and emotional skills and provides opportunities to practice these skills
- fosters students' self-efficacy by affirming their capacity to think critically and act responsibly for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others
- provides opportunities to discuss values, attitudes and beliefs that support healthy behaviours, at a personal and societal level
- models respect for and affirms the value of a diversity of viewpoints, based on principles of human rights and human dignity, without wishing to impose a particular point of view
- affirms diversity as an aspect of human life, enabling all students to feel valued and included in the teaching and learning in their classrooms. This involves using inclusive and affirming language
- critiques social pressures and influences and creates awareness of how social, economic, environmental and cultural factors can influence decisions and behaviours related to health, wellbeing and relationships
- uses a variety of methods to assess what students are learning and uses this information to provide feedback and plan the next steps in learning.

For guidance on teaching SPHE and suitable methodologies and resources see: [SPHE Toolkit](#) (curriculumonline.ie)

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 learners. By setting appropriate and engaging tasks, asking questions and giving feedback that promotes learner autonomy, assessment will support learning and promote progression, support the development of student key competencies and summarise achievement.

Assessment in SPHE

Assessment in SPHE is based on the rationale, aims and learning outcomes in this specification. The purpose of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey. Through ongoing assessment activities in SPHE students can demonstrate:

- an increase in knowledge, skills, values and dispositions needed to be healthy, responsible and caring young adults.
- increased ability to apply the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions gained through participation in the learning to personal contexts or to practical problems.
- a change or confirmation of beliefs/attitudes/assumptions/values.
- new strategies acquired to support their health and wellbeing.
- a growing capacity to make choices and take actions in support of their health and wellbeing and that of others.

There is no final written examination in SPHE. All students who engage in Senior Cycle SPHE (whether following Leaving Certificate Establish (LCE) or Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes) are assessed through **key assignments**.

Key assignments in SPHE consist of a number of learning experiences and reflection activities that are derived from the learning outcomes across the three strands of the SPHE curriculum.

The key assignments are not marked or graded although satisfactory completion of key assignments is required, and students will receive teacher feedback. Evidence of key assignments can be presented in a variety of forms: audio, written, digital, poster, photography, etc.

The key assignments are designed to enable students show evidence of their growing capacity to

- find reliable and relevant information about health and services
- make judgements, and propose solutions or strategies in relation to different scenarios
- show awareness of both the personal and social impacts of decisions and behaviours
- recognise the various influences on health and wellbeing
- reflect on what they are learning and how this learning is relevant in their lives both now and in the future
- integrate and apply their learning in relevant social and personal contexts.

Students following the LCA programme will be awarded credits on completion of key assignments. These credits are recorded for purposes of LCA certification.

Detailed guidance on assessment and reporting in Senior Cycle SPHE (including a menu of key assignments will be published at Senior Cycle SPHE on www.curriculumonline.ie)

Appendix 1 Key competencies learning outcomes

Key competency	Learning outcomes
	Students should be able to
Thinking and solving problems	<p>Apply critical thinking in both familiar and new situations.</p> <p>Identify problems, come up with potential solutions and make informed decisions.</p> <p>Develop and use a range of thinking strategies, values and dispositions to develop and respond critically to questions and tasks and to solve problems.</p>
Being creative	<p>Be creative and develop a range of strategies and processes which support their creativity.</p> <p>Develop values and dispositions which nurture their creativity.</p>
Communicating	<p>Deepen their understanding of various forms of communication and of the material they are studying.</p> <p>Communicate meaningfully and effectively, using various tools and formats, for different purposes and audiences.</p> <p>Develop habits and nurture dispositions which help them to communicate meaningfully and effectively.</p>
Working with others	<p>Work co-operatively in pairs, groups and teams.</p> <p>Develop strategies, values and dispositions which make working with others more meaningful.</p>
Participating in society	<p>Participate meaningfully in their schools, communities, and wider society.</p> <p>Develop values and dispositions which support meaningful participation.</p>
Cultivating wellbeing	<p>Cultivate the wellbeing of self and others.</p> <p>Develop values and dispositions which support wellbeing and the capacity to cope with and respond to challenges.</p>
Managing learning and self	<p>Manage their own learning, with support from their teachers, other adults, their peers and technology.</p> <p>Develop strategies, values and dispositions which support their learning and their future life path.</p>

Appendix 2 Glossary of Action Verbs

Action verbs	Students should be able to
Analyse	Study or examine something in detail, break it down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure; identify parts and relationships, and to interpret information to reach conclusions
Assess	Show skills of judgment and evaluation, balancing different perspectives
Appreciate	Acknowledge and reflect upon the value or importance of something
Consider	Reflect upon the significance of something
Demonstrate	Prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, showing by examples or practical application
Describe	Give an account, using words or images, of the main points of the topic
Devise	Plan, develop or create something by careful thought
Discuss	Examine different concepts, perspectives or opinions on a topic and then come to their own conclusion/viewpoint, supported by appropriate evidence or reasons
Examine	Look closely at arguments, data, information and stories in a way that uncovers its origins, assumptions, perspectives and relationships
Explain	Implies more than a list of facts/ideas; the reasons or cause for or further detail about these facts/ideas must also be given
Explore	Systematically look into something closely for the purpose of discovery; to scrutinise or probe
Identify	Recognise and state briefly a distinguishing fact, feature or example
Investigate	Observe, study, or make a detailed and systematic examination, in order to establish facts and provide supporting evidence for conclusions
Research	Find suitable information, sort, record, analyse and draw conclusions
Recognise	To come to know or be aware of something based on personal experience
Reflect	Give thoughtful and careful consideration to their action, experiences, values and learning in order to gain new insights and meaning
Summarise	State briefly the main points of information
Understand	To know or realise the meaning or importance of something

Appendix 3 Glossary of terms used in Learning Outcomes

Abusive relationships: a general term for relationships which may be overtly or covertly aggressive, coercive, controlling, demeaning, harassing, intimidating, isolating, or threatening. Abusive behaviour can be once-off or repeated, intentional or unintentional.

Addiction pathway: refers to how engaging with addictive substances or behaviours changes the reward pathway of the brain (that releases dopamine) and describes the effects of this over time. In the context of this curriculum, addictive behaviours might include consideration of screen-time, gaming, gambling or pornography, while addictive substances might include consideration of alcohol, nicotine or mood-altering drugs.

Consent: a core principle of all respectful interpersonal relationships; consent involves recognising and respecting one's own boundaries and the boundaries of others and always checking whenever one is unsure. Consent in a sexual setting is defined in [Irish law](#) as follows: *a person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act*. The age of consent to engage in sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years old.

Determinants of health: whether people are healthy or not is greatly determined by a wide range of factors. Factors such as where we live, the state of our physical environment, genetics, gender, our income and education level, ability to access health services, and our relationships and social support networks, all have considerable impacts on health.

Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) *Domestic violence* is defined as all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit. *Sexual violence* is defined as any sexual act performed on the victim without consent or by taking advantage of the vulnerability of the victim. *Gender-based violence* is violence that is directed against a person

because of that person's gender. Forms of gender-based violence include sexual harassment, stalking, physical or psychological coercion, abuse and violence, and cyber violence.

Emotional wellbeing: refers to recognising, understanding and being able to express and manage our feelings and emotions. Emotional wellbeing is fluid and should not be equated with happiness which is subjective and transitory. Nor should it be understood as the absence of negative moods, feelings or thoughts.

Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender is socially and culturally constructed, so understandings of gender differ across contexts and over time.

Gender identity: refers to a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.

Health: a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Holistic health: refers to an approach to wellbeing that looks at the whole person and simultaneously addresses the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and environmental aspects of health. It also recognises the interconnected nature of all these aspects.

Image-based abuse: online harassment and image based sexual abuse includes the non-consensual distribution of intimate images including the taking, distribution, publication or threat to distribute intimate images without consent, the sending of or threatening to send grossly offensive communications with intent to cause harm to the victim.

LGBTQ+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. The 'plus' is used to signify additional gender identities and sexual orientations that are not specifically covered by the five initials.

Mental health: mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Mental ill-health: mental ill-health is used to describe moderate to severe mental health difficulties which are having a significant impact on a person's life and for which they are likely to require some kind of intervention or support. (Cannon et al., 2013) It is possible to live with mental health difficulties and have a sense of wellbeing.

Pornography: Dictionary definitions of pornography typically define pornography as writings or depictions of sexual acts for the purpose of creating sexual arousal. Such definitions do not adequately describe pornography today which depicts the objectification, dehumanization, humiliation and degradation of people, mostly women. Therefore, within SPHE, much of the discussion of pornography concerns the widespread availability and influence of depictions of sexual activity which portray female subordination and male dominance and within which violence and sexual assault are normalised.

Positive mental health: positive mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. It implies 'full functioning' and includes satisfaction with life, optimism and hope, self-esteem, resilience and coping, social functioning and emotional intelligence (NHS Scotland, 2008). This curriculum promotes positive mental health by fostering social and emotional learning – the process through which young people enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving – and strengthening individual protective factors, such as self-esteem,

emotional resilience, positive thinking, problem solving, social skills, stress management skills and feelings of mastery or self-efficacy.

Self-care: refers to what we can do for ourselves to promote and maintain health and wellbeing and prevent ill-health. Most people already practise self-care, for example, by eating healthily, exercising, personal hygiene or getting enough sleep. Forging supportive relationships, spending time in nature and making time for relaxation are other aspects of self-care. In a nutshell, it's about all the ways we take care of ourselves and protect our health.

Self-management skills: refers to our capacity to manage our thoughts, regulate our emotions and effectively take charge of our behaviour in different situations. Self-management is helpful in school and work environments, and in our personal lives. It involves developing the executive functioning skills that allow us to set and achieve goals, practise self-discipline and self-motivation, manage impulses, avoid procrastination, reduce stress and improve self-efficacy.

Sexual assault: is an act of physical assault that has a sexual aspect or motivation. It includes groping, forcibly kissing someone or touching someone in a sexual manner without their consent.

Sexual harassment: is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It can take the form of actions, gestures, spoken or written words, pictures, etc. It can involve text messages, email, phone calls or other electronic or social media communication.

Sexual health: in the context of Senior Cycle SPHE, this refers to learning about male and female fertility across the life-cycle (including menopause), the physical and psychological dimensions of sexual functioning, reproductive choices, ways to avoid sexually transmitted infections, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and sign-posting where young people can access sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships. (See [sexuality wheel](#).)

Sexual expression: refers to the many ways we show our sexual selves. It includes communication and acceptance of love, expressing emotion, giving and receiving pleasure, having the ability to enjoy and control sexual and reproductive behaviour.

Sexual orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender. Some people do not feel sexual attraction or may have very low levels of sexual attraction, and this is termed asexuality.

Social and emotional skills: in the context of this curriculum, social and emotional skills refer to self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness as set out in the [CASEL Social and Emotional Skills Framework](#).

Social norms: the unwritten rules of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that are considered acceptable in a particular social group or culture. In the context of working with young people it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important.



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