



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

Senior cycle

Key skills framework

Key skills framework

The ability to think critically and creatively, innovate and adapt to change, to work independently and in a team, and to be a reflective learner are prerequisites for life and for the workplace in the 21st century. In line with international trends and influenced by the Lisbon strategy and the OECD DeSeCo (Defining and Selecting Key Competencies) initiative, a framework of key skills has been developed as part of the curriculum and teaching and learning at senior cycle. In addition, they support the development and enhancement of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy which are crucial for learners to access the curriculum and for their future life chances. For example, skills in communication, problem-solving, accessing and selecting information to mention just a few, will contribute to literacy and numeracy mastery in all areas of the curriculum.

Following consultation, engagement with schools and research five key skills have been identified as central to teaching and learning across the senior cycle curriculum. These are *information processing, being personally effective, communicating, critical and creative thinking and working with others*. These key skills play an important part in all learners achieving their potential, both during their time in school and in the future. They also enable learners to participate fully in society, including family and community life and the world of work.

Many of the elements that make up these skills are already a feature of teaching and learning across subjects. The embedding of key skills in the curriculum will thus involve building on current practice but it also involves increasing attention to the skills and their potential for actively engaging learners. By embedding the key skills in the curriculum learners are presented with a range of learning experiences and outcomes that improve their present and future access to learning, their social interaction, their information and communication abilities and their ability to work collaboratively.

The key skills framework is an integrated framework reflecting the strong inter-relationships between each of the five skills. As learners engage with each of the key skills they grow in their knowledge about learning and their skills of learning, both in

general terms and in the particular context of their own learning. Therefore, as learners absorb the five key skills they also learn how to learn.

Each key skill has associated elements and learning outcomes. The elements further describe the skill, clarifying the skills that students will develop. The learning outcomes are phrased at a more behavioural level and indicate what students might show as evidence of achieving in the key skill. The key skills are illustrated and their purpose outlined below.

Learners will encounter the key skills frequently and in an integrated way in many areas of the curriculum. The skills are embedded in the learning outcomes of each subject, short course and transition unit, which provide the basis for assessment as part of ongoing learning and in examinations.



Five key skills

Information-processing

This key skill helps learners become competent in an information-intensive environment. As well as developing the specific skills of accessing, selecting, evaluating and recording information, learners develop an appreciation of the differences between information and knowledge and the roles that both play in making decisions and judgements.

Critical and creative thinking

This key skill assists learners in being aware of different forms and patterns of thinking so that they become more skilled in higher order reasoning and problem solving. In engaging with this key skill, learners reflect critically on the forms of thinking and values that shape their own perceptions, opinions and knowledge.

Communicating

This key skill helps learners to appreciate how central communication is to human relationships of all kinds, and to become better communicators in both formal and informal situations. As well as developing specific skills in a variety of media they form a deeper understanding of the power of communication—particularly language and images—in the modern world. It also incorporates competence and confidence in literacy as an essential basic skill for all learners.

Working with others

This key skill highlights the role that working with others plays in learning and in reaching both collective and personal goals. It helps learners gain some appreciation of the dynamics of groups and the social skills needed to engage in collaborative work. It contributes to an appreciation that working collectively can help motivation, release

energy and capitalise on all the talents in a group. In a broader context, they come to recognise that working collectively is important for social cohesion and for engaging with diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups.

Being personally effective

This key skill contributes to the personal growth of learners, to them becoming more self-aware and to their using that knowledge to develop personal goals and life plans. As well as giving learners specific strategies related to self appraisal, goal setting and action planning, an important dimension of this key skill is in building the know-how of learners in recognising how to get things done, how to garner and use resources effectively, and how to act autonomously according to personal identities and personal values.

Key skills develop knowledge and skills for learning

The vision of learners completing senior cycle is that they will pursue excellence in learning and develop a love of learning. They will engage with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to learn how to learn. Learning to learn requires the development of positive beliefs about learning and a willingness to engage in new learning situations. It helps learners to take more responsibility for their own learning as they proceed through their senior cycle education, gradually decreasing their levels of dependency on teacher direction. As learners engage with each of the key skills they grow in their knowledge about learning and their skills of learning, both in general terms and in the particular context of their own learning. In this way each of the five key skills contributes to learning to learn.

Developing the key skills through the curriculum

Learners should encounter the key skills frequently and in an integrated way in many areas of the curriculum. They will be developed through the learning outcomes of each subject, short course and transition unit. Students will not take separate courses or units in key skills; rather they will encounter the skills through their chosen programme of study. This approach of embedding the key skills within all curriculum components

ensures their relevance and use value for learners. The key skills are central to the development of all subjects, short courses and transition units so that their inclusion will have a significant positive impact on the learning experience of students.

Key skill elements

Key Skill	Elements
Information processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessing information from a range of sources ▪ Selecting and discriminating between sources based on their reliability and suitability for purpose ▪ Recording, organising, summarising and integrating information ▪ Presenting information using a range of information and communication technologies
Critical and creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examining patterns and relationships, classifying and ordering information ▪ Analysing and making good arguments, challenging assumptions ▪ Hypothesising and making predictions, examining evidence and reaching conclusions ▪ Identifying and analysing problems and decisions, exploring options and alternatives, solving problems and evaluating outcomes ▪ Thinking imaginatively, actively seeking out new points of view, problems and/or solutions, being innovative and taking risks
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysing and interpreting texts and other forms of communication ▪ Expressing opinions, speculating, discussing, reasoning and engaging in debate and argument ▪ Engaging in dialogue, listening attentively and eliciting opinions, views and emotions ▪ Composing and performing in a variety of ways ▪ Presenting using a variety of media

<p>Working with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with others in a variety of contexts with different goals and purposes ▪ Identifying, evaluating and achieving collective goals ▪ Identifying responsibilities in a group and establishing practices associated with different roles in a group (e.g., leader, team member) ▪ Developing good relationships with others and a sense of well-being in a group ▪ Acknowledging individual differences, negotiating and resolving conflicts ▪ Checking progress, reviewing the work of the group and personally reflecting on one's own contribution
<p>Being personally effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being able to appraise oneself, evaluate one's own performance, receive and respond to feedback ▪ Identifying, evaluating and achieving personal goals, including developing and evaluating actions plans ▪ Developing personal qualities that help in new and difficult situations, such as taking initiatives, being flexible and being able to persevere when difficulties arise ▪ Becoming confident and being able to assert oneself as a person

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p>Presenting information using a range of information and communication technologies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make choices about what medium to use when presenting information, taking account of audience, purpose and available facilities ▪ explain and justify their choices ▪ use a range of ICT tools effectively (e.g., powerpoint, video clips, digital camera)

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p>Thinking imaginatively, actively seeking out new points of view, problems and/or solutions, being innovative and taking risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ recognise that different mind-sets are associated with different forms of thinking (e.g., letting ideas flow, building up associations, suspending judgment in order to produce ideas, are often associated with creative thinking) ▪ be motivated to seek out alternative perspectives and viewpoints and to reframe a situation ▪ be willing to take risks and to learn from mistakes and failures ▪ be persistent in following through ideas in terms of products and/or actions ▪ develop a strong internal standard in relation to the merits of their own work

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p data-bbox="475 770 810 949">Engaging in dialogue, listening attentively and eliciting opinions, views and emotions</p> <p data-bbox="475 1361 826 1487">Composing and performing in a variety of different ways</p>	<p data-bbox="927 383 1107 412">and argument</p> <ul data-bbox="882 427 1358 1787" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="882 427 1358 555">▪ marshal and defend an argument while listening to opposing points of view <li data-bbox="882 573 1358 701">▪ recognise the possible emotional impact of a robust argument on others <li data-bbox="882 770 1358 846">▪ listen attentively to what others have to say <li data-bbox="882 864 1358 1048">▪ elicit opinions, views and emotions from others through the appropriate use of questioning and responding strategies <li data-bbox="882 1066 1358 1193">▪ develop empathy by imagining the situation from other peoples' point of view <li data-bbox="882 1211 1358 1288">▪ respond perceptively to contributions made by others <li data-bbox="882 1361 1358 1438">▪ identify a range of genres, their purposes and styles <li data-bbox="882 1456 1358 1583">▪ compose in a variety of genres, showing the capacity to plan, draft and revise <li data-bbox="882 1601 1358 1787">▪ express meaning and emotions through a range of performances (e.g., visual art, drama, music, design and graphics)

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p>Presenting using a variety of media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify the main purpose of a communication and relate its form and nature to the purpose ▪ make choices about what medium to use, taking account of audience and purpose ▪ make appropriate adjustments depending on whether they are making an oral or a written presentation ▪ use of range of general ICT tools effectively (e.g., powerpoint, video clips, and more specialized ICT if appropriate) ▪ make appropriate use of dramatic modes of presentation (e.g., role-play, story telling) ▪ explain and justify choices

Key Skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p>Identifying responsibilities in a group and establishing practices associated with different roles in a group</p> <p>Developing good relationships with others and a sense of well-being in the group</p> <p>Acknowledging individual differences, negotiating and resolving conflicts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ help to break tasks down into parts as a way of sharing the work of the group ▪ take on the responsibilities of the role whether as a team member or a team leader ▪ recognise how his/her role blends with the responsibilities of others in the group ▪ express views about how the work of the group is progressing ▪ listen carefully to other points of view ▪ develop empathy and see alternative perspectives ▪ express emotion in appropriate ways ▪ help others to feel included in the group ▪ help motivate the group to persist in the face of difficulties ▪ celebrate the achievements of the group ▪ respect the rights and views of others in the group ▪ recognise that different positions and viewpoints are likely to be adopted and expressed ▪ identify areas of agreement and

Key Skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p>Checking progress, reviewing the work of the group, and personally reflecting on one's own contribution</p>	<p>disagreements among the different positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make suggestions about possible compromises and alternative ways forward ▪ agree ways to resolve conflict ▪ keep to deadlines and agreed plans ▪ monitor progress in the group against agreed plans ▪ negotiate individual responsibilities ▪ critically evaluate and change the approach of the group if necessary ▪ participate in evaluating the outcomes against the collective goals ▪ reflect on their own contribution to the group and identify strengths and weaknesses ▪ identify ways of further improving their skills in working with others

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
<p>Being personally effective</p>	<p>Being able to appraise oneself, evaluate one's own performance, receive and respond to feedback</p> <p>Identifying, evaluating and achieving personal goals, including developing and evaluating actions plans</p>	<p>Students should be able to ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify their own aspirations and what they would like to achieve ▪ set time aside to take stock of current achievements and, with the help of others, to engage in an honest appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses ▪ show the resilience to receive and make sense of feedback ▪ identify areas for action and move on ▪ set realistic personal goals and targets to be achieved within a time frame ▪ construct action plans to help reach the targets and identify methods for monitoring how well the plans are working (e.g., deadlines, feedback from others) ▪ identify any help and resources that will be needed to implement the plans and reach the targets ▪ within a specific time frame, evaluate the extent to which the targets have been reached and engage in personal reflection on the process of setting goals and

Key skill	Elements	Learning outcomes
	<p data-bbox="480 674 802 1093">Developing personal qualities that help in new and difficult situations, such as taking initiatives, being flexible, being reliable and being able to persevere when difficulties arise</p> <p data-bbox="480 1361 767 1536">Being able to assert oneself as a person and to become more confident</p>	<p data-bbox="903 383 995 409">targets</p> <ul data-bbox="858 432 1361 1783" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="858 432 1361 510">▪ take responsibility for decisions and actions, making informed choices <li data-bbox="858 528 1361 607">▪ identify strategies for making informed choices <li data-bbox="858 674 1361 801">▪ recognise that new situations are likely to be uncertain and present personal challenges <li data-bbox="858 819 1361 947">▪ take the initiative on some occasions and not always leave it to others <li data-bbox="858 965 1361 1043">▪ be flexible and be prepared to try a different approach <li data-bbox="858 1061 1361 1189">▪ show that they are reliable in following through with tasks and undertakings <li data-bbox="858 1207 1361 1285">▪ show persistence and not give up at the first sign of difficulty <li data-bbox="858 1361 1361 1440">▪ recognise the need to make their 'voices' heard in appropriate ways <li data-bbox="858 1458 1361 1585">▪ become more skilful at 'reading' social situations and responding appropriately <li data-bbox="858 1603 1361 1637">▪ celebrate their achievements <li data-bbox="858 1655 1361 1783">▪ develop strategies for maintaining a positive sense of self in the face of disappointment and frustration