

# Senior Cycle Biology

## Assessment Overview

This document provides a clear summary of how students are assessed in Leaving Certificate Biology.

### 1. What is Assessment?

Assessment in senior cycle Biology involves:

- Gathering and interpreting information about student learning
- Identifying strengths and areas for improvement
- Supporting student progress through feedback
- Helping determine final certification grades

Assessment is not just about exams—it is an ongoing process that supports learning throughout the course.

### 2. Two Key Assessment Components

Students are assessed in **two main ways**:

#### A. Biology in Practice Investigation (40%)

- This is an **additional assessment component (AAC)** completed during the course
- Students investigate a biological issue based on a **common national brief**
- It involves:
  - Research using reliable sources
  - Designing and carrying out an experiment
  - Collecting and analysing data
  - Drawing conclusions and reflecting on the process
- Students submit a **report in Year 2**
- This work is marked by the **State Examinations Commission (SEC)**

## Key Skills Developed:

- Scientific inquiry
- Critical thinking
- Data analysis
- Independent learning

## B. Written Examination (60%)

- Sat at the end of the two-year course
- Available at **Higher and Ordinary Level**
- Tests:
  - Knowledge and understanding
  - Application of concepts
  - Ability to interpret and analyse information

## 3. Investigation Brief

Each year, students receive a **national investigation brief** which:

- Guides the topic of their investigation
- Provides context and stimulus material
- Helps students plan and structure their work
- Supports the development of an **investigative log**

## 4. Approach to Learning

Students are encouraged to:

- Engage actively in the **process of investigation**, not just the final answer
- Reflect on their work and improve it
- Take ownership of their learning

## 5. Time Commitment

- The investigation component may take up to 20 hours to complete
- This is spread across class time and independent work

## 6. Summary of Weighting

Component	Weighting
Biology in Practice Investigation	40%
Written Examination	60%

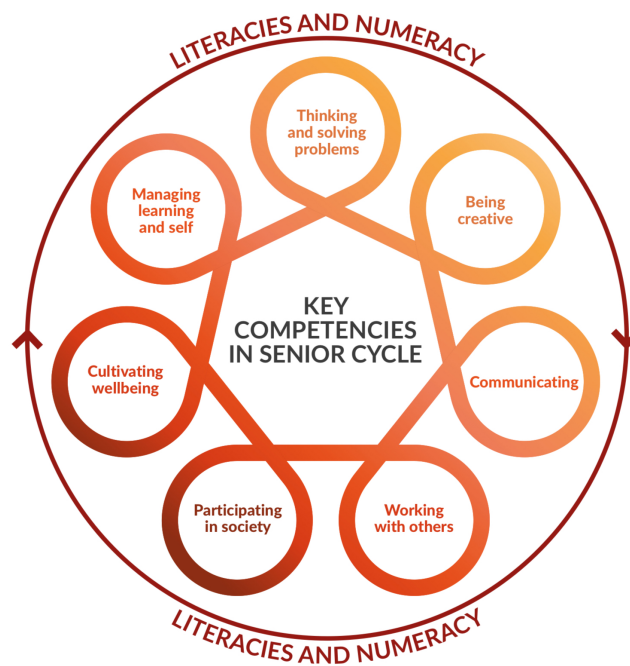


Figure 2: Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy

### 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