

SPHE at Senior Cycle (September 2025 onwards)

What are schools being asked to provide now?

The Senior Cycle SPHE specification has been developed to provide learning in SPHE for all students across the final two years of senior cycle. Therefore, students engaging in the established Leaving Certificate (LCE), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) will all have access to the same curriculum. The time requirement is 60 hours of classroom learning over two years.

When will schools implement the new Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum?

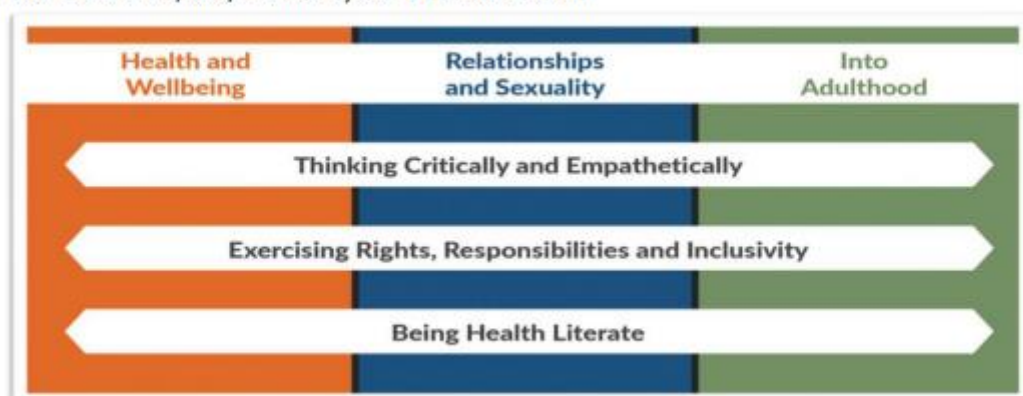
The new Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum is available for implementation in schools from this school year. However, schools have until September 2027 to introduce the specification for all students entering fifth year, with the exception of students following the Leaving Certificate Applied. The new specification will replace Social Education modules I and II of the Leaving Certificate Applied and this change will apply for all LCA students entering 5th year in 2025.

What about Transition Year?

Because Transition Year (TY), unlike other programmes, is a school-developed and flexible programme, the NCCA does not develop specifications for TY. However, the NCCA is developing a range of supports and guidance to assist schools as they develop their own modules to meet the needs of their students. In the case of SPHE, NCCA will provide a new TY section on the NCCA SPHE Toolkit with lots of guidance and resources. In addition, three 10- hour SPHE micro-modules specifically for TY are currently under development. These can be used or adapted by schools in planning for teaching and learning in TY SPHE.

An overview of learning in the Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum

Visual overview of draft Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum



Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

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

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Within this strand students explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives, with a particular focus on learning how to create and maintain respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students in being able to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

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 able to manage choices, developing skills that are needed to plan for the future, establishing and maintaining good habits, and setting 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 and express solidarity with those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Key features of the Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum

A mandatory specification for all students: All senior cycle students will engage with the same learning in SPHE for the first time, thus supporting equity of access to learning in this important area of the curriculum. This builds on proposals for a more integrated Senior Cycle Curriculum, in which ring-fencing of the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is further reduced. (Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report, NCCA, 2022)

Student-centred learning: The Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum is firmly rooted in the experiences and needs of young people growing up in Ireland today, with the focus on supporting them as they navigate the opportunities and challenges of becoming responsible and caring adults. The curriculum is informed by consultations and research and arising from this, there is a strong focus on supporting young people to a) build healthy relationships, b) maintain positive mental health and c) support them as they make the transition into adulthood and take greater responsibility for themselves.

Inclusivity: The Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum is designed to support high quality teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of all young people. Building on the updated Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum, the Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum supports teachers in adopting an approach that is inclusive in accordance with principles of equality, human rights and responsibilities: *one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, social classes and abilities/disabilities* (p. 4). Furthermore, the curriculum states that, *the learning outcomes 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 standalone lessons* (p.13)

Focus on developing competencies: In the curriculum, there is a strong focus on developing and deepening competencies, specifically self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, reflective and critical thinking, social awareness and health literacy skills. By encouraging students to become thoughtful and active agents in their own lives, Senior Cycle SPHE plays an important role in fostering self-confidence and self-efficacy and helps students prepare for the transition to life beyond school.

The full Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum can be accessed at
<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/senior-cycle/sphe/>