



Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

Updated Advice for management and
teachers of LCA 2021/22 in Second-Level
Schools and Centres for Education

August 2021

Version 1.1



Overview of Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA)

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a single award based on a unified programme, rather than a set of grades achieved in discrete subjects. LCA is designed as a two-year programme that is divided into four sessions. Over those four sessions, students accumulate credits through three different routes:

- Satisfactory completion of forty-four modules
- Completion of seven student tasks
- Final examinations.

This advice note sets out the curriculum and assessment arrangements for the LCA Year 1 and Year 2 students for the academic year 2021/22. The revised arrangements take account of the varying levels of student engagement in learning during the period of remote learning in the 2020/21 school year and acknowledge the modular nature of the LCA. This guidance for the LCA Programme should be read in conjunction with Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate 2022 available [here](#).

1. Advice for LCA Year 2 for the Academic Year 2021/22

During the academic year 2020/21, LCA students experienced disruption to teaching and learning during Year 1 of the programme owing to COVID-19 restrictions and the period of remote teaching and learning during the school closure period. This resulted in varying levels of student engagement with the learning outcomes of some of the LCA module descriptors. This impact of the school closure and the potential restrictions arising from public health requirements during the previous and the coming school year need to be considered in the context of planning for teaching and learning in 2021/22.

LCA Year 2 students as part of the Accredited Grades Model for Leaving Certificate 2021, had the option to take the examinations and/or accredited grades in the relevant subject and task examination assessment components that were due to be completed in 2020/21. As usual, credits for successful module completion will be awarded through the LCA portal.

This section is set out under the following four headings associated with the LCA programme:

- 1.1 Satisfactory completion of modules
- 1.2 Student tasks
- 1.3 Final examinations
- 1.4 Changes to credit allocation for LCA Year 2

Proposed changes and the rationale for the amendments identified are also set out.

1.1 Satisfactory completion of modules

Over the two-year duration of the programme, students should complete forty-four modules. In order to be awarded credits for modules, students complete each module by attending the classes and out-of-school activities related to the module; a minimum

attendance of 90% and completion of the Key Assignments related to each module are required.

To provide schools with enhanced autonomy and flexibility in planning for teaching and learning most suited to their context, arrangements for the satisfactory completion of modules for LCA Year 2 students have been revised and the details are set out below.

Arrangements for the satisfactory completion of modules for LCA Year 2 for the academic year 2021/22

- All learning outcomes for each module should be completed, within the confines of current health and safety advice.
- Students should complete a minimum of **two** Key Assignments to achieve the credits available for each module **and** maintain a minimum of 90% attendance
- If a student cannot attend the school due to a valid COVID-19 related restriction, the school should be flexible in its approach to monitoring and recording attendance
- In the event of a localised closure where learning is progressed remotely, schools should ensure that an appropriate system is in place to track students' engagement

In many cases, successful completion of the Key Assignments requires students to work in groups or to engage in activities in the wider school community or in their local communities. In the context of public health requirements, it may be necessary to adapt how a Key Assignment is completed. This can be accommodated through individual teachers planning for Key Assignments in a way that takes the learning environment and possible COVID-19 restrictions into consideration. For instance, it may be possible to organise a virtual tour of a local library or restaurant rather than taking students on an out-of-school visit to those venues. Evidence of student learning in key assignments can be stored in hard copy or electronically using the school learning management systems.

It is expected that students will complete work experience in a workplace environment. If access to work experience is delayed or a student encounters difficulties in sourcing a work experience placement due to COVID-19 it may be necessary to adapt how the key assignment is completed for the mandatory modules.

1.2 Student Tasks

Students complete a total of seven tasks across the two years of the LCA programme. Due to COVID-19, a special arrangement was made whereby schools were required to provide an estimated percentage mark for Year 1 students for task in General Education (Session 1) and Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education and Personal Reflection Statement Part 1 (Session 2). Year one LCA students in 2020/2021 when they get their results will receive the better of the Accredited Grade or examination. In cases where LCA Year 1 students receive an accredited grade for tasks, each accredited grade will be converted into a credit equivalent.

During the academic year 2021/22, if normal circumstances prevailed, LCA Year 2 students would complete a further four tasks as follows: in session 3, one task in each of the following areas: Vocational Education; General Education (Year two-Contemporary

Issues Task), Practical Achievement Task; and in session 4, a Personal Reflection Task (Part Two).

To provide schools with enhanced flexibility in planning for the completion of Student Tasks for LCA Year 2 students, arrangements for the academic year 2021/22 are as set out below.

Arrangements for Student Tasks for LCA Year 2 for the academic year 2021/22

- Reduction in the number of tasks due for completion in session 3 from **three** to **two** by requiring students to complete **either** the Vocational Education Task **or** the Contemporary Issues Task **and** the Practical Achievement Task; the LCA Portal will be able to deal with this change
- Completion of the Personal Reflection (Part Two) in session 4, as normal.

Providing schools with an opportunity to select a task anchored in **either** Vocational Education **or** in CIT allows the teachers and students to choose a task most suited to their individual school and student context.

The Practical Achievement Task is, for the most part, conducted outside of school and will be less affected by enforced student absence and/or potential localised school closures related to possible COVID-19 outbreaks.

When planning for the Student Tasks, up-to-date public health advice should be considered. Creative and innovative ways of task planning should also ensure that students derive maximum engagement and learning in their chosen task.

Arrangements for the examination of the tasks, to include interviews, will be based on the most up-to-date health and safety advice at the time.

1.3 Final Examinations

Final examinations are conducted in seven subject areas as follows:

Subject	Components	Credits allocated to final examination
English and Communications	Oral and written paper	12 credits
Social Education	Written paper	10 credits
Mathematical Applications	Written paper	10 credits
Gaeilge Chumarsáideach and one Modern Languages	Oral and written paper	6 credits per language
Two vocational specialisms	A practical performance or practical course work and written paper	12 credits per specialism

Owing to COVID-19, a special arrangement was made for LCA Year 1 (2020/21) students who were due to sit the final examinations in *Gaeilge Chumarsáideach* or Modern Languages at the end of session 2 in 2020/21. Each student could have opted to take the examination or receive an accredited grade or both for the relevant language examination. Each accredited grade will be converted into a credit equivalent.

Due to school closures, schools will have engaged with Year 1 modules to varying degrees. Students may not have the opportunity to fully re-engage with this learning in sessions 3 and 4. In order to acknowledge these issues, the arrangements set out below will be put in place.

Arrangements for the Final Examinations for LCA Year 2 for the academic year 2021/22

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- **Written Examinations:** There will be no adjustment to the final examination papers but a scaling, by a factor of 1.15 will be applied to the mark awarded. The scaling will be implemented up to the total mark for the examination and capped at that total. For example, if a student is awarded 280 marks out of a total of 300 marks, then the scaling would give a mark of 322, but because this exceeds the total of 300, the candidate will be awarded the maximum mark available, which is 300 marks.
- **Practical coursework briefs:** All briefs that do not already issue at the start of the year, will be issued to schools earlier than normal.
- **Practical performance tests:** These will proceed as normal and will be conducted under examination conditions, subject to public health advice
- **Oral examinations:** Oral tests in English and Communications for students in Year 2 will transact as normal. However, allowances will be made in the assessment of, and the marking of the oral test in respect of disruption and loss of teaching and learning experienced by students due to restrictions and the school closure period.
- Further information is available in Assessment Arrangements for Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2022.

As the LCA Year 2 students work towards their final examinations, the impact that the school closure period has had on their learning will need to be considered when planning for teaching and learning.

Some module descriptors require the development of skillsets that may not have been possible to fully develop or maintain in a remote learning environment. As students re-engage with their learning, teachers should be mindful of these deficits and plan accordingly.

Arrangements for interviews and practical performance tests associated with the final examinations will be based on the most up-to-date public health and safety advice.

1.4 Credit allocation for LCA Year 2 in 2021/22

Students who successfully complete the Leaving Certificate Applied programme are awarded a certificate at one of three levels based on the number of credits they have accumulated as set out below.

Pass 114-132 credits (60%-69%)	Merit 133-161 credits (70%-84%)	Distinction 162-290 credits (85%-100%)
Students who acquire less than 114 credits or who leave the programme early will receive a record of experience.		

2. Advice for LCA Year 1 for the Academic Year 2021/22

This section is set out under the following four headings associated with the programme:

- 2.1 Transition and induction programme
- 2.2 Curriculum
- 2.3 Satisfactory completion of modules
- 2.4 Student tasks

2.1 Transition and induction programme

Owing to public health restrictions, students and their parents/guardians may not have had an opportunity to fully engage with transition into the LCA programme. Therefore, the induction programme that is routinely provided by the school for LCA Year 1 students is particularly relevant. Consideration should be given to amending the content of the induction programme in order to address gaps which may have arisen in supporting students' transition to LCA. Further details on planning an induction programme are available at: www.pdst.ie

2.2 Curriculum

Four revised LCA module descriptors will be introduced in September 2021. These are: *English and Communications*, *Mathematical Applications*, *Introduction to Information and Communication Technology*, and *Information and Communication Technology - Specialism*.

The module descriptors can be accessed on <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/LCA/>

Continuing Professional Development support for the introduction of the modules will be provided by PDST

2.3 Satisfactory completion of modules

To achieve credits for the satisfactory completion of modules, LCA Year 1 students should complete all four Key Assignments and a minimum of 90% attendance should be maintained. If a student cannot attend the school due to a valid COVID-19 related restriction, the school should be flexible in its approach to monitoring and recording attendance. In the event of a localised closure where learning is progressed remotely, schools should ensure that an appropriate system is in place to track students' engagement.

In the current climate, it may be necessary to adapt how a key assignment is completed. This can be accommodated through individual teachers planning for key assignments in a way that takes the learning environment and COVID-19 restrictions into consideration. For instance, it may be possible to organise a virtual tour of a local library or restaurant rather than taking students on an out-of-school visit. Evidence of student learning in key assignments can be stored in hard copy or electronically using the school learning management system.

2.4 Student tasks

There is **no change** to the schedule for the completion of Student Tasks for LCA Year 1 students.

Session 1 Tasks	Session 2 Tasks
General Education	Vocational Preparation Vocational Education Personal Reflection Task (Part One)

LCA Year 1 in session 2 will be completing the Personal Reflection Task (Part One). When planning learning activities, teachers need to consider how the skills of student reflection are being developed and will need to ensure that sufficient opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their learning over the year.

Arrangements for the examination of the tasks, to include interviews, will be based on the most up-to-date public health advice.

2.5 Final examination in languages

In instances where students are due to complete the final examinations in a language at the end of session 2 in May 2022, planning for teaching, learning and assessment should continue as normal.

3. Planning for contingencies

3.1 Planning for work experience for the academic year 2021/22

The school week comprises a minimum 28 hours instruction time, inclusive of work experience. It is expected that students will complete work experience in a workplace environment. If access to work experience is delayed or a student encounters difficulties in sourcing a work experience placement due to COVID-19 it may be necessary to adapt how the key assignment is completed for the mandatory modules.

During the two-year programme, LCA students must complete a minimum of two mandatory modules in work experience. Two main approaches are taken by schools in scheduling work experience:

- **Block release:** In cases where it is possible for students to safely complete their work experience in accordance with public health advice and social distancing requirements they should do so. Where it is not possible for all or some students to do so during the block(s), they should attend timetabled classes as normal during the designated weeks. In these instances where only a small number of students attend classes as normal, consideration could be given to including, in these lessons, a focus on work-related activities
- **One-day per week:** In cases where it is possible for students to safely complete their work experience in accordance with public health advice and social distancing requirements they should do so. If there is a delay for some students in accessing the work experience early in the school year, they **should be** provided with access to teaching and learning opportunities during the scheduled work experience day.

LCA Year 1, should complete the introductory units in preparation for entering the workplace. These units typically contain student reflection on their skills and qualities and activities and topics such as a skills audit, goal setting, career investigation, job search, creating a CV/application, research into employer/employee rights, health and safety in the workplace, pay and conditions, and interview skills. Some of these research pieces may be completed with support on designated work experience days in session 1, if the student cannot access a placement.

In the current climate, it may be necessary to adapt how a key assignment is completed for the mandatory modules in Work Experience. This can be accommodated through individual teachers planning for key assignments in a way that takes the learning environment and possible COVID-19 restrictions into consideration. For example, it may be necessary for a school to adapt the interpretation of work placement in a key assignment to include experience of the world of work and training.

In instances where access to work placement is delayed because of possible COVID-19 restrictions, students **should be** provided with access to teaching and learning opportunities during scheduled work experience time. This time could be used to provide:

- A planned recovery of learning programme to build on the varying levels of student engagement which may have occurred during the school closure period of remote teaching and learning
- Planned activities to support work placements; for instance, additional time could be allocated to completing work preparation modules, careers investigations and journals.

Some students will encounter difficulties in sourcing work experience placements. Schools may have to plan for a continuum of support for those students in accessing work placements.

For LCA Year 1 and Year 2 students doing the additional Vocational Preparation and Guidance Modules in Work Experience some alternative approaches to work experience placements may be considered:

- **Education partnerships:** Schools could link with local businesses, Local Enterprise Offices or further education facilities to explore options for remote learning for their students. Opportunities to provide remote tours of local industries, virtual job shadowing and question and answer sessions with those in key roles may provide useful insights into the world of work
- **Mentoring:** In addition to the local partnerships, students may be able to access mentors in industries they are interested in. These mentor sessions could be accessed virtually

Online training: Students may be able to access online training courses in areas they have identified as relevant to their area of interest. There are free online courses in areas relevant to the world of work that could provide additional training, assessment and certification opportunities for students.

3.2 Progressing learning

Owing to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, teaching, learning and assessment could be disrupted due to a localised school closure. In such instances, schools should ensure that an appropriate system is in place to support ongoing student engagement with the planned learning activities.

Advice and support in relation to contingency planning for distance learning is available in Guidance on Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning in a COVID-19 Context For post-primary schools and centres for education available [here](#) and should be used as necessary to support and progress students' learning in LCA.

3.3 Additional supports

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) will have a range of LCA supports available for new coordinators and teachers. These will comprise online versions of:

- Seminars for new coordinators and teachers

- LCA task seminars
- LCA subject specific seminars
- School support for LCA

The PDST will be in contact with schools in relation to this provision.
