

Introduction to the Project Brief

40 minutes

Coursework Project Preparation

Outcome 1.19

Outcome 1.23

Outcome 3.1

Outcome 3.5

Outcome 3.8

Outcome 3.14

Outcome 2.22

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Please note: this module follows the 2026 project brief, whose theme was forests. The State Examinations Commission publishes a new brief each year, with its own theme and its own dates. These lessons will be updated once this year's brief is published. Check the current brief on the SEC website before you begin. In this lesson, you will explore how the Computer Science coursework contributes 30% to your Leaving Certificate grade, review key dates from 1 December 2025 to 19 March 2026, and outline the forest-themed project involving an embedded system and Python model. You will also distinguish basic versus advanced requirements, learn the submission format, and understand authentication...

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
1.19	identify features of both staged and iterative design and development processes
1.23	reflect and communicate on the design and development process
3.1	understand and list user needs/requirements before defining a solution
3.5	structure and transform raw data to prepare it for analysis
3.8	develop a model that will allow different scenarios to be tested
3.14	design automated applications using embedded systems
2.22	explain the different stages in software testing

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the role and impact of the coursework project within the Leaving Certificate Computer Science assessment.
- Identify key timelines, deadlines, and workflow expectations for the project.
- Grasp the central theme of forests and the core requirements for developing an embedded system and Python model.
- Differentiate between basic and advanced project standards to guide personal goal-setting.
- Recognise essential submission protocols, authentication processes, and plagiarism prevention measures.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Have the official SEC 2026 Coursework Brief PDF open and the link ready to share, since the lesson repeatedly directs students back to it as the authoritative document.
- Confirm the exact start and submission dates against the current SEC brief before you present them, as year-specific dates change and students will diarise whatever you show.
- Have a copy of Form P.2 to hand or on screen so students see the actual authentication form they and the principal will sign.

Introduction to the Project Brief

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Welcome and Objectives

Where Does the Coursework Fit In?

Key Dates and Timeline

The Theme and Overall Task

Basic vs Advanced Requirements

Submission Format, Get This Right!

Authentication and Plagiarism Warning

Student Checklist

TEACHING MOVES

- 2. Where Does the Coursework Fit In? Stress that 30 percent is a large, controllable block: unlike the written exam, they can work at it steadily over weeks. Frame it as marks they build rather than marks they sit for.
- 3. Key Dates and Timeline. Make everyone add both dates to a phone or calendar in the room before moving on. Flag that home time is research only; all written and coded work must be done supervised in class.
- 4. The Theme and Overall Task. Draw the two connected pieces on the board: embedded system feeding real data into a Python model. Emphasise they are linked, not two separate mini-projects, and that the report is an offline local website.
- 5. Basic vs Advanced Requirements. Encourage every student, including Ordinary Level, to design toward the advanced list. Aiming higher gives a safety margin if features fail. Do not let them treat basic as a ceiling.
- 6. Submission Format, Get This Right! Spell out the folder structure: one zip, Report and Artefact folders, index.html offline. Warn now against Google Sites or Wix, because students who build online early have to rebuild later.
- 7. Authentication and Plagiarism Warning. Be direct that unreferenced AI or copied code can mean zero and investigation. Set the expectation early that every borrowed source, including AI, gets referenced in the report from day one.
- 8. Student Checklist. Give class time to start the checklist: diarise dates, download the brief, and begin listing forest problems that genuinely interest them. A real personal interest sustains twelve weeks of work.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students think the report website can be hosted online with a builder like Wix or Google Sites. Point to the brief: the report must be offline HTML opened locally from index.html. Show that anything online will not open from the submitted zip.
- Students confuse the Coursework Project with the in-class Applied Learning Tasks and assume the same informal, unsupervised rules apply. Make clear this is the externally assessed 30 percent submission. All written and coded work is supervised, and it is signed off on Form P.2.
- Ordinary Level students read the basic requirements as all they should attempt. Explain that designing toward advanced features gives a buffer: if something fails, they still comfortably meet basic, and they gain practice either way.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Sit with the student and help them complete the checklist in class, especially diarising the dates and downloading the brief, so they leave with the essentials done.
- Developing: Ask them to write one sentence describing a forest problem and name one piece of data they would need to measure it, linking theme to the embedded system.