

LESSON 1

Leaving Cert Computer Science Overview

10 minutes

Foundations of Computer Science

Outcome 1.11

Outcome 1.12

Outcome 1.13

Outcome 1.18

Outcome 1.19

Outcome 1.22

Outcome 1.23

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

This lesson offers you a clear overview of the Leaving Cert Computer Science subject. Explore the official specification, key topics, Applied Learning Tasks, coursework, and exam structure to understand what's involved and how to prepare effectively.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
1.11	discuss the complex relationship between computing technologies and society including issues of ethics
1.12	compare the positive and negative impacts of computing on culture and society
1.13	identify important computing developments that have taken place in the last 100 years and consider emerging trends that could shape future computing technologies
1.18	recognise the diverse roles and careers that use computing technologies
1.19	identify features of both staged and iterative design and development processes
1.22	read, write, test, and modify computer programs
1.23	reflect and communicate on the design and development process

BEFORE THE LESSON

- This is a discussion and orientation lesson, so no environment setup is needed to run it. Have the Curriculum Online Computer Science specification page open on the projector so you can show students the real document.
- Decide in advance whether your class will run all four ALTs or three, since many teachers drop one to protect time for the project and revision. Be ready to tell students which, as the lesson states four.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Introduction

What is Leaving Cert Computer Science?

The Official Specification

What's Covered in the Subject

Applied Learning Tasks (ALTs)

The Coursework Component

The Written Exam

Our Course Structure

Equipment Needed

TEACHING MOVES

- 2. What is Leaving Cert Computer Science? Stress that no prior coding experience is assumed. Reassure the students who have never programmed and gently manage the confident ones. Name the blend of hands-on coding and theory so they know both count.
- 3. The Official Specification. Show the actual specification on Curriculum Online rather than describing it. Point out that this course follows it but is not it, and that the specification is the authority when they revise.
- 4. What's Covered in the Subject. Walk the three strands quickly and flag that Strand 3, societal impact, is examined too, not just background reading. Students often treat ethics and privacy as filler.
- 5. Applied Learning Tasks (ALTs). Be precise: ALTs are in-class structured tasks that build skills but are not graded for the Leaving Cert. Draw a hard line between these and the Coursework Project so no one confuses them later.
- 6. The Coursework Component. Emphasise this is the individual, externally assessed 30% built in sixth year. It is a separate thing from the ALTs. Note it is assessed on design, testing and evaluation, not just working code.
- 7. The Written Exam. Note the exam is 70%, 2.5 hours, and spans all three strands. Point out that Section A rewards recall, so consistent vocabulary matters from day one.
- 8. Our Course Structure. Show the module-and-tool map so students see where micro:bit, Python, web tools and SQLite each arrive. Reassure them the tools are introduced in order and nothing is expected upfront.
- 9. Equipment Needed. Confirm what your room actually provides. Tell students the micro:bit simulator is a real fallback if no physical board is available, so no one feels blocked.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students conflate the Applied Learning Tasks with the Coursework Project, assuming the ALTs are graded or that the project is just another ALT. Say it plainly twice: ALTs are formative in-class practice worth zero marks, the Coursework Project is the individual 30% submission. Keep the two terms separate every time you use them.
- Students assume that because a written exam is involved, the subject is mostly memorisation and the coding is optional. Point to the 30% project and the exam sections that require applied problem-solving. Make clear that they cannot pass by memorising alone, they have to be able to build things.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Reassure the student anxious about never having coded that the specification assumes no prior experience and the tools are introduced gradually. Pair them with a neighbour to summarise, in their own words, the difference between the exam, the project and the ALTs.
- Developing: Ask them to write down which strand they think each course module belongs to, using the module map on screen.
- Proficient: Have them open the real specification and find one learning outcome that interests them, then say which strand it sits in. Ask them to start noting a possible Coursework Project idea now, so they have a running list by sixth year.