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 short talk-through overview with no coding environment to set up. Have the NCCA Computer Science specification open on Curriculum Online so you can show the real document if asked.
- Know whether physical micro:bits and USB cables are available in the school, because the final step raises kit and students will want a clear answer.

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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

- 1. Introduction. Frame the period as a map of the next two years, not a content lesson. Promise one clear takeaway: how ALTs, coursework and the exam each play a different role.
- 2. What is Leaving Cert Computer Science? Stress that the subject suits tech careers and digital citizenship alike. Name computational thinking, practical coding and societal impact as the three legs they will keep meeting.
- 3. The Official Specification. Show the Curriculum Online specification briefly. Tell students this NCCA document, not any textbook, is what the exam and coursework are written against.
- 4. What's Covered in the Subject. Write the three strand names where all can see them. Pause on Strand 3: it is where ALTs live, and it is practice, not a separate theory topic.
- 5. Applied Learning Tasks (ALTs). Say plainly: four team tasks, computational artefacts plus reflection, formative only. They do not contribute to the Leaving Cert grade.
- 6. The Coursework Component. Contrast with ALTs at once: one individual artefact, 30%, externally assessed, usually across 6th Year. Design, implement, test, evaluate, report.
- 7. The Written Exam. Anchor the numbers: 70%, 2.5 hours, short and longer questions across all three strands. Section A is quick recall; later sections need fuller answers.
- 8. Our Course Structure. Skim the eight-module arc so students see foundations, Python, web, algorithms and systems ahead. Note the dedicated ALT, project and exam-prep sections.
- 9. Equipment Needed. Confirm a laptop, Chromebook or PC with internet is enough to start. Recommend a physical micro:bit if available; otherwise the simulator is fine.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students treat ALTs and the Coursework Project as the same thing, or think ALTs count toward the final grade. What to do: Put the two side by side: ALTs are four in-class team tasks with no external grade; the Coursework Project is one individual 30% submission.
- Students assume they need strong prior coding experience before taking the subject. What to do: Return to the specification point that no prior experience is required, and point to Module 1 as the shared starting point for the class.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: While you talk, give them a three-box outline to complete: ALTs, Coursework Project, Written Exam, noting only weight and team versus individual.
- Developing: After the strands step, ask them to tell a partner which strand sounds most like building something and which sounds most like how computer scientists think.
- Proficient: Ask them to scan the module list and note one area of existing strength and one they expect to find hardest, ready to share in a sentence.