

Leaving Certificate Computer Science Exam

20 minutes

Exam Prep

Outcome 1.11

Outcome 1.6

Outcome 2.7

Outcome 2.8

Outcome 2.12

Outcome 2.13

Outcome 2.20

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Explore the structure and components of the Leaving Cert Computer Science exam. Learn about the assessment breakdown, including written and programming sections, coursework requirements, and the types of questions you'll encounter across different strands.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
1.11	discuss the complex relationship between computing technologies and society including issues of ethics
1.6	explain the operation of a variety of algorithms
2.7	implement algorithms using a programming language to solve a range of problems
2.8	apply basic search and sorting algorithms and describe the limitations and advantages of each algorithm
2.12	describe the different types of logic gates and explain how they can be arranged into larger units to perform more complex tasks
2.13	describe the rationale for using the binary number system in digital computing and how to convert between binary, hexadecimal and decimal
2.20	identify and fix/debug warnings and errors in computer code and modify as required

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the structure and components of the computer science examination.
- Identify the key topics and skills assessed across written and programming sections.
- Recognise the weighting and timing of each assessment element.
- Develop strategies for tackling different question types effectively.
- Gain insight into the coursework requirements and submission process.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- This is a discussion and orientation lesson with no coding or tools required. Have the current SEC assessment specification to hand so any figures students query can be checked against the live document.
- Be ready to state clearly that the coursework is the individual, externally assessed 30% project, and is not one of the in-class Applied Learning Tasks.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Overview of the Leaving Certificate Computer Science Exam

Assessment Components

Exam Structure and Timing

Types of Questions

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Overview of the Leaving Certificate Computer Science Exam. Draw the 300-mark split on the board: 210 written exam, 90 coursework. Stress that both matter and that the coursework 30% cannot be left to the end of sixth year.
- 2. Assessment Components. Make the distinction explicit: the coursework is the one individual, externally graded artefact with report and video, submitted electronically. Separate it clearly from the in-class Applied Learning Tasks they will also meet, which are formative.
- 3. Exam Structure and Timing. Put the timing on the board: 90 minutes for the written Sections A and B, 60 minutes for Section C programming. Get students to note that time management across the split is a skill in itself.
- 4. Types of Questions. Show the shape of each section rather than teaching content: short answers in A, longer multi-part analysis in B, coding in C. Name the Point-Example-Explain structure for the essay-style Section B answers.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students confuse the coursework project with the Applied Learning Tasks, assuming all are graded the same way. State plainly that the coursework is the single externally assessed 30%, while the ALTs are structured in-class tasks that are not externally graded. Write both terms side by side.
- Students assume the exam is entirely written and are surprised by a live programming component. Point to Section C on the board, worth 80 marks over a full hour at a computer, and confirm they will be coding under exam conditions.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: For students overwhelmed by the numbers, focus on one fact only: 70% exam, 30% coursework. Build the detail later.
- Developing: Ask students to reconstruct the three sections and their marks from memory as an exit check.
- Proficient: Have them draw the difference between Higher and Ordinary level treatment of the same strand, and identify which strand each sample question type belongs to.