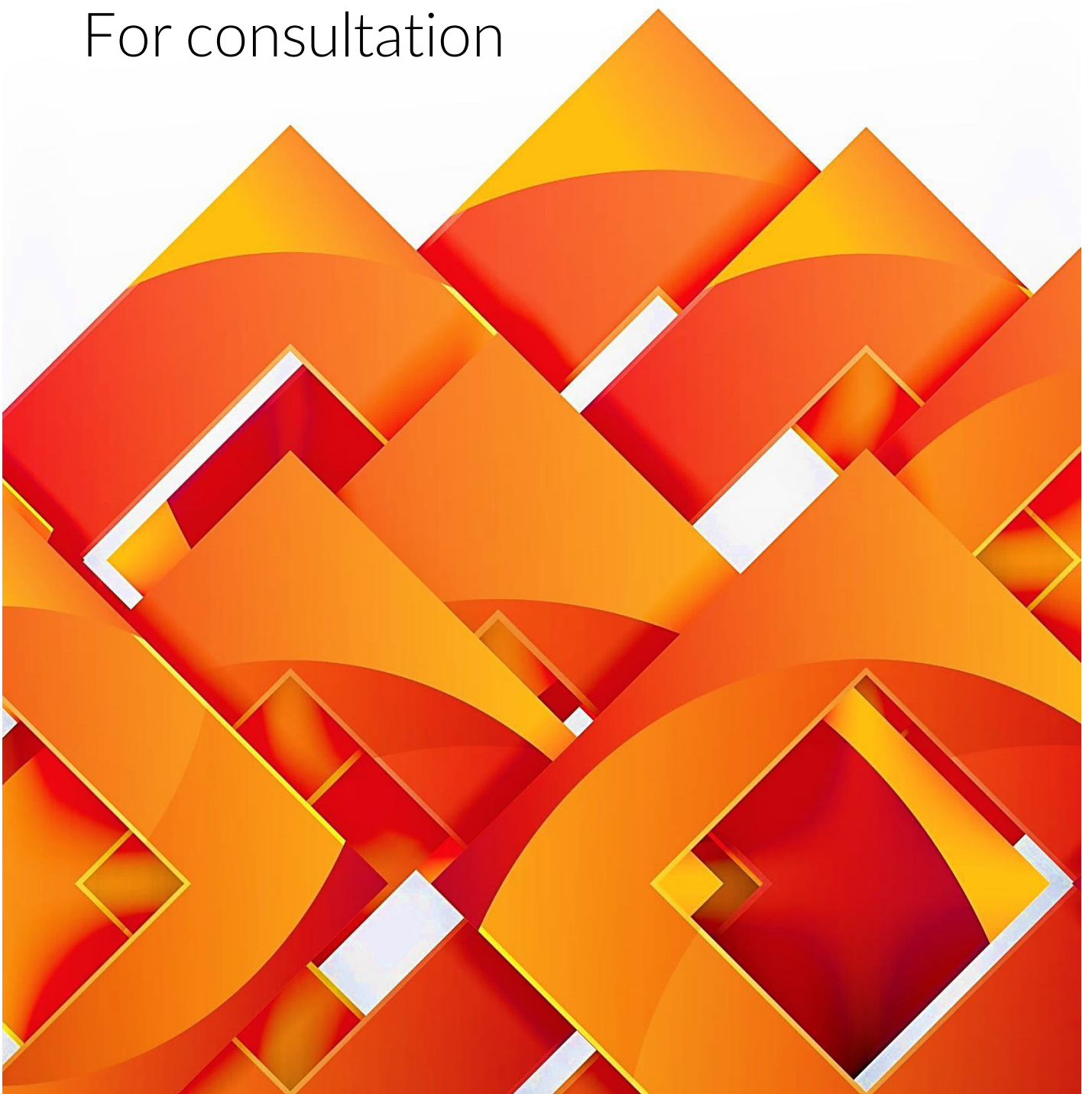NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Draft Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Specification

For consultation

Contents

Senior cycle

Senior cycle educates the whole person and students' experiences in senior cycle contribute to their intellectual, social and personal development and their overall wellbeing. During senior cycle students develop a stronger sense of their identity, learning with and from their peers, teachers, other adults, and various media.

The guiding principles below capture what is most valued in senior cycle. They are a touchstone for schools and other educational settings, as they plan and design their senior cycle with the aim of enhancing the educational experience for all.

Guiding Principles of Senior Cycle	Guiding Principles of Senior Cycle
Wellbeing and relationships Students' experiences in school, in other educational settings and in the wider society contribute directly to their overall wellbeing and to their holistic development. Students' experiences throughout senior cycle are supported in the relationships students have with teachers, peers, parents, and other significant adults.	**Choice and flexibility** Senior cycle facilitates broad learning and increased specialisation. It provides flexibility and coherence for students as they combine learning in a variety of ways, navigate their personal pathway through senior cycle, and pursue diverse futures.
Inclusive education and diversity The educational experience in senior cycle is inclusive of every student, celebrating, valuing and respecting diversity and the contribution each student can make. Every student has enjoyable experiences in and meaningful outcomes from senior cycle education.	**Continuity and transitions** Students build on their learning to date and are supported as they develop and pursue their chosen pathways, and as they transition to adult life.
Challenge, engagement, and creativity Students experience a challenging, engaging and high-quality education, with opportunities for new and deep learning and for critical, creative and innovative thinking.	**Participation and citizenship** Students participate in schools, communities and society, exercising their rights and responsibilities as local, national and global citizens in ethical and sustainable ways.
Learning to learn, learning for life Students develop greater independence in, and understanding of, how they learn; deepen their capacity to meet the challenges of life within and beyond school; and have second-chance opportunities for learning and assessment.	**Learning environments and partnerships** Partnerships and collaboration across schools, with families, communities, and with other learning environments, including online, enrich and extend student learning and expand the possibilities open to them.

Senior cycle consists of an optional Transition Year, followed by a two-year course consisting of subjects and modules, embedded key competencies, clearly expressed learning outcomes and a range of approaches to assessing student learning. Building on their learning in junior cycle, learning happens in schools, communities, educational settings, and other sites of learning where students' increasing independence is recognised. Relationships with teachers are established on a more mature footing and students take more responsibility for their learning. Senior cycle provides a curriculum which challenges students to aim for the highest level of educational achievement, commensurate with their individual aptitudes and abilities. Students are supported to make informed choices as they choose different pathways through senior cycle. Their experiences in senior cycle should establish firm foundations for transition to further, adult and higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment, and for meaningful participation in society, the economy and adult life.

The educational experience in senior cycle should be inclusive of every student, respond to their learning needs, and celebrate, value, and respect diversity. Students vary in their family and cultural backgrounds, languages, age, ethnic status, beliefs, gender, and sexual identity as well as their needs, interests, aptitudes and prior knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. Every student's identity should be celebrated, respected, and responded to throughout their time in senior cycle.

During senior cycle, students have opportunities to grapple with social, environmental, economic, and technological challenges and to deepen their understanding of human rights, social justice, equity, diversity and sustainability. Senior cycle gives every student opportunities to experience the joy of reaching significant milestones in their personal educational journey. Every subject and module students experience should contribute to the realisation of this overall vision for senior cycle.

At a practical level, senior cycle is supported by enhanced professional development; the involvement of teachers, students, parents, school leaders and other stakeholders; resources; research; clear communication; policy coherence; and a shared vision of what senior cycle seeks to achieve for our young people as they prepare to embark on their adult lives. It is brought to life in schools and other educational setting through:

- effective curriculum planning, development, organisation and evaluation
- teaching and learning approaches that motivate and interest students, that enable them to progress and improve and to deepen, apply and reflect on their learning and
- a school culture that respects students and promotes a love of learning.

Visual overview of Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

The Senior Cycle SPHE specification is designed around three strands and three cross-cutting elements as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Visual overview of Senior Cycle SPHE
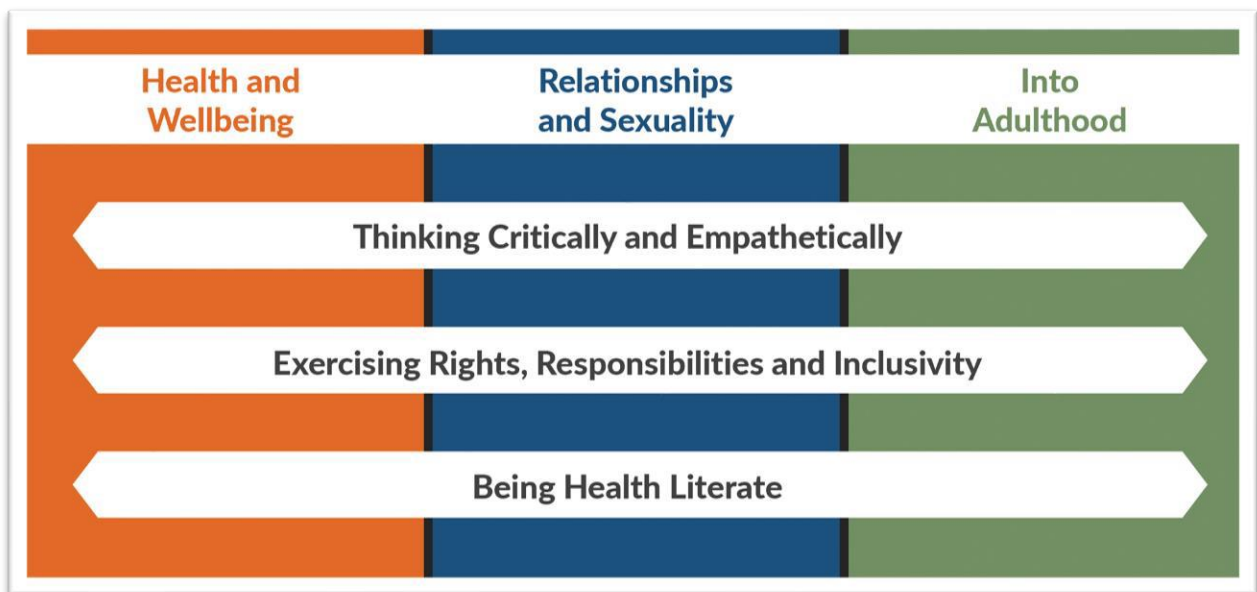
Rationale

Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a dedicated space and time where students can further develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions needed to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, now and in their future lives.

During this period of their learning, young people are developing their capacity to think and behave more independently and will experience significant change in their personal, social, emotional and academic lives, some of which can be challenging. The knowledge and skills gained and the values and dispositions nurtured in SPHE can help young people to manage these challenges.

Developing self-awareness and social and emotional skills is a lifelong process. By building on the learning in Junior Cycle SPHE, learning in Senior Cycle SPHE enables students to deepen the core skills of self-awareness, self-management, self-regulation, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. Senior Cycle SPHE also provides an opportunity for students to extend their health literacy skills, as they learn how to access, understand, appraise and use information and services related to health and wellbeing and build their confidence to communicate and act upon this information.

In senior cycle, students develop a greater capacity for reflective thinking and critical questioning. Applying this in SPHE, they can be enabled to reflect upon and critique social/cultural norms and to understand the wider social and economic factors that can influence behaviour and decisions in relation to health, wellbeing and relationships. The SPHE course also enables young people to understand patterns of inequity, discrimination and violence and how they can impact on health, wellbeing and relationships. By encouraging students to become thoughtful and active agents in their own lives, SPHE plays an important role in fostering self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Senior Cycle SPHE helps students prepare for the transition to life beyond school. It nurtures important life skills and aspects of self-care and self-management that are needed as they move into adulthood and prepare for living more independently. It also recognises that relationships continue to be an important part of their lives and that these too are evolving as they mature.

Alongside supporting young people's personal development and preparing them to be responsible adults, this course develops awareness that everyone is interdependent and that personal decisions and actions have consequences for others, thus fostering a sense of connection with and responsibility for people and communities beyond ourselves.

Through the use of critical and active pedagogies, SPHE provides a safe, supportive and non-judgmental space where students can engage in dialogue and reflection, grow in self-awareness and awareness of others, and identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others.

This specification supports teachers in adopting an approach that is inclusive in accordance with principles of equality, human rights and responsibilities. This ensures that all students can see themselves, their families and their communities reflected across the learning and can learn to value diversity as part of human life and as a source of enrichment. SPHE thus contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.

Aim

This course aims to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will empower students to become healthy, resilient, responsible and empathetic young adults; nurture respectful and caring relationships; and prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life now and beyond school.

Continuity, pathways, and progression

SPHE in Ireland is grounded in an approach that is holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age and developmentally appropriate.[1] A redeveloped SPHE curriculum also provides a progression of teaching and learning from early childhood education to post-primary.

Across all stages of learning, SPHE is developing children's and young people's positive sense of self, and their capacity to care for themselves and others. At each stage, important SPHE themes are revisited, and new themes introduced, thus ensuring both continuity and progression of learning. In revisiting themes, care is taken to allow for deeper engagement relevant to the students ages, evolving needs and stages of development.

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for children from birth to six years, describes children's learning and development using four themes. These are Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking. Wellbeing is about children being confident, happy and healthy and focuses on both psychological and physical wellbeing.

As set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* (2023), a curriculum area named 'Wellbeing' is part of the redeveloped primary curriculum. This area supports children's social, emotional, and physical development now and into the future. Incorporating teaching and learning in SPHE and PE, the wellbeing area enables children to develop self-awareness and knowledge, build life skills, develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school, their community, and wider society, and value positive and healthy relationships with others.

Junior Cycle SPHE (2023) has as its aims *to build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives; empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society* (p.5).

Finally, learning in Senior Cycle SPHE prepares young people for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. It builds the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values to enable them to flourish both now and as they transition to life beyond school.

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[1] NCCA, Report on the Review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools (2019)

Key competencies

Senior cycle helps students to become more engaged, enriched and competent, as they further develop their knowledge, skills, values and dispositions in an integrated way.

Figure 2 The components of key competencies and their desired impact

Key competencies[1] is an umbrella term which refers to the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions students develop during senior cycle.

Students develop key competencies within and across the curriculum during senior cycle. Their learning is deeper when they can draw upon, integrate and apply their knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to various tasks, contexts, situations and events.

The competencies:

- are linked and blend together
- are visible and important across the curriculum
- can help students and teachers to make meaningful connections between and across different areas of learning
- can improve students' overall learning.

The development of students' literacies and numeracy contributes to the development of competencies and vice-versa. Key competencies are supported when:

- students' literacies are well developed, i.e., when they can meaningfully and effectively read, watch, write, speak, listen, interpret and mediate meaning in a range of contexts
- students' numeracy is well developed, i.e., when they can understand numbers, data and symbols meaningfully and interpret and use them effectively
- students make good use of various tools, including technologies, to support their learning

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[1] These are sometimes also referred to as capacities, or capabilities.

Figure 3 Key Competencies in Senior Cycle, supported by literacies and numeracy.

Thinking and solving problems

Managing learning and self

Being creative

KEY COMPETENCIES IN SENIOR CYCLE

Cultivating wellbeing

Communicating

Participating in society

Working with others

Literacies and numeracy
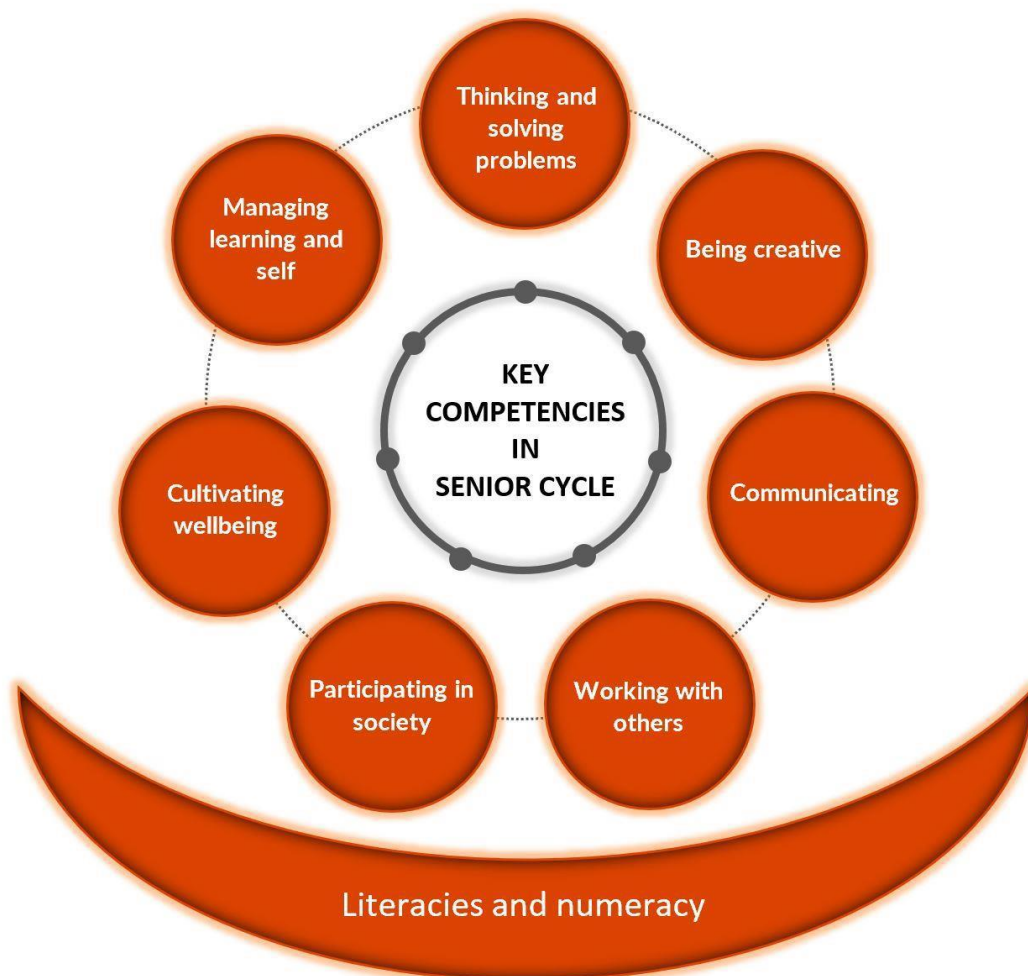
Key competencies can give young adults the power to meaningfully take part in their schools, families, communities, and society. As students mature, these key competencies can work together to help students handle and respond to more complex and varied tasks, as appropriate to their needs and abilities. They come to know what to do and how to do it, to know when to act and when not to act. Students whose key competencies are well-developed are better able to understand and learn; to deal with and respond to social opportunities and problems; to make the transition from school to further, adult and higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and/or the world of work; and to embrace adult life.

The key competencies build on important learning from early childhood, primary and junior cycle. They come to life through the learning experiences and pedagogies teachers choose and through students' responses to them. Students can and should be helped to develop their key competencies no matter what path they follow through senior cycle or what subjects and modules they choose and irrespective of their past or present background, circumstances or experiences. As part of teaching, learning and assessing, they should have many opportunities to make their key competencies visible. The transformative potential of key competencies is most likely to be realised when teachers and students analyse and discuss the competencies they are developing and when teachers offer students opportunities to make meaningful connections across their different subjects and modules.

These competencies can be developed in SPHE in a range of ways. For example, the three cross-cutting elements that underpin teaching and learning in Senior Cycle SPHE offer opportunities for the development of a number of key competencies. The cross-cutting element of *thinking critically and empathetically* relates closely to the competency of *thinking and solving problems*, while the cross-cutting element of *exercising rights, responsibilities and inclusivity* links well with the competency of *participating in society*, and the cross-cutting element of *being health literate* intersects with both the competencies of *thinking and solving problems* and *communicating*. When cooperative and experiential pedagogies are used in the SPHE classroom it facilitates the development of all seven key competencies, and in particular the competencies of *working with others and being creative*.

In addition, all key competencies in senior cycle are embedded within the learning outcomes in this specification. The following table highlights just some examples of how the learning in Senior Cycle SPHE can foster each of the key competencies.

Table 3: Key Competencies and SPHE

Key competencies	Opportunities for learning and development
Thinking and solving problems	Students become more skilful in critical and reflective thinking as they critique social and cultural norms and come to understand the various factors that can influence behaviour and decisions related to health, wellbeing and relationships.
Being creative	Students examine and evaluate options and consequences by engaging with relevant data, experiences and scenarios. This includes being able to accommodate ambiguity and uncertainty as they engage with questions of concern to their lives.
Communicating	Students develop awareness and skills to effectively communicate opinions, feelings and needs in a respectful and empathic manner.
Working with others	Through dialogical and participative learning students engage with different perspectives and appreciate how a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences can enrich their learning.
Participating in society	Students are encouraged to recognise their own rights and responsibilities in relation to their health, wellbeing and relationships as well as an awareness of their social responsibilities. Students gain awareness of the socio-cultural factors that influence their wellbeing and how this is a matter of social justice, requiring both individual and collective responses.
Cultivating wellbeing	Students explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing and learn strategies and techniques to help them take care of themselves and others.
Managing learning and self	Students grow in awareness of their own thoughts, emotions, attitudes and values and by providing opportunities for reflection, they come to recognise the insights and learning gained.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in SPHE provides a unique space where students can develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values they need to maintain healthy lives, make healthy choices and build respectful and caring relationships now and for the future.

At the heart of all teaching and learning is the relationship. Building supportive, caring and respectful classroom relationships which allow students to safely engage in dialogue and reflection and grow in awareness of themselves and others, is an essential foundation for effective SPHE. This requires the teacher stepping out of the role of expert and assuming the role of facilitator; acknowledging that many of the topics addressed in SPHE may be sensitive and complex and may not have easy answers. It also requires adopting an open, non-judgmental disposition and at the same time being able to skillfully question and probe assumptions, behaviours and viewpoints, within youth culture or society at large.

Teaching and learning in SPHE is grounded in values of respect, equality, dignity, inclusivity, responsibility, compassion and empathy.

Overarching features of effective teaching and learning in SPHE

When planning SPHE lessons, it is important to provide opportunities for awareness, dialogue, reflection and action.

Awareness

Awareness is the ability to recognise and understand one's own thoughts, emotions, values and behaviour. It includes understanding how different factors influence our sense of self and how we live our lives, including the influence of family, peers, the internet, gender, culture and social/cultural norms. This also includes an awareness that to be human is to be in relationships and that we all share a common humanity, dignity, rights and responsibilities.

Dialogue

Through dialogical teaching and learning students are facilitated to engage with a diversity of viewpoints; discuss and reflect on their own perspectives, values, and behaviours and those of others; enlarge their understanding of topics of relevance to their lives; and come to informed, thoughtful decisions based on their personal values, with due regard to their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. Respectful dialogue is aided by presuming a diversity of backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences in every classroom and seeing this as a resource for learning.

Reflection[3] and action

This is about students reflecting on what they have learned and coming to their own personal insights and conclusions in response to their learning. It enables students to consider how the learning can inform their choices, behaviour and relationships, and discerning what it means for their lives now or for the future. Learning in SPHE is a 'praxis'; an ongoing process of critical reflection and action, nurtured by dialogue with others.

Further characteristics of effective teaching and learning in SPHE

Effective SPHE teaching and learning in senior cycle education:

- Involves regular consultation with students to ascertain their needs, questions and concerns and uses this information to plan teaching and learning aligned with the learning outcomes.
- Uses cooperative and experiential learning methodologies.
- Provides accurate and age-appropriate information.
- Is relevant to the real-world experiences of students.
- Builds personal, social and emotional skills and provides opportunities to practice these skills.
- Fosters students' self-efficacy by affirming their capacity to think critically and act with responsibility for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.
- Provides opportunities to discuss values, attitudes and beliefs that support healthy behaviours, at a personal and societal level.
- Critiques social pressures and influences and creates awareness of how social, economic, environmental and cultural factors can influence decisions and behaviours related to health, wellbeing and relationships.
- Affirms diversity as an aspect of human life and human sexuality, enabling all students to feel valued and included in the teaching and learning in their classrooms. This involves using inclusive and affirming language.
- Uses a variety of methods to assess what students are learning and uses this information to provide feedback and plan the next steps in learning.

For guidance on teaching SPHE and suitable methodologies and resources see: SPHE Toolkit (curriculumonline.ie)

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[3] Reflection is "the ability to take a critical stance before deciding, choosing and acting, such as, by stepping back from the assumed, known, apparent, and accepted, comparing a given situation from other, different perspectives, and looking beyond the immediate situation to the long-term and indirect effects of one's decisions and actions. This enables individuals to reach a level of maturity that allows them to adopt different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their decisions and actions." OECD, 2020, Technical Report: Curriculum Analysis of the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030.

Strands of study and learning outcomes

This SPHE senior cycle course has been designed for 60 hours of student engagement to be taught over the final two years of senior cycle education.

The course is designed around three strands and three cross-cutting elements as shown below.

Figure 4: Visual overview of Senior Cycle SPHE
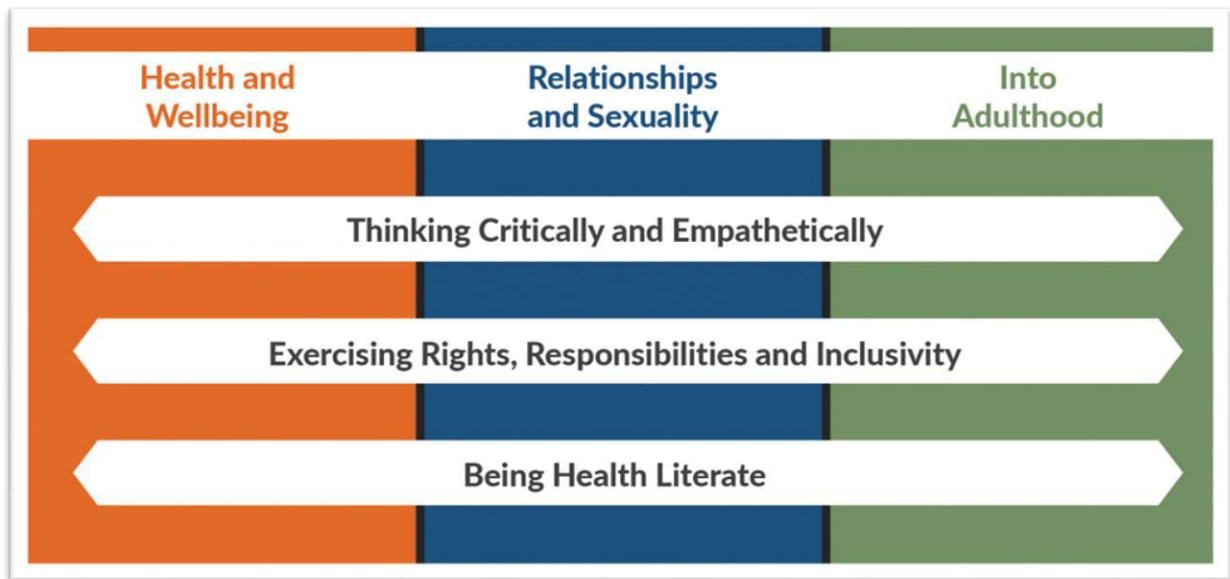
The learning outcomes set out on pages 13-15 describe the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions that students should be able to demonstrate after a two-year period of learning. This learning is underpinned by three cross-cutting elements which are summarised below.

Thinking critically and empathetically

This element focuses on supporting young people to critically consider their own and societal attitudes, values, norms and behaviours. The purpose is to promote awareness of the influences that shape their decisions and behaviours so that they can make informed choices and act as responsible agents of their own lives. By adopting a socio-cultural critical lens young people can become critically aware of the wider influences on health/wellbeing and relationships; examine social norms (including those that are harmful); and discern what lies within their control, what lies beyond their control and strategies for dealing with both. This lens acknowledges that the individual is not solely responsible for their health and wellbeing and builds an appreciation of the wider influences at play. It also creates awareness that how we relate to others has societal impacts.

Thinking emphatically and being able to demonstrate empathy underpins positive interpersonal relationships. It involves being open to different perspectives, seeking to understand the feelings and experiences of others, and showing care for the wellbeing of

others. Thinking empathetically is a key feature of critical thinking as it stems from a capacity to seek out alternative ways of seeing our world.

Exercising rights, responsibilities and inclusivity

This element seeks to highlight the importance of adopting a rights-based, inclusive approach as part of learning and teaching in SPHE. This means encouraging young people to recognise their own rights and responsibilities in relation to their health, self-care and relationships; affirming their right to comprehensive health education and health services; and raising awareness of how their interactions and behaviours impact on the lives and rights of others. Hence with rights come personal and social responsibilities. A rights-based approach also supports inclusivity, ensuring that learning and teaching across the strands are reflective of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities.

Being health literate

This element involves building young people's knowledge, confidence and comfort to access, understand, appraise and use information about health and services and make decisions for the health and wellbeing of themselves and those around them. Once a person has accessed information, health literacy also includes the capacity to communicate, assert and act upon this information. Hence, being health literate means more than knowing how and where to access reliable and relevant information. It also involves being able to use that information to make good decisions and knowing when/how/where to seek out relevant help and services. These skills become even more important as young people move into adulthood.

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, emotional and mental health and the relationships between these. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Strand 1 Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Factors that influence health and wellbeing generally	**1.1** research the determinants of good health **1.2** discuss the enablers and barriers to managing a healthy life balance - including study, work, play, sleep, people, 'me time', and ways to manage greater balance **1.3** critically analyse the origins and effects of social norms and attitudes to alcohol and drugs
Fostering positive mental health	**1.4** explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, peers, societal attitudes, media, technology, alcohol and drugs, and one's sense of self **1.5** recognise unhelpful thinking patterns and negative self-talk and how these can affect emotions and behaviour **1.6** draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage harmful thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health
Coping with emotional or mental health challenges	**1.7** recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed **1.8** discuss healthy and unhealthy ways of responding to stress and anxiety **1.9** explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed
Staying safe when out socially	**1.10** discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Strand 2 Learning outcomes

	Students should be able to
Healthy relationships	**2.1** demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating feelings and needs and preventing and managing conflict **2.2** reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity can influence the dynamics of friendships, relationships and sexual behaviour **2.3** discuss sexual activity as an aspect of adult relationships characterised by care, respect, consent, intimacy and mutual pleasure
Gender	**2.4** examine how harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online and in society and discuss strategies for challenging these attitudes and narratives
Abusive and violent relationships	**2.5** identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control **2.6** explain the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on violence against women and girls, and outline the supports available **2.7** investigate the influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations **2.8** discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape and what to do if they or someone they know has experienced any of these
Sexual health	**2.9** explore sexual and reproductive health, including fertility, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health services.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Strand outline:

Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being able to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and stick to good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understand their rights and responsibilities before the law, and build the skills needed to be a good ally to those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Strand 3 Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Self- management and self-care skills	**3.1** explore strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health **3.2** demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life **3.3** explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times
Rights and responsibilities before the law	**3.4** summarise accurately their rights and responsibilities before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, age of consent, alcohol and drug use, their right to access services and work-place rights
Ways to advocate for and create greater equity and inclusion	**3.5** consider the skills needed to stand up for themselves and others, and the range of situations where this might arise **3.6** demonstrate allyship skills to challenge unfair or abusive behaviours and support greater equity and inclusion.

Assessment

Assessment in SPHE

Giving students regular opportunities to demonstrate their learning in SPHE benefits both the teacher and students.

- It enables the teacher to feel confident that learning has taken place, to affirm progress, and identify future learning needs.

- It fosters students' awareness of the development of their knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and skills, signifies the value of their learning in SPHE and increases their motivation for further learning.

The focus of assessment is to enable students to show evidence of their learning journey.

Through ongoing assessment activities in SPHE students can demonstrate:

- an increase in knowledge and understanding

- a change or confirmation of beliefs/attitudes/assumptions/values

- increased competence

- new strategies acquired

- a growing disposition to take actions in support of their wellbeing and that of others.

Reflection in SPHE is essential as it provides students with opportunities to consider what they are learning and how this new learning is relevant in their lives both now and in the future. Reflection is a valid and valuable aspect of SPHE assessment. Systematic recording and gathering of students' reflective exercises can enrich their learning and enable them to monitor both their personal growth and their learning in SPHE.

Detailed guidance on assessment and reporting in Senior Cycle SPHE (including sample assessment tasks) will be developed upon finalisation of this specification and published at Senior Cycle (curriculumonline.ie)

Appendix 1 Glossary of Action Verbs

Action verbs	Students should be able to
Analyse	study or examine something in detail, break it down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure; identity parts and relationships, and to interpret information to reach conclusions
Assess	show skills of judgment and evaluation, balancing different perspectives
Appreciate	acknowledge and reflect upon the value or importance of something
Consider	reflect upon the significance of something
Demonstrate	prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, showing by examples or practical application
Devise	plan, develop or create something by careful thought
Discuss	examine different concepts, perspectives or opinions on a topic and then come to their own conclusion/viewpoint, supported by appropriate evidence or reasons
Examine	enquire into/look closely at arguments, data, information and stories in a way that uncovers its origins, assumptions, perspectives and relationships
Explain	implies more than a list of facts/ideas; the reasons or cause for or further detail about these facts/ideas must also be given
Explore	systematically look into something closely for the purpose of discovery; to scrutinise or probe
Identity	recognise and state briefly a distinguishing fact, feature or example
Investigate	observe, study, or make a detailed and systematic examination, in order to establish facts and provide supporting evidence for conclusions
Research	find suitable information, sort, record, analyse and draw conclusions
Recognise	to come to know or be aware of something based on personal experience
Reflect	give thoughtful and careful consideration to their actions, experiences, values and learning in order to gain new insights and meaning of it for themselves
Summarise	state briefly the main points of information

Appendix 2 Glossary of terms used in Learning Outcomes

Abusive relationships: a general term for relationships which may be overtly or covertly aggressive, coercive, controlling, demeaning, harassing, intimidating, isolating, or threatening. Abusive behaviour can be once-off or repeated, intentional or unintentional.

Addiction pathway: refers to how engaging with addictive substances or behaviours changes the reward pathway of the brain (that releases dopamine) and describes the effects of this over time.

Allyship skills: refers to the actions, behaviours, and practices used to support, advocate and collaborate with others, in support of justice and equity. Allyship involves recognising and using one's privileged status (for example as white or male or Irish person) to support individuals from minority identity groups.

Bullying behaviour: intentional behaviour that is repeated over time by a group or individual with the intention of inflicting injury or discomfort through physical contact, verbal attacks or psychological manipulation.

Consent: a core principle of all respectful interpersonal relationships; consent involves recognising and respecting one's own boundaries and the boundaries of others and always checking whenever one is unsure. Consent in a sexual setting is defined in Irish law as follows: *a person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act.* The age of consent to engage in sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years old.

Determinants of health: whether people are healthy or not is greatly determined by their circumstances and environment. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our physical environment, genetics, gender, our income and education level, access to health services, and our relationships and social support networks, all have considerable impacts on health.

Emotional wellbeing: refers to recognising, understanding and being able to express and manage our feelings and emotions. Emotional wellbeing is fluid and should not be equated with happiness which is subjective and transitory. Nor should it be understood as the absence of negative moods, feelings or thoughts.

Gender: gender means the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, characteristics, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender is socially and culturally constructed, so understandings of gender differ across contexts and over time

Gender identity: a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.

Gender-based violence: is an umbrella term for all forms of violence that are directed against a person on the basis of their gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. The vast majority of cases of gender-based violence are perpetrated against women and children.

Health: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Image-based abuse: online harassment and image based sexual abuse includes the non-consensual distribution of intimate images including the taking, distribution, publication or threat to distribute intimate images without consent, the sending of or threatening to send grossly offensive communications with intent to cause harm to the victim.

LGBTQI+: an umbrella term to signify gender and sexuality diversity and refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people. The 'plus' is used to signify additional gender identities and sexual orientations that are not specifically covered by the five initials.

Mental health: mental health is as a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community (WHO 2001d, p.1)

Mental ill-health: mental ill-health is used to describe moderate to severe mental health difficulties which are having a significant impact on a person's life and for which they are likely to require some kind of intervention or support. (Cannon et al., 2013) It is possible to live with mental health difficulties and have a sense of wellbeing.

Positive mental health: positive mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. It implies 'full functioning' and includes satisfaction with life, optimism and hope, self-esteem, resilience and coping, social functioning and emotional intelligence (NHS Scotland 2008). This specification promotes positive mental health by fostering social and emotional learning - the process through which young people enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving – and strengthening individual protective factors, such as self-esteem, emotional resilience, positive thinking, problem solving, social skills, stress management skills and feelings of mastery or self-efficacy.

Self-care: refers to the ability to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider. Most of us already practice self-care that protects our health every day, for example in eating healthily, exercising or ensuring we get enough sleep. In a nutshell, it's about taking care of ourselves.

Self-management skills: refers to the abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations in order to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes executive functioning skills that enable students to practice self-discipline and self-motivation, set personal and collective goals, use planning and organisational skills, and show the courage to take initiative.

Sexual activity: a range of activities from kissing, touching, founding to sexual intercourse (in all its forms) which involve giving and receiving sexual pleasure. These activities can be solitary or involve other people.

Sexual assault: is an act of physical assault that has a sexual aspect or motivation. It includes groping, forcibly kissing someone or touching someone in a sexual manner without their consent.

Sexual harassment: is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. It can take the form of actions, gestures, spoken or written words, pictures etc. It can involve text messages, email, phone calls or other electronic or social media communication.

Sexual and reproductive health: in the context of Senior Cycle SPHE, this refers to learning about male and female fertility, contraception options, ways to avoid sexually transmitted infections, responding to an unplanned pregnancy, and sign-posting where young people can access sexual and reproductive health advice and services.

Sexuality: the components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression, sexual fantasies, attitudes and values related to sex. Aspects of sexuality can change as we go through different ages and relationships. (See sexuality wheel).

Sexual expression: refers to the many ways we show our sexual selves. It includes communication and acceptance of love, expressing emotion, giving and receiving pleasure, having the ability to enjoy and control sexual and reproductive behaviour.

Sexual orientation: each person's capacity for emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender. Some people do not feel sexual attraction or may have very low levels of sexual attraction, and this is termed asexuality.

Social and emotional skills: in the context of this specification, social and emotional skills refer to self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness as set out in the CASEL Social and Emotional Skills Framework.

Social norms: the unwritten rules of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that are considered acceptable in a particular social group or culture. In the context of working with young people it is important to interrogate, question and critique social norms, especially those which may be harmful, unhelpful or not reflective of what people actually feel is important.

Stereotypes: presenting an image of a person, a group or a culture based on an assumed range of characteristics, behaviours or activities.