

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

Description

Students following the Irish Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) accumulate credits by three different routes (satisfactory completion of modules; the student tasks; and the final examinations) over two years. They are certified on the basis of the total number of credits accumulated.

Beneficiaries

-  **Learners at risk of early leaving from education and training**
-  **Learners at transition points and/or uncertain about career aspirations**

Students who are not adequately catered for by other Leaving Certificate programmes or who choose not to opt for such programmes (students are free to select this option under the guidance of the LCA coordinator or other teachers).

Countries

 **Ireland**

Education level and sector

-  **Secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary general education**

Upper secondary (senior cycle)

Type of policy/initiative

-  **Prevention**

Preventive

Level of implementation / Scope

-  **National level**

National

Stage of implementation

 On-going

Mainstream since 1995

Aims of policy/initiative

The LCA's primary rationale is to retain at-risk young people within the full-time education system. It is a two-year prevocational programme designed to prepare participants for adult and working life.

Features and types of activities implemented

In regard to curriculum and teaching, candidates accumulate credits by 3 different routes (satisfactory completion of modules; student tasks; and final examinations) over 2 years, and are then certified on the basis of the total number of credits accumulated.

The programme of learning is modular, students complete 44 modules (including 4 elective modules) in a range of courses across 3 broad curricular areas: vocational preparation, vocational education, and general education.

They also complete 7 substantive student tasks', which are practical and/or reflective activities through which they integrate and apply their learning experiences.

The LCA differs significantly from the other Leaving Certificate programmes in terms of structure, design, content, teaching methodologies and assessment. The pedagogical basis of the LCA places emphasis on active teaching and learning experiences and innovation.

Resources

Budgetary changes in November 2008 meant the allocation of teachers reduced to 1.4 full-time equivalents for the first 20 students. The current allocation of 1.5 full-time equivalents is only offered to schools introducing the programme and only holds for their first cohort. No allowance is offered to existing schools.

Evaluation of the measure

No evaluation was conducted, however the Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland conducted some research in 2010 and 2014.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Qualitative evidence suggests that the LCA acted as a safety net by retaining young people in the school system, with many suggesting that they would most likely have left school before completion if they had taken the established Leaving Certificate programme. Teachers and LCA coordinators are convinced that students taking the LCA would not have completed the Established Leaving Certificate (ELC), the most common programme in

Ireland.

Study respondents were extremely positive about their learning experiences in the LCA. **Case study interviews** also demonstrated that students develop more positive attitudes to learning and begin to enjoy school. Confidence and self-esteem also increase as they see some achievement in their work, can work at their own pace, and do not have to compare themselves to other students taking the LCE.

Success factors

The following success factors are based on the testimonies of participants in the measure interviewed for the Cedefop study:

1. A real alternative to the ELC with appealing teaching and assessment styles: The LCA appeals to and encourages students with a more practical orientation or a kinaesthetic learning style. Also, the assessment system and teacher-student relationship represent a more positive experience for LCA students. Evaluation evidence shows that the teaching and learning methodologies used in the LCA help re-engage young people in the education process and foster more positive attitudes towards school. Students enjoy active teaching methods and a student-centred approach to learning. Group and project work, credit accumulation over time, smaller class sizes and greater individual attention from their teachers all emerged as positives aspects of LCA.
2. LCA coordinator support: The LCA coordinators are a valuable source of information and support to LCA students and their families. They serve to champion the LCA and lead teaching teams so that the outcomes are maximised.
3. Work experience: Evaluation evidence suggests that work experience is an important part of the curriculum and an incentive to participate in the programme. Young people were positive about the work-experience element of the LCA in forming their career aspirations, improving their confidence and decision-making skills, and preparing them for the world of work.

Contact details for further information

Contact name

Rita Sexton

Contact telephone

+35318896402

Contact website

http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state_examinations/leaving_certi...

Contact email

rita_sexton [at] education.gov.ie

Related intervention approaches



Flexible education and training systems



Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/leaving-certificate-applied-lca>