

O'Carolan College – Policy Document



Leaving Certificate Applied Policy

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the students, staff, parents/guardians of O'Carolan College.

This is version 1 of this policy which was most recently ratified by the Board of Management on 13/11/2025. The original policy with first ratified by the Board of Management on 13/11/2025.

O'Carolan College offers Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) as a two-year programme, available to students who wish to follow a practical or vocationally orientated programme. The Leaving Certificate Applied is made up of a range of courses that are structured round three elements: Vocational Preparation, Vocational Education and General Education.

Aims of the Leaving Certificate Applied Year Programme

The Leaving Certificate Applied programme is a two-year Leaving Certificate programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life.

The programme sets out to recognise the talents of all students and to provide opportunities for developing personal responsibility, self-esteem and self-knowledge, and helps students apply what they learn to the real world.

The two-year programme consists of four half-year blocks called sessions. Achievement is credited in each session. Courses are offered in three main areas: Vocational Preparation; General Education; and Vocational Education.

Who is Leaving Certificate Applied for?

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is designed for students who prefer a practical, vocational, and hands-on approach to learning, rather than the traditional academic route. It's specifically for students who may not be fully suited to the established Leaving Certificate program and are looking for a more applied and work-focused experience.

Who is the LCA for?

- **Students who learn best through practical activities:**

The LCA emphasizes hands-on learning and real-world application of knowledge.

- **Students interested in vocational and work-related skills:**

It offers a pathway to further education and training through PLC courses and apprenticeships, with a focus on preparing for the world of work.

- **Students who may have struggled with the traditional Leaving Certificate:**

The LCA provides a different learning environment and assessment style, which can be more suitable for some students.

- **Students who want to develop personal responsibility, self-esteem, and self-knowledge:**

The LCA program aims to build these personal qualities alongside vocational skills.

In essence, the LCA is for students who:

- Want to learn by doing and applying their knowledge in practical situations.
- Are interested in vocational training and work experience opportunities.
- May benefit from a more flexible and continuous assessment approach

The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

The programme, which is of two years' duration, has three main elements

- Vocational Preparation
- Vocational Education
- General Education

The following principles form the basis for the design of these courses

- Courses to consist of short, self-contained modules
- Student Tasks to be used as a means of integrating courses
- Progression from Year 1 to Year 2
- We have the flexibility to adapt the course to suit our students' needs within the overall national provision

A range of courses is provided within each of these elements. Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) is split into four half-year sessions, with more emphasis on continuous assessment instead of the end of year exams. This is different to the established Leaving Cert which focuses on the final exams taken at the end of two years (5th and 6th year).

The Leaving Certificate Applied programme consists of a range of courses, each designed on a modular basis. A module is of thirty hours duration.

Each year of the two-year programme is divided into two sessions, September to January and February to June, to facilitate the modular structure of the courses.

A module within a given course is usually completed within a session. Over the two-year duration of the programme the participants will complete 42 modules.

Students are required to take courses in each of the following areas

Vocational Preparation	No. of Modules
Vocational Preparation & Guidance	8
English and Communication	4
Vocational Education	No. of Modules
Vocational Specialisms (2 full courses)	8 (4x2)
Mathematical Applications	4
Introduction to Information and Communication Technology	2
General Education	No. of Modules
Social Education	4
Languages:	
Gaeilge	2
Modern European Language	2
or	
Sign Language for participants from the deaf community	(4)
Arts Education (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)	2
Leisure and Recreation (including Physical Education)	2
Elective Modules	No. of Modules
Participants must complete four elective modules	4
TOTAL	42

4. Assessment and Certification

The following principles apply to the assessment and certification of the Leaving Certificate Applied

- i. Assessment criteria to be transparent
- ii. Participants to accumulate credit during the programme
- iii. The centrality of the Student Tasks to the nature of the Leaving Certificate Applied
- iv. External examination to incorporate a wide range of techniques
- v. Provision for early leavers to carry credit for achievement

Participant achievement and performance will be recorded in three modes:

Module Completion

At the end of each Session the participant will be credited on satisfactory completion of the appropriate modules. In order to be awarded credit participants must

- Attend the classes and out-of-school activities related to the modules and
- Complete the key assignments related to the module.

No ranking of performance will be involved. A minimum attendance of 90% is required. The school must verify where there is absence due to exceptional circumstances.

Student Tasks

Individual Performance across 7 tasks over a two-year period. Tasks have a specific marking scheme and involve an interview with an external examiner, appointed by the SEC.

External Examinations

At the end of Year 2 participants will take final examinations in the following areas:

- English and Communication
- Vocational Specialisms (2)
- Mathematical Applications
- Languages (2)

Allocation of Credits

A participant may accumulate a maximum of 200 credits. These credits are allocated on the following basis

Mode	Credits	Percentages
Satisfactory Completion of Modules*	68	34%
7 Student Tasks	74	37%
Final Examinations	58	29%

*With regard to the assessment component of Module Completion, modules in the non-examination courses will have a value of two credits. Courses also assessed in the Final Examinations will have a value of one credit per module.

Credits for Module Completion

Non-Examination Courses	No. of Modules	No. of Credits
Vocational Preparation & Guidance	8	16
Introduction to Information & Communication Technology	2	4
Arts Education	2	4
Leisure and Recreation	2	4
Social Education	4	8
Total	18	36
Final Examination Courses	No. of Modules	No. of Credits
English and Communication	4	4
Vocational Specialisms	8 (4x2)	8
Mathematical Applications	4	4
Languages	4 (2x2)	4
Total	20	20
Elective Modules	No. of Modules	No. of Credits
Current and Validated Modules	4	8
Total	4	8
Senior Cycle SPHE		No. of Credits
Total		4
OVERALL TOTAL	42	68

Credits for Student Tasks

General Education Task	10 credits
Vocational Preparation Task	10 credits
Vocational Education Task (x2)	10 + 10 credits

Contemporary Issue Task	14 credits
Practical Achievement Task	10 credits
Personal Reflection Task	10 credits
OVERALL TOTAL	74 credits

Credits for Final Examinations

English and Communications	12 credits
Vocational Specialisms (2)	12 credits each
Languages (2)	6 credits each
Mathematical Applications	10 credits
OVERALL TOTAL	58 credits

The Leaving Certificate Applied will be awarded at three levels

- Pass 120 - 139 credits (60% - 69%)
- Merit 140 - 169 credits (70% - 84%)
- Distinction 170 - 200 credits (85% - 100%)

Students who have completed the Leaving Cert Applied programme in our school commonly report the following benefits:

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THE LCA PROGRAMME

- I expected it to be stress-free and fun, and it is. It is more enjoyable.
- DO IT!! Best decision I have ever made.
- I think practical teaching helped, like getting out and doing projects really helped.
- The group that is in LCA is so good as we bond really well as a team, and it's easier as it's so small.
- You learn a lot, like job skills, and you get to do work experience, and you get to go on trips.
- I am so unbelievably glad I did LCA. It was an absolutely amazing two years.
- I enjoyed the LCA program so much. I think it's fantastic to have it in school for different types of learners, and I wouldn't change a thing as it made my experience in school incredible.
- All the trips we went on were amazing, but Germany topped all.
- If you are stressed about the Leaving and finding it hard with studying and big exams, definitely consider LCA.

Cost & Budgeting

Student Direct Costs for LCA are decided by the Board of Management and approved by the Board of LMETB and are advised to parents in the final term of each year for the following year.

The school makes every effort to keep student direct costs for LCA to a minimum. However, in order for the school to be able to plan effectively for the delivery of the LCA programme, and for the associated costs involved, it is imperative that all student direct costs are paid for students participating in the programme.

The LCA Admissions Team

The LCA Admissions Team will be responsible for assessing applications for the programme and offering places.

The Team will include:

- Programme Coordinator (who will chair the team)
- Deputy Principal
- Year Leader for 3rd year
- Tutor for one of the existing LCA classes
- A Guidance Counsellor.

Where interviews are carried out to interview prospective LCA candidates, the interview board will be made up from the members of the Admissions Team.

Application for admission to LCA is open to all students in Third Year and Transition Year. Students who are interested in the programme should apply by completing the schools Leaving Certificate Applied application form.

Acceptance of the application form does not confirm or imply an expectation of a place on the programme.

A closing date will be clearly indicated on the application form and late applications may not be considered. In any case if considered they will only be processed after the on-time applications have been assessed.

The number of places available in LCA may vary year to year, depending on the number of students that apply, and necessary restrictions imposed by timetabling and staff resources.

The Admissions process involves:

- **An information evening for the parents/guardians** of 3rd year students/ Transition Year on senior cycle options including Leaving Certificate Applied.
- **An information session for all interested 3rd and Transition Year students** presented by the Programme Coordinator on LCA.
- Those interested in the LCA programme should apply by completing the **application form**. Each applicant must complete all sections of the online application form for LCA and submit it on or before the deadline given.
- Together with their parent(s)/guardian(s), the student must sign the **Leaving Certificate Applied Student Contract** and submit it with the application form.
- Late applications may not be considered. It is the responsibility of each student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that their application has been completed and submitted correctly.

Once the Application process is concluded, all applications for LCA are then reviewed:

- The Programme Coordinator will review **the Diary/Chronicle entries** for all applicants.
- Together with this review, the Programme Coordinator will liaise with the relevant Tutors and Year Leaders to assess the **disciplinary and behaviour record** of each applicant along with the applicants record **of attendance and punctuality**.

A consistent record of very good attendance and punctuality along with a positive record of behaviour and discipline at Junior Cycle is required for admission to LCA. Applicants who are unable to demonstrate this may not be offered a place in LCA.

Applicants may be interviewed for the programme by members of the Admissions Team.

Having conducted the comprehensive review of each application and applicant's school record as outlined above, along with the applicant's participation and at interview (where utilised), the Admissions Team will then decide whether the applicant is suitable for admission to LCA. This decision will be communicated to the student and their parents in writing. Where the Admissions Team considers an applicant unsuitable for LCA, the reason(s) for this will be outlined to the student and their parents.

Where the number of applicants deemed suitable exceeds the number of places available in LCA, places will be allocated by way of lottery and a waiting list formed. Students and Parents will be informed of their position on the waiting list. Should places become available, they will be offered in order up to the first day of the school term.

Where a student is offered a place in Leaving Certificate Applied and subsequently withdraws from the programme and opts for the established Leaving Certificate, their subject options for Fifth Year will be allocated only after the options process for Fifth Year students who did not apply for LCA has been completed.

Provisional Admission to LCA

The Admissions Team may, at its discretion, decide to provisionally admit a student to LCA. Students provisionally admitted to LCA will be assessed based on a set of specified targets and criteria prior to the end of the school year (Third Year/Transition Year). Where a student has not met the specified targets and criteria, their offer of a place in LCA may be withdrawn and the student will be placed in an established Leaving Cert class.

Reasons why the Admissions Team may decide to offer a provisional place include, but are not limited to:

- The student's prior record of attendance would not meet the standards required in LCA.
- The student's prior record of behaviour and discipline would not meet the standards required in LCA.

Where a student is offered a provisional place in LCA, the reasons for the provisional nature of the admission will be communicated to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) along with:

- The specific targets and criteria under which the student will be assessed at the end of Third Year/Transition Year.
- The date at which the review of these targets and criteria will take place in May of the year preceding entry to LCA.

Withdrawal of place in LCA

While every effort will be made to assist those admitted to the LCA programme in ensuring they are able to engage successfully with the programme, it may become necessary to withdraw a student's place in LCA after they have commenced the programme.

Should this become necessary, the decision will be made by the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Programme Coordinator, Year Leader, the relevant LCA Tutor. Members of the LCA teaching team may also be consulted. The decision will be communicated in writing to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

Reasons why a student's place in LCA may be withdrawn as outlined above include, but are not limited to:

- The student's record of attendance and punctuality is consistently failing to meet the required standard and has not improved to an acceptable level despite repeated interventions.
- The student's record of behaviour and discipline is consistently poor and has not improved to an acceptable level despite repeated interventions.
- The student's continued participation in the programme is considered to be detrimental to the order, discipline and educational welfare of the other students in their class.

Appeals

Where a student already enrolled in the school has not been offered a place in LCA or has had their place in LCA withdrawn, the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal this decision to the principal in writing. The appeal must be made within seven days of the date of the written notification of the decision not to offer or to withdraw a student's place in LCA sent to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

The decision of the principal on appeal is final.

External Applications

Applications for admission to O'Carolan College are considered under the terms of the school's Admissions Policy and Admissions Notice that are in force at the time of the application.

The number of places available in LCA may vary year to year, depending on the number of students that apply, and necessary restrictions imposed by timetabling and staff resources. As a result, places in LCA will not be offered to external applicants until after the internal LCA admissions process has concluded in any given year.