

# Short Course Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE)

Specification for Junior Cycle



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# Introduction to junior cycle

Junior cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

Junior cycle allows students to make a greater connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute to the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity and enterprise. The student's junior cycle programme builds on their learning in primary school. It supports their further progress in learning. It helps students to develop the learning skills that can assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

# Rationale

The teaching and learning of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides a unique space where students can develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values needed to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual<sup>1</sup> wellbeing, now and in the future. The SPHE specification is grounded in values of respect, equality, inclusivity, responsibility, dignity, compassion and empathy.

Adolescence is a time of important change and challenge for young people as they come to a clearer sense of their identity and gain a more secure sense of who they are. The lifelong process of 'becoming your own person' and gaining a secure sense of identity is a prime developmental concern in adolescence. All young people need knowledge and skills to help them develop a strong sense of self, make informed and healthy decisions, be able to take care of themselves and others, and manage life's challenges.

This course places a strong focus on the development of important life skills that young people need growing up in a fast changing and complex world. Specifically, it focuses on developing the core social and emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. These have been shown to determine how well people manage changing and challenging environments and can influence many important life outcomes.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of, and connects with, aspects of SPHE. It is of particular importance for young people at this stage of their lives as they reflect on questions such as 'what kind of person am I?' and 'what matters for me in relationships?' As they continue to form their identity, they are making sense of life experiences, information, images and messages about relationships and sexuality from a range of informal sources such as their peers, family, the media, online world. Having the opportunity to think about and discuss relationships, sexuality and healthy sexual expression within a safe classroom setting and with a skilled teacher is vitally important.

Through the use of critical and participative pedagogies, SPHE can provide a safe, supportive and non-judgemental space where students' self-awareness and awareness of others can grow, and where they engage in reflection and dialogue, and identify actions they can take to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others. By affirming and developing young people's strengths and capacities as active agents in their own lives, SPHE can play an important role in enabling young people to find their voice and develop self-efficacy.

In junior cycle, six indicators have been identified as central to students' wellbeing. Teaching and learning within the SPHE classroom can provide meaningful learning opportunities to foster all six indicators of wellbeing, helping students become more Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware. SPHE is thereby a core pillar of a school's Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.

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 a feature of humankind 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The spiritual dimension of wellbeing relates to being able to experience a sense of awe and wonder and knowing that life has meaning and purpose. (*Primary Curriculum Framework*, p12, NCCA, 2023) This is based on a human development approach to wellbeing that is holistic and interdisciplinary and recognises different aspects to wellbeing, including the spiritual aspect of life.

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# Aim

This course 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.

# Overview: Links

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages show how SPHE may be linked to central features of learning and teaching in junior cycle.

## SPHE and statements of learning (SOL)

**Table 1: Links between junior cycle SPHE and the statements of learning**

| Statement  | Examples of related learning in the course  |
|--|---|
| <b>SOL 5:</b> The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making.  | Students develop self-awareness, including an awareness of their personal values and how these values influence day-to-day decision making. They also gain understanding of and develop respect for values, beliefs and experiences that may be different from their own. |
| <b>SOL 6:</b> The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives. | Students have opportunities to discuss the wider social and cultural context that influences their personal and inter-personal relationships and decision making around health and wellbeing.   |
| <b>SOL 11:</b> The student takes action to safeguard and promote his/her wellbeing and that of others.   | Students learn how to make decisions to support their own and others' health and wellbeing. They gain information and develop skills and strategies to help them deal with relevant life challenges and learn where to seek support when needed.                          |

## SPHE and key skills

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The junior cycle curriculum focuses on eight key skills, which are set out below.

Figure 1: Key skills of junior cycle



This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some of the key skill elements that are related to learning activities in SPHE. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

**Table 2: Links between junior cycle SPHE and key skills**

| <b>Key skill</b>                         | <b>Key skill element</b>   | <b>Student learning activity</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Being Creative</b>                    | Exploring options and alternatives                                     | Students explore and evaluate options in the context of decisions they make and consider possible outcomes and consequences. Thinking creatively and being open to the viewpoint and perspective of others is also encouraged.   |
| <b>Being Literate</b>                    | Exploring and creating a variety of texts, including multi-modal texts | Students are encouraged to express their learning in SPHE in a variety of ways: physically (such as a mime, drama), digitally (such as audio/video recording, presentation), paper-based (scrapbook, poster), data-based (charts, graphs), or through artistic representation.             |
| <b>Being Numerate</b>                    | Gathering, interpreting and evaluating information                     | Students consider research data relevant to their lives. In some instances, students may create their own surveys or questionnaires to investigate aspects of health and wellbeing relevant to young people.   |
| <b>Communicating</b>                     | Listening and expressing myself  | Students learn to express ideas and emotions clearly and respectfully and develop empathy by listening to different perspectives and experiences and showing concern for the feelings of others.   |
| <b>Managing Information And Thinking</b> | Thinking creatively and critically                                     | Students are encouraged to question assumptions (their own and others) and social norms. They are supported to reflect on their learning and prompted to review their learning in light of new information and insights gained.  |
| <b>Managing Myself</b>                   | Knowing myself   | Through their learning students develop self-awareness and recognise their personal values, strengths and capacities. They are also supported in considering the influence of family, peers, the media and other contextual factors that influence who they are and the choices they make. |
| <b>Staying Well</b>                      | Being safe   | Students identify the likely consequences of risky and unhealthy behaviours and learn how to respond if their personal safety is threatened.   |
| <b>Working With Others</b>               | Developing good relationships and dealing with conflict                | Through their learning students develop the foundational skills needed for healthy relationships, including skills for assertive and respectful communication.   |



## SPHE and wellbeing

SPHE is a core pillar of the junior cycle Wellbeing programme. The six indicators of wellbeing – Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware - describe what is important for young people and their wellbeing. The SPHE course supports young people to develop all six indicators of wellbeing. Figure 2 provides an overview of the six wellbeing indicators.

Appendix 3 demonstrates the extent to which the SPHE learning outcomes contribute directly to developing the indicators of wellbeing.

**Figure 2: Indicators of wellbeing**



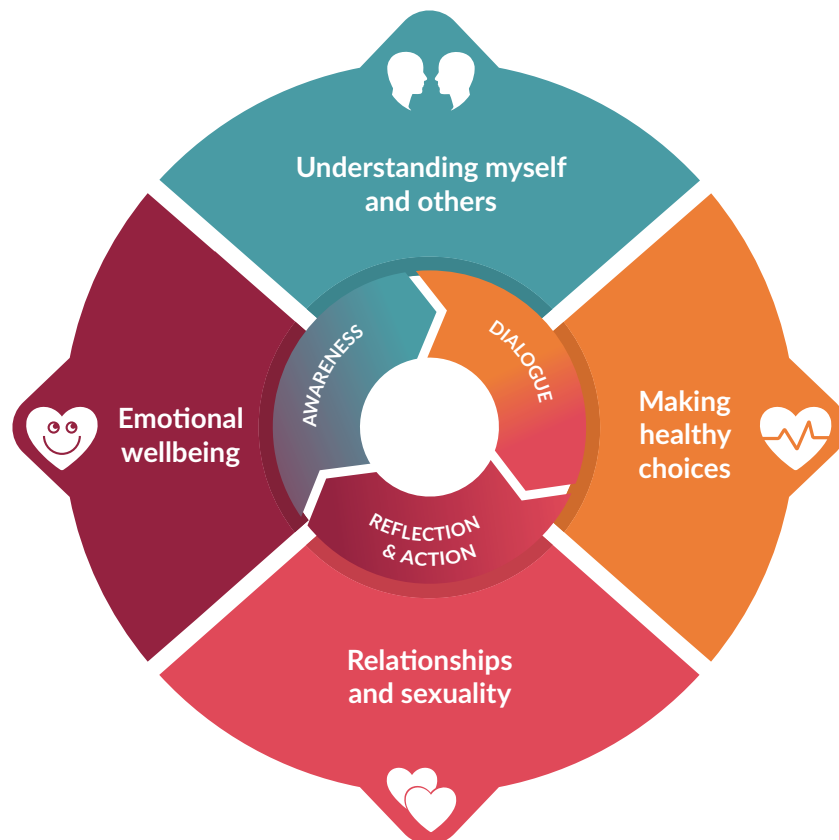
Guidelines to support schools in planning and developing a junior cycle Wellbeing programme are available on [ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing](https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing).

**Table 3: Reflection questions for the SPHE classroom based on the indicators of wellbeing****Reflection questions for the SPHE classroom based on the indicators of wellbeing**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Active</b>      | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to become more physically active and healthy?   |
| <b>Responsible</b> | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to make good decisions?   |
| <b>Connected</b>   | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to see how my actions and choices impact not only on my own life but on the lives of others too?  |
| <b>Resilient</b>   | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to manage the normal ups and downs of life and helping me to know where I can go for help, if needed?   |
| <b>Respected</b>   | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to feel valued, included and listened to?<br>How am I showing respect and care for others in my class and beyond?   |
| <b>Aware</b>       | How is my learning in SPHE helping me to become more aware of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours?<br><br>Am I becoming more aware of the influences that are shaping how I think and behave?<br><br>Am I becoming more aware of the perspectives and feelings of others and able to show empathy?<br><br>Am I better able to make thoughtful decisions based on my personal values? |

# Overview: Course

This junior cycle course in SPHE is designed to support students in developing a positive sense of self and a capacity to care for themselves and others. It is designed around four interconnected strands and three cross-cutting elements.



## Strand 1: Understanding myself and others

This strand focuses on developing self-awareness and self-esteem and building some of the foundational skills and dispositions needed for healthy relationships and to thrive in life, including communicating and negotiating, listening, showing empathy, respecting difference, and self-management/self-regulation.

## Strand 2: Making healthy choices

This strand offers opportunities for students to consider how they can make healthy choices to support their wellbeing. It explores what being healthy might look like for a teenager, what helps or gets in the way of making healthy choices and how to access reliable information to support good choices. Students will also practice the skills needed for making healthy decisions and come to understand contextual factors, such as family, peer, media and social pressures, that influence decisions.

**Strand 3: Relationships and sexuality**

This strand explores the cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexuality through a positive, inclusive, rights and responsibilities-based approach. The focus is on family relationships, friendships, romantic and potential sexual relationships in the future.

**Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing**

This strand primarily focuses on nurturing emotional wellbeing and promoting positive mental health. It helps students develop problem solving and coping skills for dealing with the emotional ups and downs of life, explores how they can support themselves and others in challenging times and discusses where/how to find support, if needed.

The four strands are underpinned by three cross-cutting elements that are foundational for effective teaching and learning in SPHE. These are:

- Awareness
- Dialogue
- Reflection and action.

**Awareness**

Awareness is the ability to 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 norms. This element also includes an awareness that to be human is to be in relationships and that we all share a common humanity and dignity, have 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<sup>2</sup> and action**

This cross-cutting element focuses on 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.

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2 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*.

# Expectations for students

*Expectations for students* is an umbrella term that links learning outcomes with annotated examples of student work. For NCCA-developed short courses, in some cases examples of work associated with a specific learning outcome or with a group of learning outcomes will be available.

## Learning outcomes

*Learning outcomes* are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values students should be able to demonstrate having completed this junior cycle course in SPHE. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students and represent outcomes for students at the end of their period of study.

The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply any hierarchy of importance across the outcomes themselves. Nor does it imply that the learning outcomes should be attended to sequentially. When planning for learning and teaching in SPHE, teachers can work with a number of learning outcomes from within one strand or across different strands.

This course employs a spiral approach that will be familiar to SPHE teachers. This spiral approach allows students to revisit important themes over the three years in order to allow for deeper engagement relevant to the students' evolving needs and stage of development. In revisiting learning outcomes, it is important to ensure that there is a progression of learning. It is also important to consult regularly with students to ascertain how to plan teaching and learning using the learning outcomes so that the learning is responsive to students' particular needs, questions and concerns. Such consultation will ensure that SPHE is relevant and responsive to the reality of students' lives in diverse contexts and classrooms.

This SPHE course has been designed for 100 hours of student engagement to be taught over the three years of junior cycle.

Appendix 2 provides a glossary of key terms for SPHE.

For guidance on planning using these learning outcomes as well as sample resources and methodologies, see the SPHE toolkit at: [www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/)

The learning outcomes in this course are aligned with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 4).

# Strand 1: Understanding myself and others

## Students should be able to:

- 1.1 explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence
- 1.2 reflect on their personal strengths and values and how they bring these into relationships
- 1.3 explore the range of influences and life experiences that can impact on self-image and self-esteem and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth
- 1.4 recognise the factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, dis/abilities, religious beliefs/world-views
- 1.5 reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on expectations, behaviour and relationships
- 1.6 discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion<sup>3</sup> and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments
- 1.7 communicate in a respectful and effective manner and listen openly and sensitively to the views/feelings of others
- 1.8 reflect on the meaning and importance of empathy and discuss ways that it can be expressed
- 1.9 demonstrate self-management skills, including setting personal goals, delaying gratification, and self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and impulses.

### Awareness

### Dialogue

### Reflection and action

<sup>3</sup> The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. These grounds are a useful lens for engagement with this learning outcome. Teachers may select the grounds most relevant to their context to facilitate student engagement with this learning outcome.

# Strand 2: Making healthy choices

## Students should be able to:

- 2.1 consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing, and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different adolescents, including how food, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing
- 2.2 investigate how unhealthy products such as nicotine, vapes, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks are marketed and advertised
- 2.3 discuss societal, cultural and economic influences affecting young people when it comes to making healthy choices about smoking, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and how harmful influences can be overcome in real-life situations
- 2.4 demonstrate skills and strategies to help make informed choices that support health and wellbeing and apply them in real-life situations that may be stressful and/or involve difficult peer situations
- 2.5 discuss the physical, social, emotional and legal consequences of using addictive substances - immediate and long-term
- 2.6 consider scenarios where, for example, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, food and electronic devices might be used to cope with unpleasant feelings or stress, and discuss possible healthy ways of coping
- 2.7 assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise
- 2.8 discuss how to share personal information, images, opinions and emotions in a safe, responsible and respectful manner online and in person
- 2.9 explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this
- 2.10 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information, supports and services about health and wellbeing.

Awareness

Dialogue

Reflection  
and action

# Strand 3: Relationships and sexuality

## Students should be able to:

- 3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.2 examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships - friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.3 identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships
- 3.4 appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others
- 3.5 consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health
- 3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways
- 3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices
- 3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective
- 3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- 3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression
- 3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

### Awareness

### Dialogue

### Reflection and action



# Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing

## Students should be able to:

- 4.1 discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it
- 4.2 recognise and acknowledge their emotions and recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- 4.3 consider the impact of stress and draw upon a variety of techniques to help self-regulate emotions and cope with the day-to-day stresses of life
- 4.4 discuss ways to support themselves and others in challenging times and where/how/when to seek support, if needed
- 4.5 explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control
- 4.6 recognise different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in interactions online and in person
- 4.7 explain why noticing and responding to different kinds of abusive or bullying behaviour that can occur in person and online is important and discuss appropriate responses including, why, how, where and when to report
- 4.8 identify actions young people can take, without putting themselves at risk, in situations where they are aware of incidents of abusive behaviour or bullying happening and explore the barriers to standing up
- 4.9 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

### Awareness

### Dialogue

### Reflection and action

# Assessment and reporting

The junior cycle places a strong emphasis on assessment as part of the learning process. This approach requires a more varied approach to assessment in ensuring that the assessment method or methods chosen are fit for purpose, timely and relevant to the students. Assessment in Junior Cycle SPHE will optimise the opportunity for students to become reflective and active participants in their learning and for teachers to support this.

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. The SPHE course supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. It is envisaged that most assessment in SPHE will be formative in nature and students will provide evidence of their learning through multiple means of expression, including oral, written, visual, digital and art-based pieces. In these contexts, students, with their teachers and peers, will reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work, and they will agree the next steps in their learning based on feedback they give and receive. In this way, ongoing formative assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this course.

Student progress and achievement in short courses, both in ongoing assessments and in the specific Classroom-Based Assessment relating to this course, will be communicated to parents/guardians in interim reporting and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

To support this, teachers and schools will have access to online assessment support material in addition to the guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process. The contents of the online support material include a range of assessment supports, advice and guidelines to enable schools and teachers to engage with the assessment system and reporting arrangements in an informed way, with confidence and clarity.

In addition, specially developed materials to support SPHE teaching and learning are available in the SPHE Toolkit at [www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/)

## Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessments are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Where feasible, teachers of short courses will participate in SLAR meetings. A particular purpose of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the task and at the end of the process.

## Classroom-Based Assessment in SPHE

Assessment in SPHE is not about setting tasks in order to accumulate a record of marks. Nor is it about teachers assessing where the student is situated on the continuum of wellbeing or making a judgment about a student's physical, social or emotional wellbeing. The focus of assessment is on allowing students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values they have gained through their engagement in learning in SPHE.

Considering the diversity of learners and contexts, and to support maximum flexibility and choice, students will engage in **one** of the following CBAs.

| Title   | Format  | Student preparation  |
|---|---|--|
| Portfolio of my learning and reflection in SPHE | Individual selection of items of work, such as digital, written texts, posters, audio-visual or multi-modal | Students will choose three pieces of work, completed over time and linked to different strands of learning within the course, and present these accompanied by a reflection on why each piece was chosen and how it marked important learning for the student in SPHE. |

OR

| Title                  | Format   | Student preparation   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Taking action for SPHE | Individual or small group project that can be presented in a wide range of formats | Students will, over a specified time, with support and guidance from the teacher, research, report and reflect on an action they have taken to raise awareness about or promote an aspect of health/wellbeing studied in the SPHE short course. |

Whilst the timing of the Classroom-Based Assessment in short courses may vary from school to school, Classroom-Based Assessment for reporting purposes in the JCPA cannot be conducted in first year. This Classroom-Based Assessment can be completed during second or third year.

(See SPHE Toolkit: [Creative Approaches to Assessment in SPHE](#))

## Features of quality

The features of quality support student and teacher judgement of the Classroom-Based Assessment and are the criteria that will be used by teachers to assess the student's portfolio or action project.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this SPHE short course, including features of quality and details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of the Classroom-Based Assessment, are available in separate assessment guidelines for SPHE.

## Inclusive assessment

This specification allows for inclusive assessment practices whether as part of ongoing assessment or Classroom-Based Assessment. Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment. The accommodations, for example, support provided by a Special Needs Assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year.

# Appendix 1:

## Glossary of action verbs

### Action verbs Students should be able to

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Analyse</b>     | study or examine something in detail, break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure; identify parts and relationships, and to interpret information to reach conclusions  |
| <b>Appreciate</b>  | acknowledge and reflect upon the value or importance of something  |
| <b>Assess</b>      | show skills of judgement and evaluation, balancing different perspectives  |
| <b>Communicate</b> | use written, visual, verbal or signs/gestures to share meaning or exchange information with an audience  |
| <b>Compare</b>     | give an account of the similarities and/or differences between two (or more) items, perspectives or positions, referring to both/all of them throughout  |
| <b>Consider</b>    | reflect upon the significance of something   |
| <b>Critique</b>    | state the positive and negative aspects of, for example, an action, idea or perspective  |
| <b>Demonstrate</b> | prove or make clear by reasoning or evidence, showing by examples or practical application   |
| <b>Describe</b>    | give an account, using words, diagrams or images, of the main points of the topic  |
| <b>Devise</b>      | plan, develop or create something by careful thought   |
| <b>Discuss</b>     | examine different concepts, perspectives or opinions on a topic and then come to their own conclusion/viewpoint, supported by appropriate evidence or reasons  |
| <b>Evaluate</b>    | collect and examine information/evidence to make judgements and appraisals; describe how evidence supports or does not support a judgement; identify the limitations of evidence in conclusions; make judgements about ideas, solutions or methods |
| <b>Examine</b>     | enquire into/look closely at arguments, data, information and stories in a way that uncovers its origins, assumptions, perspectives and relationships  |
| <b>Explain</b>     | implies more than a list of facts/ideas: the reasons or cause for or further detail about these facts/ideas must also be given   |
| <b>Explore</b>     | systematically look into something closely for the purpose of discovery; to scrutinise or probe  |
| <b>Express</b>     | communicate or present information and ideas clearly and accurately  |
| <b>Identify</b>    | recognise and state briefly a distinguishing fact, feature or example  |
| <b>Interpret</b>   | use knowledge and understanding to recognise trends and draw conclusions from given information  |
| <b>Investigate</b> | observe, study, or make a detailed and systematic examination, in order to establish facts and provide supporting evidence for conclusions   |
| <b>List</b>        | provide a number of points or facts  |
| <b>Outline</b>     | set out the main points of information on a topic  |
| <b>Present</b>     | show something for others to examine   |
| <b>Recognise</b>   | to come to know or be aware of something based on personal experience  |
| <b>Reflect</b>     | give thoughtful and careful consideration to their actions, experiences, values and learning in order to gain new insights and make meaning of it for themselves   |
| <b>Research</b>    | find suitable information, sort, record, analyse and draw conclusions  |
| <b>Share</b>       | communicate to exchange information with an audience   |
| <b>Survey</b>      | examine or measure in a detailed manner  |

# Appendix 2:

## Glossary of key terms for SPHE

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

**Active Bystander:** a person who witnesses and recognises a harmful or potentially harmful act and doesn't ignore it or walk away.

**Addictive behaviours:** in the context of this specification, this refers to addictive behaviours that may arise among young people such as alcohol/substance use, gaming, gambling and social media addictions.

**Behaviour:** refers to the way in which one acts or behaves towards self or others. It is helpful to view behaviour as a continuum. Behaviour can be appropriate, helpful, supportive, respectful, neutral, inappropriate, unhelpful, unsupportive, disrespectful or even harmful (physically or psychologically). Harmful behaviour might include abusive or bullying behaviours to self or others. Identifying and understanding our behaviour requires self-awareness and insight into the impact of behaviour and this is the first step to addressing behaviours we wish to change.

**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.

**Bystander:** a person who is present when something happens and who sees it but does not take part in it.

**Consent:** a core principle of all respectful interpersonal relationships; it 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.

**Emotional wellbeing:** being aware of one's emotions, being able to manage and express those emotions appropriately and being able to cope when confronted with adversity or stressful situations. Emotional wellbeing is fluid and involves managing the ups and downs which are a normal part of life. It should not be equated with happiness which is transitory. This course promotes emotional wellbeing for all students and while it does not focus on specific mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety) which may need professional support beyond the classroom, it helps students develop self-awareness and the skills to support and protect their emotional wellbeing throughout their lives.

**Gender:** Refers to the social and cultural factors influencing what it means to be male and female, i.e. the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It is important to distinguish gender from 'sex' which refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that are defined as being male and female (see definition of sex below).

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

**Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

**Health literacy:** is the combination of personal competencies and resources needed for people to access, understand, appraise and use information and services to make decisions about health. It also includes the capacity to communicate, assert and act upon these decisions.

**Reproductive health:** in the context of Junior Cycle SPHE this refers to learning about fertility - and how to protect it and learning about menstruation.

**Romantic or intimate relationships:** for the purpose of this specification, this refers to relationships that include but go beyond friendship to include a sexual attraction and may involve feelings of affection, infatuation, desire, and sensuality.

**Sex:** refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that are defined as being male and female. When children are born, their sex is largely decided or 'assigned' on the basis of their external genitalia, which generally – but not always – reflects their internal hormonal and chromosomal make-up.

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

**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 refers 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.

**Substance use:** in the context of this specification, substance use refers to alcohol, nicotine, vaping and drugs.

**Upstander:** a person who is present when something happens and speaks up or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly intervening on behalf of someone who is under threat of harm or attack. Akin to an Active Bystander.

# Appendix 3:

## SPHE learning outcomes and wellbeing indicators

### Strand 1: Understanding myself and others

#### Learning outcomes Students should be able to...

|  | Active* | Responsible | Connected | Resilient | Respected | Aware |
|--|---------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 1.1 explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.2 reflect on their personal strengths and values and how they bring these into relationships   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.3 explore the range of influences and life experiences that can impact on self-image and self-esteem and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.4 recognise the factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, dis/abilities, religious beliefs/ world-views |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.5 reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on expectations, behaviour and relationships  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.6 discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.7 communicate in a respectful and effective manner and listen openly and sensitively to the views/ feelings of others  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.8 reflect on the meaning and importance of empathy and discuss ways that it can be expressed   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 1.9 demonstrate self-management skills, including setting personal goals, delaying gratification, and self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and impulses   |         |             |           |           |           |       |

\* SPHE encourages students to be active participants in their learning and active agents in their own lives. In SPHE, students are active in their learning through the realisation of the three foundational cross-cutting elements (page 12). Action is the focus of one of the CBA options where students research, report and reflect on an action they have taken to raise awareness about or promote an aspect of health/wellbeing studied in the SPHE short course.

## Strand 2: Making healthy choices

### Learning outcomes *Students should be able to...*

|  | Active* | Responsible | Connected | Resilient | Respected | Aware |
|--|---------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 2.1 consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing, and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different adolescents, including how food, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing                      |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.2 investigate how unhealthy products such as nicotine, vapes, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks are marketed and advertised   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.3 discuss societal, cultural and economic influences affecting young people when it comes to making healthy choices about smoking, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and how harmful influences can be overcome in real-life situations |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.4 demonstrate skills and strategies to help make informed choices that support health and wellbeing and apply them in real-life situations that may be stressful and/or involve difficult peer situations  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.5 discuss the physical, social, emotional and legal consequences of using addictive substances – immediate and long-term   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.6 consider scenarios where, for example, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, food and electronic devices might be used to cope with unpleasant feelings or stress, and discuss possible healthy ways of coping   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.7 assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.8 discuss how to share personal information, images, opinions and emotions in a safe, responsible and respectful manner online and in person   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.9 explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 2.10 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information, supports and services about health and wellbeing  |         |             |           |           |           |       |



## Strand 3: Relationship and sexuality

### Learning outcomes *Students should be able to...*

|  | Active* | Responsible | Connected | Resilient | Respected | Aware |
|--|---------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.2 examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships – friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.3 identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.4 appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.5 consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective                               |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health  |         |             |           |           |           |       |

## Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing

### Learning outcomes *Students should be able to...*

|     |  | Active* | Responsible | Connected | Resilient | Respected | Aware |
|-----|--|---------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 4.1 | discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.2 | recognise and acknowledge their emotions and recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.3 | consider the impact of stress and draw upon a variety of techniques to help self-regulate emotions and cope with the day-to-day stresses of life   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.4 | discuss ways to support themselves and others in challenging times and where/how/when to seek support, if needed   |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.5 | explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.6 | recognise different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in interactions online and in person  |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.7 | explain why noticing and responding to different kinds of abusive or bullying behaviour that can occur in person and online is important and discuss appropriate responses including, why, how, where and when to report |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.8 | identify actions young people can take, without putting themselves at risk, in situations where they are aware of incidents of abusive behaviour or bullying happening and explore the barriers to standing up           |         |             |           |           |           |       |
| 4.9 | demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.  |         |             |           |           |           |       |

# Appendix 4:

## Level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, for Level 3 certification and awards, the knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.

### NFQ Level 3

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Knowledge</b>          | Knowledge moderately broad in range   |
| <i>Breadth</i>            |   |
| <b>Knowledge</b>          | Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements |
| <i>Kind</i>               |   |
| <b>Know-how and skill</b> | Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools                             |
| <i>Range</i>              |   |
| <b>Know-how and skill</b> | Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range       |
| <i>Selectivity</i>        |   |
| <b>Competence</b>         | Act within a limited range of contexts  |
| <i>Context</i>            |   |
| <b>Competence</b>         | Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups             |
| <i>Role</i>               |   |
| <b>Competence</b>         | Learn to learn within a managed environment   |
| <i>Learning to</i>        |   |
| <b>Competence</b>         | Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour                   |
| <i>Insight</i>            |   |



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education



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