THE LCA STUDENT TASK WORKBOOKS

EXPLANATORY BOOKLET

THE STUDENT TASK 1

A Workbook-Based Resource for Leaving Certificate Applied Year 1

GOLDEN KEY — JANE LANDY

THE STUDENT TASK 2

A Workbook-Based Resource for Leaving Certificate Applied Year 2

GOLDEN KEY — JANE LANDY
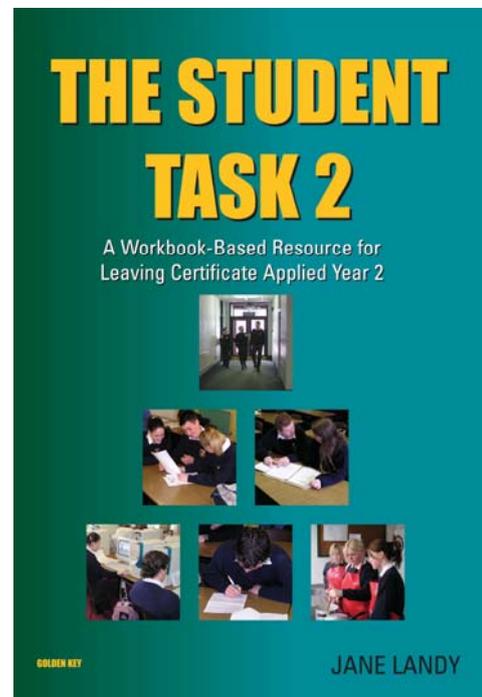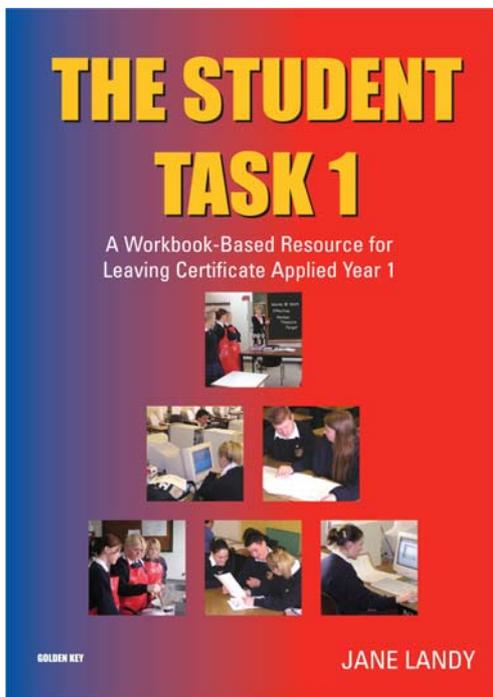
GOLDEN KEY

THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is for LCA Coordinators and teachers. In it we explain how best to use the Student Task workbooks in your school and outline how this will benefit students, teachers and the LCA Coordinator.

WHAT ARE THE STUDENT TASK WORKBOOKS?

These two workbooks have been specially written to help LCA students to get the greatest possible value from their task work. The books provide activities to help students develop their problem solving, planning and reflection skills.

Such skills are highly in demand by employers in Ireland today and all too rare in our school and college leavers.   The task work in LCA offers a unique opportunity to embed these skills in a group of senior cycle students. We hope that this will contribute positively to the profile of LCA among employers and in the wider community.

The content of the workbooks corresponds to the requirements specified in the **NCCA booklet "LCA Programme Statement and Outline of Student Tasks".** They provide an additional means to improve the quality of the outputs and outcomes from task work as set out by the NCCA. We have also built the recommendations from recent **Examiners' Reports** into our exercises for each of the tasks.

These books fill the current gap in resource provision in this crucial component of the LCA programme.

TEACHERS CAN PICK AND CHOOSE TO SUIT THE STUDENT

It goes without saying that no single resource can match each individual teacher's needs for a student at a given time. There is enormous variation in how tasks are approached, in the type of student concerned, even in concentration levels on any particular day.

At the test stage of these workbooks, different teachers found that different exercises appealed to them. They indicated a preference for a wide choice of activities which could be:

- **Used on their own OR**
- **Combined into a single coherent approach to the task.**

This means that appropriate material can be selected for students of differing abilities so that **every student is challenged at the right level**.   It has been our goal to include something for everyone in the workbooks.

CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH NCCA SPECIFICATIONS

The outputs and outcomes of the resource have been designed to match those specified for
LCA by the NCCA in its **LCA "Programme Statement and Outline of Student Tasks"**.
Providing exercises to cover the NCCA's key questions and other requirements is extremely
important if the resource is to help students get the most out of their task experience.

Of course **comprehensive does not mean prescriptive**. This is a vital point for coordinators
to make to teachers when introducing them to the workbooks.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORKBOOKS

The structure of each workbook reflects the tasks carried out in that year of the LCA
programme.
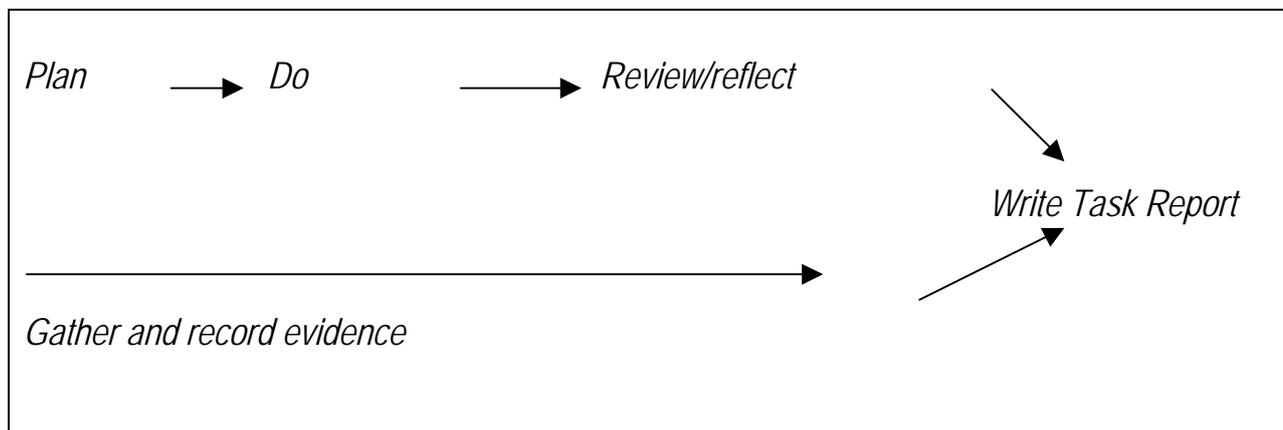

The Student Task 1

- Introduction
- Personal Reflection – Initial Statement
- General Education Task
- Vocational Preparation Task
- Vocational Education Task 1
- Personal Reflection Statement 1

The Student Task 2

- Introduction
- Personal Reflection – Starting LCA 2
- Practical Achievement Task
- Contemporary Issue Task
- Vocational Education Task 2
- Personal Reflection Statement 2

EXERCISES SUPPORT THE TASK PROCESS

The set of exercises offered to the student supports the basic task process of "Plan, Do, Review" that all teachers use.

Plan ⟶ Do ⟶ Review/reflect

Write Task Report

Gather and record evidence

The Task Process

Evidence is gathered and recorded along the way and the student writes up the "edited highlights" of the entire experience in the task report.

Each of these stages is essential and exercises are provided to take students through every detail of each stage. Teachers can pick and choose the best exercises to suit the needs of their students at each of the stages. We recommend that students attempt a minimum of one exercise or part of an exercise for each of the above stages.

The Personal Reflection Task is different in structure from the other three and is approached somewhat differently.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY – "SET THE BAR HIGH"

Literacy levels vary widely among students and LCA aims to **raise a student's standard of literacy** as much as possible over the duration of the programme.

The language of the workbooks is deliberately challenging and reflects a vocabulary in common use in the workplace in Ireland today.

An ability to use such vocabulary with confidence will stand to students in their adult lives. Not all will master it all during LCA but it is there to be learnt and practiced by every student to the extent that a teacher feels is achievable. It was the overwhelming desire of coordinators,

teachers and support personnel whom we consulted, that when it came to language, these workbooks should **"set the bar high"**.

This makes the **role of the English and Communications teacher fundamental**. This teacher will be able to work out how best to use the exercises to integrate literacy and language improvements into every task, regardless of the anchor course. We acknowledge that this will be challenging in the hectic environment of secondary school but believe it is a goal worth striving for. The LCA Coordinator may be in a position to facilitate this interaction.

DEVELOPING SKILLS – ESPECIALLY PLANNING

Familiarity with the activities in the workbooks will help students to develop skills in personal reflection, project management, team working, problem solving/analysis and creative thinking. Such terms will naturally be meaningless to them when they start off on LCA.

To foster the development of these skills, the teacher will need to select the activities and corresponding vocabulary in a sensible way that works for a student.

When we tested these exercises in the classroom, students, often perceived to be of a low level of ability, performed at a level that, in our experience, frequently **exceeded that of senior managers**. It seems that the planning exercises in particular, develop skills very quickly indeed across a very broad range of students.

Coordinators could try to get teachers interested in the planning material first. Planning (although only 20% in most marking schemes) makes the "doing" part of the task much easier and provides a basis for meaningful review and reflection. So time spent in planning, benefits outcomes and other outputs later on in the task process and actually impacts on far more than the allocated "20%" of the assessment marks.

EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT ABILITIES

Each exercise in the workbooks can be regarded as a "block". This analogy of building blocks is useful. If you are given a box of building blocks you do not have to use them all every time you build something. Your building will be unique each time and you can use as many or as few blocks as you wish. It simply has to stand up. The important thing is to learn how to build.

The same principle goes for how teachers use the "blocks" of the workbooks with their students. Each student should be challenged to complete the task at a level that is right for him/her. Ultimately they will become competent and experienced "builders"/project managers.

The detail of each "building block" or exercise offered consists of:

* Word bank
* Guidance text
* Practical activity/activities
* Worked example
* Links to other parts of LCA including Key Assignments.

The detail is designed to offer something to students of different abilities who are in the same class. Here are some suggestions for how this might be done.

Ability level of student	Teacher could encourage student to:
Above average	- Read and discuss text and worked example - Learn and use vocabulary in word bank - Use content generated in activity as the basis for a piece of original narrative to be used in the Task Report
Average	- Complete the activities and discuss the ideas they have generated - Use some new vocabulary in these discussions
Below average	- Work through activity slowly, completing some parts - Understand that new words will help them to express their ideas - Ask for vocabulary to be explained or other words suggested.

If a teacher feels that a particular student can move ahead faster than his/her peers, then he/she should be encouraged to follow on with extra activities during the class.

CHOOSING "A LA CARTE"

Teachers should try out the different exercises in an **"a la carte"** style. They should feel free to pick and choose from the contents of the workbookss according to the normal day to day constraints of:

* Time available
* Ability and concentration of students at a given time

- Literacy levels of students
- Teachers' own experience with LCA
- Pressure to achieve **high marks in the assessments.**

The workbookss can supplement rather than replace a teacher's own task methodology. In time teachers can progress to link the exercises together in a logical sequence for students when and if they think this is appropriate.

MAXIMISING MARKS VERSUS MAXIMISING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

We recognize that inevitably there will be tension for teachers caused by the desire to see their students gain the highest possible marks in the task assessments and the desire to maximize the value of the learning process for each student.

Of course, the two aims are not mutually exclusive. In the workbookss we have opted to include all activities we think may benefit a student. Some of these will impact more directly on marks than others but all will considerably aid skills development and improve learning outcomes. The teacher should use their judgment when selecting activities.

The assessment criteria from task marking schemes have been built in to many of the exercises. Although such schemes undergo minor adjustments from year to year, this will not impact on the contents of the workbooks.

REPETITION IN THE *PROCESS* BUT NOT THE TASK *CONTENT*

For the three main tasks in each year, the process and vocabulary will be similar but the content of the task will be completely different. A **common process and vocabulary** helps students to generate original content each time.

The nature of work everywhere today emphasizes the distinction between **process** and **content** and it is vital that teachers communicate this to their students. It is not a distinction that is strongly made in either the Junior Cert or traditional Leaving Cert where students are required to remember a mixture of the two without any understanding of how to distinguish one from the other.

Repetition is important for mastering any skill. This is why it forms such a key part of these workbooks.

RATIONALE FOR WORKED EXAMPLES

The inclusion of worked examples serves to illustrate that the **same process** can be applied to different ideas, projects and problems to generate **original subject matter** each time. The same process can be used productively on a large group task or on a highly individual task.

When students grasp this point, they will be able to apply their new process skills to work experience and key assignments.

PLAGIARISM AND COPYRIGHT

Teachers should advise students that if copies of the worked examples appear in Task Reports, this constitutes **a breach of copyright** which is **against the law.**

PRACTICAL POINTS TO CONSIDER

In many schools it is extremely difficult, from a practical point of view, for teachers who are not delivering the "anchor course" to help students to work on their tasks. Sharing the work of a task amongst teachers can simply be impossible. This makes the goal of integration very difficult to achieve.

In order to help different teachers to use the workbooks **coordinators will need to find a central location** where the workbooks can be safely stored between classes so that they can be **easily accessed by any LCA teacher at any time.**

Teachers may also need the coordinator's support in overcoming other practical obstacles - such as lack of time to plan together - that make it so hard to implement integration at the best of times. Easy access to and use of these workbooks should facilitate integration.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS FROM USING THE WORKBOOKS

For LCA Students:

- Provide a clear structure and concrete activities to follow for each task
- Give a greater understanding of the entire task process
- Help to meet assessment criteria from task marking scheme

- Facilitate carrying forward learning to subsequent tasks
- Offer a challenge at the right level
- Expose them to and coach them in the vocabulary of work

- Ensure all the "bits" are in the one place
- Encourage them to write material for the task report as they go along
- Can also benefit learning from work experience and can be applied to key assignments

- Help students to take responsibility for organizing their own work
- Deveop key workplace skills of project management, team working and reflection

- Give them a competitive edge over non-LCA peers
- Foster entrepreneurial spirit and creativity.

For LCA Teachers:

- Fill the gap by providing a substantial resource for task work
- Make it easier to deliver outputs and outcomes specified by NCCA
- Link broadly to Department of Education's marking schemes
- Provide a structure and examples for teachers who are new to LCA task work

- Introduce some novel alternative activities to the experienced teacher
- Eliminate need to photocopy worksheets for students doing tasks
- Provide activities which can be also be used on key assignments
- Facilitate a substitute teacher who can help students with their task work at short notice

- Incorporate recommendations from Examiners' Reports
- Help anchor teacher by facilitating the involvement/support of other teachers with the task.

For LCA Coordinators:

- Help to drive up standards of literacy among LCA students
- Offer a practical means of improving integration
- Enhance the delivery of the LCA objectives generally
- Provide a resource to allow team working among staff to become more effective

- Can be used as a team resource for planning and managing improvements to LCA in your school
- Help your teachers to work cooperatively when time is scarce
- Bring teachers new to task work up to speed quickly
- Allow substitute teachers to guide task work more effectively.

NEXT STEPS FOR COORDINATORS

Introduce your LCA task teachers to the workbooks. Ensure they read this explanatory booklet before they go through the books. Make sure any concerns they have (such as book storage) are resolved before they introduce the workbooks "live" in the classroom.

Teachers of all anchor courses should be familiar with the relevant task material in the workbooks. This will make it easier for them to help students to master vocabulary and to make links with course work. The active involvement and support of the English and Communications teacher is particularly important.

If you or one of your team would like to speak to a teacher from another school or centre who has experience of using the workbooks, we would be very happy to arrange this.

FEEDBACK

Please contact us with your feedback on the workbooks. We are particularly keen to pass on suggestions for other teachers.

Golden Key
56 Holmpatrick
Skerries
Co Dublin

01 849 0598

www.goldenkey.ie
info@goldenkey.ie