



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Assessment and Reporting on Students' Learning – Junior Cycle 2021

1. Introduction

These guidelines set out arrangements to support schools and centres for education in their approach to reporting on the learning achievements and progress of students who are completing their Junior Cycle programme of study in 2021.

2. Context

- In the context of the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19, and based on public health advice, it is not possible to deliver both the Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle examinations in 2021. The Junior Cycle examinations will not, therefore, be run this year. Consequently, as in 2020, alternative arrangements are required for assessment and reporting on the learning achievements of students concluding Junior Cycle in 2021.
- It is recognised that students completing Junior Cycle in 2021 have experienced disruption to their learning and loss of face-to-face teaching and learning in 2020 and more recently in 2021.
- School management and teachers have made extensive efforts to provide remote emergency teaching and learning opportunities for students during school closures. When students return to face-to-face teaching and learning they will continue to have further opportunities to engage with learning and assessment.
- As third-year students are currently expected to return to school in April 2021, it is expected that with the support of their teachers, students will be able to further progress in their learning and work towards completing their Junior Cycle programme. This will assist in preparing Junior Cycle students for progression to Senior Cycle.
- While many students will have completed most of their classroom-based assessments¹, and/or short courses and/or priority learning units (PLUs), the normal range of assessment activities may not be concluded consistently for all students.
- In this context, the use of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA), is not appropriate as a reporting and certification mechanism in 2021.

¹ With reference to Revised arrangements for the completion of Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) for the cohort of students 2018 - 2021 (students in third year in 2020/21)

3. Key Elements

In 2021, Junior Cycle students' progress and learning achievements will be recognised through a dual form of certification designed to meet the current exceptional circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For each student certification will involve two elements

- A **State Certificate of Completion of the Junior Cycle from the Department of Education**. This certificate will state that the student has completed the Junior Cycle programme of study. For each student the certificate will include the list of subjects, short courses and/or priority learning units studied by him/her during their Junior Cycle programme.
- A **School Report** detailing the learning achievements of the student during their Junior Cycle programme. Students should receive a written report on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject, short course and/or priority learning unit at the end of Junior Cycle. This assessment of their learning will be provided by their teachers. Schools will have autonomy, following consultation with the teachers of third-year students, regarding how this assessment is to be arrived at and the format in which the report is provided.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed some sample templates for reporting on Junior Cycle and these can be accessed [here](#).

4. The school's assessment of students' learning achievements

- To protect the time for teaching and learning and the completion of courses, a balanced approach should be taken to the gathering of further evidence of third-year students' attainment over the remainder of the school year. Care should be taken to ensure that third-year students are not over-assessed on their return to school.
- The assessment of students' learning and achievements will take place at school level. Drawing on teachers' professional knowledge, schools will have the autonomy to choose the most appropriate forms of school-based assessment to put in place for the third-year cohort for the remainder of the school year.
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- Schools and teachers may set a limited number of additional assessments up to 21 May 2021. These assessments should be considered proportionately with existing evidence of students' learning over the programme when reporting to students on their achievements in subjects on the school report.
- The range of evidence should include both formative and summative assessment activities undertaken by students for their Junior Cycle.
- Schools are encouraged to use a range of evidence to inform their assessment of students' achievements. These could include:
 - Evidence already available within the school from assignments, tests, tasks, journals, portfolios, projects, practical and other work completed over the course of second year and third year;
 - School-designed examinations, tasks, projects, assignments, essay style questions, presentations, or other tasks chosen by the teacher from the range of approaches agreed at school level.
- Each school should adopt a whole-school approach to the assessment and reporting on student achievement following consultation with teachers of third-year students. The school should communicate with parents and students in relation to its proposed approach and the timeframe for completion of any additional assessments.
- For each subject, the evidence of learning to be used and any additional method of assessment chosen should be decided by the relevant subject teachers in the context of the whole-school approach adopted. Teachers know their students and the evidence of learning already available and can balance a variety of factors in arriving at a suitable form of additional assessment, if required, to put in place for their students.

5. Considerations when assessing students' learning for the purposes of school reporting on student learning

- A collaborative approach should be taken in schools to devise a suitable timeframe for the completion of any assessments and should be reviewed at whole-school level to ensure that the timeframes are balanced and achievable. In all cases, additional assessments, if conducted, should be completed before 21 May 2021.
- For each subject, the evidence of learning to be used and any method of assessment chosen should be decided by the relevant subject teachers in the context of the whole-school approach adopted above. Teachers know their

students and can balance a variety of factors in arriving at the most suitable form of additional assessments to put in place for their students.

- Any additional assessment or other form of end-of-year assignment and/or examination agreed to be completed by students, including the partial or full completion of practical components of a subject, should be limited in scope. Cognisance should be taken of the disrupted learning that students have experienced in 2020 and in 2021, and it should be recognised that some students may be unable to undertake such additional assessments because of issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- School-based assessments used should be devised and marked by the class teacher. The assessment format chosen should be accessible to all students in the class. The method or format of assessment used (for example, written or electronic format) should take cognisance of students' accessibility to the mode chosen.
- Where necessary, greater weighting can be given to work that was completed by students during face-to-face teaching and learning, if students have experienced difficulties in accessing emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment. Cognisance may be given to work completed during the periods of school closures in 2020 and 2021 but teachers should have regard to the impact that these school closures will have had on students' ability to engage with further learning and their ability to complete tasks set during these times. This is particularly so for students who are at very high risk to COVID-19.
- Where relevant the method or format of assessment used should be inclusive of students with special educational needs (SEN) and provide differentiated approaches to allow students with SEN to access the appropriate assessment mode and be adaptable to their particular context.
- In May 2020, adjustments were made to the number of classroom-based assessments (CBAs) that current third-year students were required to complete. The revised arrangements require that each student must complete only one CBA in each subject rather than the usual two. As Junior Cycle State Examinations will not be completed by third-year students, Assessment Tasks are not required for any subject in 2021.
- In September 2020, the NCCA issued additional guidance which offered flexibility regarding the key dates for completion of the CBA process for the current third-year students, where schools encountered particular difficulties due to COVID-19. The completion of the CBA process, including Subject Learning and Assessment

Review Meetings (SLARS) allows for a descriptor to be awarded to the student on their report for the remaining CBA for each subject.

- Students should have the opportunity to complete any additional assessments within a clearly defined timeframe. A collaborative approach should be used in schools to devise a suitable timeframe for the completion of additional assessments and should be reviewed at whole-school level to ensure that the timeframes are balanced and achievable, **and do not result in over assessment of students as they return to school**. In all cases, assessments should be completed and marked before 28 May 2021.
- For students in special schools completing subjects, PLUs and/or short courses as part of their Level Two Learning Programme (L2LP), the deadline for completing and reporting on assessment is 18 June 2021. Additional guidance for schools and teachers on the gathering of evidence for PLUs and the revised assessment and reporting of L1LPs and L2LPs for current 3rd year students (2020-2021) is available [here](#).

6. Providing the report to students and parents/guardians

- Students and their parents/guardians should receive a written report from the school of the progress and achievement in each subject, short course and/or priority learning unit, Wellbeing and other areas of learning.

The student's school report should include the subjects studied, the level (if applicable), and the grades and/or descriptors awarded. It should also detail separately the descriptors awarded to Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) and/or Priority Learning Units.

- The report should also provide an opportunity for schools to report on other aspects of achievement including the wellbeing programme completed by students.
- Schools may use a reporting template available from the NCCA but are also free to devise their own report format.
- The report should be provided to students and their parents/guardians as soon as feasible following the completion of the school year 2020/21.

7. Providing State Certification

- The Department of Education will provide each student with a certificate indicating the completion of the Junior Cycle programme of study, including the list of subjects, short courses and/or priority learning units studied.
- This data will be drawn from the Department's Post-primary Online Database (PPOD) and will not exceed the 10-subject limit on subjects for certification set out in Circular Letter 0076/2020 (or lower where the student has studied short courses).
- This certificate will be provided in the school year 2021/22.

8. Adult learners and Early School Leavers

- In 2020, the SEC put in place specific arrangements for adult learners who have the flexibility to study a subject or subjects at Junior Cycle level within one academic year. These arrangements were extended to include early school leavers.
- Consideration is being given to a later running of the Junior Cycle written examinations limited to Adult Learners and Early School Leavers. Further information on this is to be provided in due course.
- These examinations will only be available to learners/students who meet the specific qualifying criteria.

9. Additional Advice and Support

Additional advice and support on assessment and reporting is available at www.ncca.ie and www.jct.ie

Assessment:

- Focus on Learning | NCCA
- https://jct.ie/wholeschool/cpdsupports_assessment

Reporting:

- https://jct.ie/wholeschool/cpdsupports_reporting
- [Reporting | NCCA](#)