



Circular Number: 0028/2023

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Post-Primary Schools, Special Schools and Chief Executives of ETBs

Arrangements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to the school year 2023/2024.

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This Circular Letter is to be read in conjunction with the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, and the Junior Cycle subject specifications, assessment guidelines, L1LP and L2LP guidelines and Short Course specifications.



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this circular

This circular supersedes Information Note 11/2022 and Circular 59/2021. It sets out the arrangements now governing the implementation of the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*, with particular reference to the school year 2023/2024.

Boards of Management, Principal teachers of all second-level schools, special schools, and the Chief Executives (CE) of all Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are asked to ensure that this circular is brought to the immediate attention of all teachers. In addition, Boards of Management are also requested to ensure that parents/guardians and students are advised of the relevant elements of this circular.

1.2 Key updates for the school year 2023/2024

- It has been decided that the adjustments made to assessment arrangements for the 2022/2023 academic year will be maintained for one further year. As a result of these assessment adjustments, students entering third year in the school year 2023/2024 will be required to complete a minimum of one Classroom-Based Assessment rather than the usual two. Further detail is at section 3.5.
- This also means that students in third year in the school year 2023/24 will not be required to complete Assessment Tasks (ATs) in the relevant subjects.
- The newly redeveloped SPHE specification will be introduced in all schools for students entering their first year of Junior Cycle in the 2023/2024 academic year. Further detail is set out at section 2.4 of this document.
- The newly developed 135 hour Physical Education (PE) specification will be introduced in all schools for students entering their first year of Junior Cycle in the 2023/2024 academic year. Further detail is set out at section 2.4 of this document.
- The newly developed History (Level 2) short course will be introduced in all schools for students entering their first year of Junior Cycle in the 2023/2024 academic year. This short course specification is designed for students following Level 2 Learning Programmes. Further detail is set out at section 2.4 of this document.
- Schools are reminded of Circular 15/2023 issued in March 2023 on Gaelige. This announced amendments to prescribed literary texts and to arrangements for



Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) 1 and 2. The changes arose from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) early enactment review of the specifications for Junior Cycle Gaeilge (T1 and T2). Please note there was an omission from the appendix to the original document posted online on 6 March 2023, which was corrected on 10 March 2023. Accordingly, it is recommended that this document is downloaded again. A link to this Circular can be found in Appendix 1.

- In planning their Wellbeing programme, schools are reminded that from September 2022 onwards, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabuses for SPHE and CSPE was discontinued. From September 2023, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabus for PE and the NCCA 100 PE hour short course are also to be discontinued.
- The provision of management resource hours will be continued for the 2023/2024 school year. Further information is available in section 4.5 of this document.
- It is not appropriate to use resources or materials produced or funded by the alcohol industry for education and awareness on alcohol in schools, or for teachers to attend, in their professional capacity, associated training which may be offered by organisations funded by the alcohol industry.

1.3 Ongoing review of Junior Cycle implementation

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently undertaking early enactment reviews of the implementation of Junior Cycle Visual Art and Modern Foreign Languages as well as early insights reviews of the NCCA-developed short courses in Digital Media Literacy, Coding and Chinese Language and Culture. It is also due to begin a follow up review of Junior Cycle Gaeilge T1 and T2 along with early enactment reviews of the implementation of Junior Cycle Mathematics, Music, Home Economics, History and Geography in September 2023.

The University of Limerick has been commissioned by the NCCA to conduct a research study - *Exploring the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle in post-primary schools*. The University of Limerick has published two interim reports, in October 2022 and April 2023. This longitudinal research, which began in late 2020, will continue until 2024. A link to the study can be found in Appendix 1.



2. Curriculum arrangements for Junior Cycle

2.1 Curriculum and timetabling arrangements for Junior Cycle

Each school is to use the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* to plan a programme for each of the three years of the Junior Cycle that meets the requirements set out in the Framework and this circular. When planning its Junior Cycle programme, each school is required to take account of the school's local context and the backgrounds, interests, and abilities of its students and to reflect the characteristic spirit of the school.

Subject specifications, short courses and Priority Learning Units (PLUs) developed by the NCCA have been designed to be as universal and inclusive as feasible, providing meaningful and valuable learning opportunities for students from all cultural and social backgrounds, and from a wide variety of individual circumstances.

Schools should be conscious of this when planning their Junior Cycle programmes in order to ensure that, as far as possible, the particular range of subjects, short courses and PLUs available is appropriate to the needs and aptitudes of every student including those with special educational needs. Notwithstanding the above, there will inevitably remain learning outcomes within subjects and short course specifications that cannot be achieved by some students by virtue of their particular special educational needs.

The programme planned for Junior Cycle should be available to students and parents/guardians as soon as is feasible for students commencing first year in the academic year 2023/2024. The individual student and his/her parents/guardians should be made aware of the feasibility and appropriateness of the curricular options available in light of the student's ability.

In planning the programme, post-primary school leaders and teachers should also be aware that the adjustments made to assessment arrangements in 2022/2023 will be maintained for 2023/2024. Further details will issue in due course.

2.2 Subjects, short courses and Priority Learning Units

Schools will ensure that the 24 statements of learning feature in the programmes offered to their Junior Cycle students. Each Junior Cycle specification includes links to the eight key skills of Junior Cycle. These skills are also embedded in the learning outcomes, which are clearly set out in subject specifications, short course specifications and PLUs.

The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* provides that students in recognised schools will study

- A range of subjects



OR

- A combination of subjects and short courses

OR

- In the case of some individual students with special education needs, a combination of PLUs, and/or short courses and/or subjects, suited to their individual needs

AND

- A programme in the area of Wellbeing.

2.3 Approved Subject Specifications, Syllabuses and Guidelines

The subject specifications and assessment guidelines setting out the curriculum and assessment arrangements for each Junior Cycle subject, short course, area of learning, and PLUs approved by the Minister are available at <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-Cycle> and are as follows;

- All Junior Cycle specifications and assessment guidelines;
- The relevant NCCA Junior Cycle short course specifications selected by the school (if applicable) for inclusion in its Junior Cycle programme;
- The NCCA Level 2 Learning Programme Guidelines for Teachers;
- The NCCA Level 1 Learning Programme Guidelines for Teachers;
- The NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021).

Please Note: Schools may opt to include short courses developed by the NCCA, or alternatively, school-developed or externally-developed short courses that have been developed in accordance with a template and guidelines set out by the NCCA. A link to these guidelines can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4 Number of Subjects and Short Courses studied by students.

Students will study a minimum of eight and a maximum of 10 subjects (the maximum of 10 subjects includes subjects studied outside of a recognised school setting) for final examination and reporting through the JCPA, the exact number being dependent on whether the student is also taking short courses. It is not the aim or intention that short courses would replace existing subjects.

A maximum of four short courses may be studied in the Junior Cycle programme, in addition to Wellbeing short courses in SPHE, CSPE and the 135 hour PE specification.

Exceptions to the minimum number of eight subjects should only be made in the cases of students with special educational needs who may take a lower number of subjects, combined in some cases with Level 2 **or** Level 1 learning programmes.



Each student must include Gaeilge, English, Mathematics and History among the subjects that he/she studies¹, along with a number of other subjects and/or short courses in their Junior Cycle programme. *Circular Letter 16/2020* provides further details regarding special core status within the Framework for Junior Cycle assigned to History. A link to this circular can be found in Appendix 1.

In all types of recognised second-level schools, for students who commenced Junior Cycle from September 2020 onwards, the following requirements apply:

In the case of students following a Level 3 programme of study

Subject and short courses

Students will:

- study a maximum of ten² subjects for final examination and reporting through the JCPA, in addition to Wellbeing areas of learning - PE, SPHE and CSPE
OR
- study nine subjects for final examination and up to two short courses for reporting through the JCPA, in addition to Wellbeing areas of learning – PE, SPHE and CSPE
OR
- study up to eight subjects for final examination and up to four short courses for reporting through the JCPA, in addition to Wellbeing areas of learning – PE, SPHE and CSPE.

Wellbeing: Students entering 1st year in 2023/2024

Schools are reminded that there is a *minimum* threshold of 400 hours across the three years of Junior Cycle which should be provided for Wellbeing, including PE, SPHE and CSPE. All schools must provide the following*:

- PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years). Students **must** follow the newly developed NCCA 135 hour curriculum specification.
- SPHE short course: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years). Students **must** follow the newly developed NCCA short course specification.

¹ Certain students may be exempted from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular 55/2022 and students following L1LPs are exempt from the study of History.

² The maximum of 10 subjects includes subjects studied outside of a recognised school setting. It should be noted that students who choose to study a subject outside of their school cannot complete the requirements for the Classroom-Based Assessment and Assessment Task for that subject.



- CSPE short course: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years). Students **must** follow the NCCA short course specification.

* Schools are reminded that from September 2022 onwards, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabuses for SPHE and CSPE was discontinued. From September 2023, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabus for PE and the NCCA 100 hour short course are also to be discontinued.

Note: Schools can include other areas in their provision for wellbeing, as detailed in section 2.6.

Wellbeing: Students who entered 1st year in 2022/2023

Schools are reminded that there is a *minimum* threshold of 400 hours across the three years of Junior Cycle which should be provided for PE, SPHE and CSPE:

- PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).
- SPHE: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).
- CSPE: 100 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).

The options available are *

Option 1: The specifications for the NCCA short courses in PE, SPHE, CSPE (100 hours each);

Option 2: School-designed or externally-designed short courses in PE, SPHE, CSPE (100 hours) using the NCCA template and '*Guidelines on developing your own Short Course*', which can be found in Appendix 1;

Option 3: Other programmes/modules/units for PE, SPHE and CSPE developed using Appendix I of the *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)*, which can be found at Appendix 1;

Option 4: The Junior Certificate syllabus for PE (2003) in combination with any of the SPHE and CSPE options above.

Note: Schools can include other areas in their provision for wellbeing, as detailed in section 2.6.

* Or a combination of these options provided the minimum threshold time of 400 hours across the three years for PE, SPHE and CSPE is met.



Wellbeing: Students who entered 1st year in 2021/2022

Schools are reminded that there is a *minimum* threshold of 300 hours across the three years of Junior Cycle which should be provided for PE, SPHE and CSPE:

- PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).
- SPHE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).
- CSPE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years).

The options available are *

Option 1: The specifications for the NCCA short courses in PE, SPHE, CSPE (100 hours each);

Option 2: School-designed or externally-designed short courses in PE, SPHE, CSPE (100 hours) using the NCCA template and '*Guidelines on developing your own Short Course*', which can be found in Appendix 1;

Option 3: Other programmes/modules/units for PE, SPHE, CSPE developed using Appendix I of the *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)*;

Option 4: The Junior Certificate syllabus for CSPE (1996), the SPHE Junior Certificate syllabus (2000), the PE syllabus (2003).

Note: Schools can include other areas in their provision for wellbeing, as detailed in section 2.6.

* Or a combination of these options provided the minimum threshold time of 300 hours across the three years for PE, SPHE and CSPE is met.

Other areas of learning

- The Junior Cycle programme **must include** guidance related learning. Guidance can be included under the umbrella wellbeing hours **OR** as an 'other area of learning.' The teacher support service Oide will continue to provide professional development for Junior Cycle Guidance in the 2023/24 academic year and beyond. Guidance can be provided by the Guidance Counsellor or another teacher in accordance with Whole School Guidance planning.
- Students may engage in other learning activities set out in a school's programme for Junior Cycle. These can include social, cultural, pastoral, scientific,



entrepreneurial, and other activities that can support the 24 statements of learning and the eight key skills.

- Some schools may also provide students with a course in religious instruction reflective of their own characteristic spirit as part of a Junior Cycle programme.

Please also note that:

- Schools may continue to offer more than 10 subjects to their first-year students to facilitate subject selection. However, when students enter second year, the maximum of 10 subjects for final examination and reporting through the JCPA must be adhered to.
- The list of possible subjects can be found in Appendix 1.

Students studying the programme, as set out in the requirements above, will be recognised by the Department of Education for the purposes of teacher allocations and other payments to the school.

2.5 Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

2.5.1 Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs)

L1LPs are designed for students having learning difficulties/needs in the **low moderate and severe and profound range of ability** which prevent them from accessing all or some of the L2LPs. It is expected that these students will, in almost all cases, be enrolled in special schools rather than mainstream schools, due to the complexity of their needs.

Level 1 Learning Programmes (the term 'Level' refers to broad alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications) and their main curriculum component – Priority Learning Units (PLUs) - have been approved by the Minister and have been available to schools since September 2018.

L1LPs consist of six PLUs and two Level 1 short courses. Some students participating in a Level 1 Learning Programme may also take a small number of Level 2 PLUs (or elements of a PLU) and short courses. L1LP guidelines are available at Appendix 1.

It is **not** anticipated that students undertaking a Level 1 Learning Programme will also be sitting Level 3 examinations.

2.5.2 Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs)



L2LPs are designed for students having general learning difficulties/needs in the **low mild to high moderate range of ability**, where the difficulties/needs of those students prevent them from taking some or all of the subjects or short courses on offer at Level 3, as a result of being identified as requiring additional learning supports. Typically, one or two students would avail of L2LPs in a mainstream school.

Some of these students may also be capable of undertaking a Level 3 state examination and a CBA, or only the CBA in that subject, or a Level 3 short course. L2LPs are **not** suitable for students who are learning English as an additional language unless having general learning difficulties/needs in the low mild to high moderate range of ability. L2LPs consist of five PLUs and two Level 2 short courses. L2LP guidelines are available at Appendix 1.

2.6 Wellbeing

Wellbeing crosses the three years of Junior Cycle and builds on substantial work already taking place in schools in support of students' wellbeing. It is envisioned that the school's commitment to this area of learning will increasingly have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the students. It will include learning opportunities to further enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students.

Schools were required to provide a programme of 400 hours of Wellbeing for students who started first-year from September 2022 onwards.

The *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)* aim to support schools in planning and developing a coherent Wellbeing programme that builds on the understandings, practices and curricula for Wellbeing already existing in schools.

In addition to programmes of study in PE, SPHE and CSPE schools may also choose to include other areas in their provision of a programme of 400 hours of Wellbeing, with examples set out in the *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)*.

In selecting programmes or resources developed by external facilitators, schools should refer to *Circular 43/2018: Best practice guidance for post-primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*, a link to which can be found in Appendix 1.

It is not appropriate to use resources or materials produced or funded by the alcohol industry for education and awareness on alcohol in schools, or for teachers to attend, in



their professional capacity, associated training which may be offered by organisations funded by the alcohol industry.

Where schools introduce units of learning to cover part of a Wellbeing programme, the rationale for the inclusion of these units in the school's Wellbeing programme must be clear and should be linked to the six wellbeing indicators while inclusive of all students in Junior Cycle.

The Junior Cycle programme must include guidance related learning. Guidance can be included under the umbrella wellbeing hours OR as an 'other area of learning.' The teacher support services Oide will continue to provide professional development for Junior Cycle Guidance in the 2023/24 academic year and beyond. Guidance can be provided by the Guidance Counsellor or another teacher in accordance with Whole School Guidance planning.

Optional wellbeing-related initiatives which engage a small number of students, rather than a whole class group, can be effective for those involved. However, these learning experiences should not be counted as part of the Wellbeing programme as they do not include all students in the class. Staff, parents and students should be consulted when a school's Wellbeing programme is being developed. There is a series of appendices in the *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)* to support schools in this process.

2.6.1 Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides an overarching structure to support schools in planning and reviewing their work in wellbeing promotion. The policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process be developed and implemented in all schools through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process. The *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)* are aligned with the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (a link to which can be found in Appendix 1) and can inform the development of a Wellbeing Promotion Process in the context of School Self-Evaluation (SSE).

Taking the above into consideration, *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* has been developed through the lens of the four key areas of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019. It is grounded in national and international research through UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, and informed by considered and broad consultation and engagement with members of our education community and wider society. Through the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* we can all



work together towards a diverse, inclusive Irish society free from bullying in all its forms, where individual difference is valued, nurtured and celebrated and where all our children and young people can feel happy and safe in our schools.

2.7 Timetabling

The teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting activities that take place in the Junior Cycle programmes encompass a wider range of activities, a new balance between the development of skills and competences and the development of students' knowledge.

To facilitate this learning and the implementation of good formative assessment practices, a minimum class period of 40 minutes is required. Certain subjects require double class periods (2 x 40 minutes) during the school week. Schools must ensure that class periods of less than 40 minutes are no longer timetabled.

Some schools may find the use of longer class periods of up to 60 minutes (rather than 40 minutes) more suited to the learning needs of their students and the subjects they study, or alternatively a combination of class periods of 40 minutes and longer class periods of up to 60 minutes.

English, Gaeilge and Mathematics each require a minimum of 240 hours of timetabled student engagement over the three years of the Junior Cycle. All other Junior Cycle subjects, including History, require a minimum of 200 hours of timetabled student engagement over the three years of the Junior Cycle, including teaching, learning and assessment activities.

Priority Learning Units are designed for up to 250 hours of student engagement each and are set out in terms of elements and learning outcomes.

Short courses require 100 hours of student engagement over the three years of the Junior Cycle, while the PE specification requires 135 hours of student engagement over the three years of Junior Cycle.

In schools where a sampling programme is in place for first-years, school management should ensure that such programmes do not impact on the overall time available for the subject options chosen as students progress in subsequent years of the Junior Cycle.



2.8 Subjects taken outside of a recognised school setting

The Junior Cycle Framework is designed to be delivered in a school setting and all subjects and areas of learning can only be undertaken in their entirety within a school setting.

The three-year Junior Cycle programme is underpinned by the integration of assessment and reporting as a normal part of teaching and learning in classrooms. The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) is a school-based award, which draws upon and reports on achievement across all elements of assessment including ongoing assessment, Classroom-Based Assessments descriptors and State Examination grade descriptors.

The full suite of learning and assessment components at Junior Cycle is only available when studying in a recognised school setting. However, in some cases, students may study a subject(s) outside of a recognised school setting. In such situations (even where the student is sitting fewer than ten subjects in school) the requirements in relation to the conduct of Classroom-Based Assessments cannot be satisfied and CBAs cannot, therefore, be reported on as part of the JCPA. Where students cannot complete the CBAs within a recognised school setting (or recognised centre for education), the CBAs will display as “not reported” on the JCPA. Students studying outside of a recognised school setting will not be able to complete ATs in the relevant subjects.

Please note that all students, including those studying outside of a recognised school setting, are subject to the maximum of 10 subjects for final examination and reporting through the JCPA.

2.9 Home schooled students

Students who have ***elected to be home schooled*** will have access to the final examination at Junior Cycle. A JCPA **will not** be provided to such students, as the JCPA is designed as a school-based award. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) can provide these students with a statement of the results of their final examinations.

2.10 Junior Certificate School Programme

Schools that currently offer the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) may continue to do so. A review of JCSP is ongoing, with no new applications currently being accepted from schools for entry to the JCSP.



3. Assessment and Reporting in Junior Cycle

3.1 Assessment arrangements for subjects

The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 introduced a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over the three years of Junior Cycle. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to Classroom-Based Assessments and formative assessment.

This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 outlines the assessment of the subject specifications through: ongoing in-class feedback; two Classroom-Based Assessments (generally one in second year and one in third year), reported on to parents/guardians and students by the school; an Assessment Task (devised by the NCCA and marked by the SEC) in most subjects; and a Final Examination set, administered and marked by the SEC at the end of third year.

The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination, marked and awarded by the SEC, will generate a grade descriptor. Slightly modified assessment arrangements apply in Visual Art, Music, Home Economics, and the Technology subjects. Assessment Tasks (ATs) will not be examined in 2024. Further information on Assessment Arrangements is available in Section 3.8 of this document.

3.2 Assessment arrangements for L1LPs and L2LPs

Student learning in the PLUs and in short courses included in L1LPs and L2LPs will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during Junior Cycle and in the JCPA using appropriate descriptors.

- Level 1 and Level 2 PLUs: the evidence of learning will be generated with reference to the NCCA specifications for the PLUs as outlined in the NCCA publications and *Level 1 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers* and *Level 2 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers* and will be directly related to the learning outcomes of those PLUs.



- Level 1 and Level 2 short courses: there will be one Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) for each short course. Any arrangements to ensure the accessibility of these CBAs for students should be in line with those the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year. These should be designed to ensure that students can demonstrate what they have learned, rather than to compensate for lack of learning/achievement.

Over the three years of Junior Cycle, students gather evidence of their learning in a Level 1 and/or Level 2 Learning Programme in a portfolio. Students submit this portfolio to their teachers and the students' work is assessed and reported on.

3.3 General information about Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs)

The three-year Junior Cycle programme is underpinned by the integration of assessment and reporting as a normal part of teaching and learning in classrooms.

CBAs allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. The assessments associated with CBAs cover a broad range of activities, including oral tasks, written work of different types, practical or designing and making tasks, artistic performances, scientific experiments, projects, portfolios or other suitable tasks, depending on the subject or short course in question.

The CBAs in each subject and short course are assessed by the teacher, based on the learning that has taken place within the context of a classroom. In general, students undertake two CBAs in each subject, guided and facilitated by their class teacher, one in second year and one in third year. Students generally take one CBA in short courses.

Classroom-Based Assessments:

- Are used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses and are assessed at a common level.
- Will be undertaken by students within class time to a national timetable which is available at www.ncca.ie, and as per assessment guidelines for each subject and short course which are available at www.curriculumonline.ie.
- Are assessed by the students' teachers. The descriptors awarded are reported to students and parents/guardians during Junior Cycle using the normal school reporting procedures and in the JCPA.

Additional information about CBAs can be found along with the above-mentioned assessment guidelines at www.curriculumonline.ie.



When assessing the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment teachers will make 'on-balance' judgements in relation to the Features of Quality, which are set out in four level descriptors: Exceptional; Above Expectations; In Line with Expectations and Yet to Meet Expectations.

- As subject specifications include ongoing feedback, formative assessment, CBAs, Assessment Tasks (students in third year in the school year 2023/24 will not be required to complete ATs in the relevant subjects) as well as final examinations, there is a need to consider the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments across the full range of subjects. In this context, the CBAs **will** substitute for other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as in-house examinations.

Schools are reminded that they should examine their own assessment policies and must plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments for students, where relevant.

3.4 Arrangements for CBAs in short courses

Junior Cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment. The exception to this is the new 135 hour PE programme which requires students to complete two CBAs. Assessment Guidelines for each NCCA-developed short course can be found in Appendix 1.

3.5 Arrangements for CBAs 2023/2024

As a result of the decision to maintain adjustments made to assessment arrangements for the 2022/2023 academic year for one further year, the following arrangements now apply in relation to CBAs for third year students in 2023/2024:

- Students entering third year of Junior Cycle in 2023/2024 must complete a minimum of one CBA in each subject and one CBA in each short course.
- School management, following consultation with relevant teachers (and where feasible, discussion with students), will decide whether to complete one or two CBAs in each subject. There will be some exceptions to the choices made by schools:
 - To ensure assessment of oral communications skills, students must complete CBA 2: Communicative Task in Gaeilge and CBA 1: Oral Communication in Modern Foreign Languages;
 - As they are linked in each case with the final examination in the subject, students studying Visual Art, Home Economics, Music, Applied Technology, Engineering, Graphics and Wood Technology must complete CBA 2.



Arrangements for the cohort of students entering second year of Junior Cycle 2023/2024 are as per the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*.

Classroom-Based Assessments should be completed within the time period allocated (e.g. 3 weeks, 4 weeks) as specified in the Assessment Guidelines for each subject or short course.

3.6 Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings

To support teachers in assessing students' Classroom-Based Assessments, teachers engage in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings. SLAR meetings play a key role in developing a collegial professional culture and building up expertise about the judgements that teachers make about student achievement.

At these meetings, teachers share and discuss representative samples of students' work and build a common understanding about the quality of their students' learning.

The SLAR meeting should take place no more than a month after completion of the CBA.

The scheduling of CBAs and associated SLAR meetings within the wider time-bands is a matter for the management of the school, in liaison with subject departments. In order to ensure effective SLAR meetings, it is recommended that the timing of the completion of CBAs and SLAR meetings remain as close together as the situation in specific school contexts allows.

It is best practice to hold SLAR meetings in person and it is recommended that this should be the default approach. However, it is recognised that there may be particular circumstances that may arise which require schools to transact these meetings in different ways. Where practicable³, and subject to the agreement of all subject teachers involved, schools may explore the use of digital platforms as a method of transacting SLAR meetings. The option of holding of SLAR meetings in an online environment will be kept under review.

Where there is a single teacher of a subject in the school, that teacher can be facilitated to participate in a SLAR meeting with another school. In the case of an Irish-medium school, the teacher can be facilitated to participate in a SLAR meeting with another Irish-medium

³ It is acknowledged that certain aspects of the SLAR process cannot be transacted online such as meetings involving the physical examination of artefacts.



school. The potential of using digital technologies to support such meetings may be explored. It may also be necessary, in the case of short courses, for schools to consider online SLAR meetings with teachers of short courses from other schools. SLAR meetings should take place, save in exceptional circumstances, for the assessment of CBAs that are completed in short courses and the achievement of students will be described using the same descriptors as for subjects above. The options open to schools in relation to organising SLAR meetings are outlined in Appendix 3.

3.7 Assessment Task Arrangements for third year students 2023/2024

As a result of the decision to extend adjustments made to assessment arrangements for the 2022/2023 academic year to the 2023/2024 academic year, the requirement to complete Assessment Tasks has been removed for third year Junior Cycle students in the 2023/2024 academic year.

Assessment Tasks account for 10% of the final mark in the relevant subjects. For third year students in the 2023/2024 academic year, this 10% will be subsumed into the final examination, which will account for 100% of the final marks in the relevant subjects.

3.8 Final Examination for third year 2023/2024 students

All assessment for Final Examination purposes remains externally devised and assessed by the SEC. More information on assessment is available on the NCCA website at: <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting>

For most⁴ Junior Cycle subjects there is a written examination which is set, administered and marked by the SEC. The written examinations are no longer than two hours duration now that new Junior Cycle specifications have been introduced for all subjects and the old Junior Certificate syllabi are no longer available for study.

Final written examinations are scheduled to take place in June 2024. The final written examinations are set and assessed at a common level, apart from English, Gaeilge (T1 and T2) and Mathematics, where there are two levels (higher and ordinary) available.

Student achievement in the Final Examinations incorporates, in the case of the practical subjects, student achievement in the externally assessed practical component (artefact, practical work, or performance). Achievement is recorded using a set of state-certified grades which will first be reported by the SEC in provisional form following the end of third

⁴ Visual Art is the only Junior Cycle subject that does not have a Final SEC Examination in June.



year. They will subsequently be confirmed and included in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) which is issued from the school. The grades will appear as follows:

Grading of the Final Examination:

Grade	Range (%)
Distinction	≥ 90 to 100
High Merit	≥ 75 and < 90
Merit	≥ 55 and < 75
Achieved	≥ 40 and < 55
Partially Achieved	≥ 20 and < 40
Not Graded	≥ 0 and < 20

Existing SEC supports for reasonable accommodations in the Junior Cycle examinations (RACE Scheme) continue to be provided for candidates sitting final examinations in Junior Cycle subjects.

3.9 Reporting on student achievement

3.9.1 Reporting

Formal reporting by the school to students and their parents/guardians on the progress and achievements of students in their subjects, short courses, PLUs and Wellbeing programme, as appropriate, will take place in first year and second year. The school will issue the composite Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) following final examination. This will complement reporting on progress to parents/guardians during parent-teacher meetings and through normal student feedback sessions, including feedback after the completion of each CBA.

The NCCA has developed reporting templates in line with the style and format of the JCPA. Schools are encouraged to develop their own reporting formats along similar lines. Guidelines on Reporting, including examples of templates for use by schools, are available at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting>.

3.9.2 Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

The JCPA will report on student achievement across a range of areas of learning in Junior Cycle, including where appropriate:

- SEC Final Examinations;



- Short Courses;
- Classroom-Based Assessments⁵;
- Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs);
- Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs);
- The area of Wellbeing;
- Other areas of learning.

Further information on this matter may be found in the JCPA Handbook.

3.10.3 Reporting on students' achievements in the area of Wellbeing

Reporting on students' learning in Wellbeing aims to provide a picture of what students have learned about wellbeing and the skills they have developed to support their wellbeing. It is expected that schools will report on student learning in the area of wellbeing as part of ongoing assessment and reporting throughout Junior Cycle.

Wellbeing will show in a separate area of the JCPA with free text space where schools can report on achievement in Wellbeing in other areas as set out in Section 2.6. It is in this area that schools will report on student achievement in PE, SPHE and CSPE. This is facilitated by the use of the descriptors developed for that purpose, which reflect the appropriate language of learning. Due to technical constraints, **it is not possible to reflect subject descriptors for the old Junior Certificate syllabi in the Wellbeing section of the 2023 JCPA**. As a result, schools which provided the Junior Certificate syllabi in PE, SPHE and/or CSPE to students should reflect their students' achievements in these areas of learning via the free text box entitled 'Other Areas of Wellbeing'. Students who studied the Junior Cycle short courses are not affected by this issue. Further information on reporting on students' achievement in Wellbeing in the 2023 JCPA are available in Appendix 4.

3.9.4 Reporting on students' achievements in other areas of learning

In the 'Other Areas of Learning' free text section of the JCPA the school has flexibility to report on other learning experiences and events in which the student has participated during co-curricular and extra-curricular aspects of the Junior Cycle programme in the school. Examples of the activities which may be provided as part of the 400 hours of Wellbeing provision are set out in the *NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2021)*.

3.9.5 Reporting on students' achievements in the area of L1LPs and L2LPs

⁵ The design of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) for 2023 will be adjusted to take account of the revised arrangements for CBAs.



The JCPA can document a student's achievements in Level 1 and/or Level 2 Learning Programmes, as reported by the school.

At Level 1, where a student has submitted evidence of learning that indicates the student has benefited from accessing some learning outcomes for that PLU, Progress Achieved will appear alongside the title of the relevant PLU. At Level 1, where a student has submitted evidence that indicates they have accessed all and achieved the majority of learning outcomes related to the PLU, Successfully Completed will appear alongside the title of the relevant PLU.

At Level 2, where a student has submitted evidence that indicates learning in a majority of the learning outcomes for all elements of that PLU, Achieved will appear alongside the title of the relevant PLU.

Apart from the requirements related to PLUs, students will also include evidence of learning in Level 1 and Level 2 short courses:

- When the student has successfully completed a CBA for a Level 2 short course, the descriptor 'Achieved' will be recorded in the relevant section of the JCPA with the title of the relevant short course. Where a student has not successfully completed a CBA for a Level 2 short course, the title of the short course will not appear on the JCPA.
- For Progress Achieved to be recorded on the JCPA for each Level 1 short course, the student must present evidence of learning that demonstrates the student has benefited from accessing some learning outcomes in the short course. For Successfully Completed to be recorded on the JCPA for each Level 1 short course, the student must present evidence that indicates they have successfully completed the Classroom-Based Assessment related to the short course.

3.10 Technical arrangements for schools

The following paragraphs provide a broad outline of the technical arrangements currently in place that are required for the production of JCPAs in respect of the various schools and centres where students undertake the Junior Cycle.

3.10.1 Recording of the programme of study for students

It is the **responsibility of the school authority** to ensure that the Department's Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) reflects accurately the subjects each student is studying – both examination and non-examination subjects, including subjects undertaken outside of a recognised school setting, which are included as part of the previously outlined maximum of 10 subjects.



PPOD is used to provide the State Examinations Commission (SEC) with details of students and their subjects for examination purposes. Having accurate and complete data on PPOD is essential so that students are provided with the materials they require for their Assessment Tasks⁶ where relevant, practical and performance tests and final examinations.

3.10.2 Recording and reporting arrangements for the publication of the JCPA

Recognised post-primary schools will record the outcome of Classroom-Based Assessments (in subjects and short courses), as well as achievements in PLUs (where appropriate), for their students and these details will be uploaded onto the Department's PPOD. This data, along with the outcome from the SEC Final Examinations (following the appeals process and incorporating the Assessment Task⁷) will be recorded on a JCPA for each student.

The part-completed JCPA template will then be made available electronically to schools who will record relevant details of achievements in the 'Other Areas of Learning' and 'Other Areas of Wellbeing' sections in respect of each student. The completed JCPAs will be issued by schools to their students and parents/guardians.

In the case of Special Schools, Youthreach Centres, Detention Centres and Adult Learners in other education settings where students undertake the Junior Cycle, a part-completed JCPA template will be provided to these schools and centres through an automated system developed by the Department called the Junior Cycle Assessment Database (JCAD). This JCPA template will include the outcomes of any SEC Final Examinations (incorporating the Assessment Task⁸) taken by students where applicable.

Schools and other centres where students undertake the Junior Cycle will record locally on the JCPA, the outcome of students' Classroom-Based Assessments (in subjects and short courses as appropriate), students' achievements in PLUs, as well as achievements under 'Other Areas of Learning' and 'Other Areas of Wellbeing'. The completed JCPA will be supplied by these schools and centres to their students and parents/guardians.

⁶ Students in third year in the academic year 2023/2024 will not be required to complete Assessment Tasks for the relevant subjects.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Students in third year in the academic year 2023/2024 will not be required to complete Assessment Tasks for the relevant subjects.



It should be noted that where student(s) cannot complete the CBAs within a recognised school setting (or recognised centre for further education), the CBAs will display as “not reported” on the JCPA.

It should also be noted that, as laid out in the letter reminding Principals of the arrangements and tasks required for uploading and completion of JCPAs, sent to schools on 1 June 2022, the uploading of finalised CBA assessments to PPOD for inclusion in students’ JCPAs is being actively monitored by the Department of Education.

The Department has established a dedicated email account CBAUPLOADS@education.gov.ie, to allow school Principals to advise the Department of particular issues in their school in relation to the finalisation of CBA assessments for uploading to PPOD.

3.10.3 JCPA Retention and Records Management

Schools should retain copies of the JCPA, either digitally or in hard copy for each student for 7 years after the age of majority (18 years). The retained records should be used to meet requests by students for their JCPA, including after the students have left the school. Schools should have regard in this context to the GDPR requirements introduced in May 2018.

3.11 Adult learners in adult education settings

Adult learners in the school year 2023/2024 will continue to have the flexibility to study a subject or subjects at Junior Cycle level within one academic year. These adult learners will undertake one Classroom-Based Assessment (that completed in third year by students in mainstream schools) and the final examination.

Adult learners may also study short courses and Priority Learning Units as suited to their learning needs. Adult learners are not required to undertake study in any specific subject and they are not required to study PE, SPHE or CSPE or other elements in the area of learning known as Wellbeing. As the Framework for Junior Cycle is designed as a three-year school-based programme it is not suited to be undertaken within a shorter timeframe.

4. Resources and Supports

To ensure that the necessary time and resources are available to implement the Framework for Junior Cycle, the following resources will continue to be made available to schools:



- a) An extensive programme of CPD for school leaders and teachers (details available from the support service Oide at www.oide.ie)
- b) Professional time for teachers (i.e., non-student contact time in which teachers will participate in a range of professional and collaborative activities to support the implementation of Junior Cycle)
- c) Additional paid hours for the coordination of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- d) Management resources (i.e. additional paid hours that schools will devote for the sole purpose of the management of activities associated with the implementation of Junior Cycle)

4.1 School Self-Evaluation and Junior Cycle

Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Post-primary Schools, published in August 2022, is available in Appendix 1. Requirements in respect of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) 2022 to 2026 are set out in *Circular Letter 56/2022*. (A link to this Circular Letter can be found in Appendix 1 of this document).

4.2 Oide and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for school leaders and teachers

Approval continues for schools to close, with board of management or ETB approval, as appropriate, for a day of whole-school planning and self-evaluation for Junior Cycle implementation for each year of implementation up to and including the school year 2023/2024.

The purpose of this day will change over time, but in 2023/2024 it may be used by schools to support the embedding and/or continued development of the underlying Junior Cycle Framework on a whole-school basis. This may involve schools reviewing their current policies and practices, as well as planning and monitoring for the changes being introduced under the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*.

Oide will continue to be available to assist schools in planning for and implementing this whole-school day and will liaise with schools directly on this matter.

4.2.1 Models of CPD delivery

The new integrated teacher education support service, Oide, will provide a comprehensive programme of CPD for school leaders and teachers. Oide professional learning events in the 2023/2024 school year will reflect the pedagogical environments in which teachers will be working and the need to minimise, insofar as possible, any disruption to class contact



time over the school year. A blended approach (i.e., an appropriate mix of face-to-face and online supports) to the provision of Junior Cycle related CPD is planned for the 2023/2024 school year.

4.2.2 CPD for school leaders

Online supports will be provided for school leaders regularly throughout the 2023/2024 school year and will address expressed needs of school leaders. One focus of these supports will be on the implications of the provisions contained within this Circular Letter for the implementation of Junior Cycle in schools. Other areas of focus will include the introduction and implementation of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes and a school's Wellbeing programme at Junior Cycle.

School leaders will receive notification of these events, which will issue well in advance of their delivery. School leaders are encouraged to engage with Oide events to keep abreast of developments at Junior Cycle.

4.2.3 Whole-school CPD

The JCIS team will work with schools to co-design and co-facilitate their whole-school CPD day, which may include, as relevant, one or more key Junior Cycle modules developed by Oide.⁹

The JCIS team will continue ongoing supports for teachers throughout 2023/2024. These supports will address, but will not be limited to, Wellbeing, Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes, SLAR meetings, dedicated supports for teachers with Junior Cycle management resource hours, and support in relation to the use of teacher professional time. The JCIS team will also work to provide a wide range of elective supports for teachers, in collaboration with JCIS associates. All events will be notified to schools and teachers well in advance.

4.2.4 Subject-Specific CPD

Subject specific CPD school cluster events will take place online in 2023/2024 in the period from November 2023 to March 2024. These events will require a one-day school closure to students for clusters of schools, and their teachers to attend their relevant subject CPD online.

Schools may close, with board of management/ETB approval, as appropriate, to enable teachers' engagement. Where a school closes, all teachers must attend the school cluster

⁹ Please note that JCIS will be part of the Programme Support Team in Oide from 1 September 2023.



online event and engage in the CPD activity. Oide will liaise directly with schools regarding these cluster events, including scheduling the events and assigning each school in good time prior to these events.

4.2.5 Second Teaching Subject Supports

Teachers who teach a second subject in Junior Cycle are provided with the opportunity to engage in CPD supports in that subject at the start of successive school years. In the 2023/2024 school year these workshops will be provided online during September and October 2023. All the materials and resources associated with these workshops may be found at www.oide.ie

4.2.6 Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

Supports for Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes will continue for both mainstream post-primary and special schools in 2023/2024. Bespoke supports for schools can be arranged in collaboration with the relevant Oide L1/L2 Learning Programmes Team Leader and Advisors.

4.2.7 Elective CPD

An extensive programme of elective, or supplementary, CPD will be provided by Oide throughout 2023/2024, in an online and face-to-face format and in collaboration with Education Centres nationwide and a range of external partners, which teachers may engage with in their own time.

To complement the core CPD events being provided during the 2023/2024 school year, Oide will organise two concentrated elective online CPD events during the 2023/2024 school year, one held in October 2023 and another in March 2024. These events comprise, but will not be limited to, webinars, podcasts and live CPD events covering a wide range of areas and topics applicable to Junior Cycle.

The Oide Arts in Junior Cycle programme (www.artsinjuniorcycle.ie) will present a series of professional development workshops aimed to inspire, support and empower Junior Cycle teachers to engage with and be enriched by the arts and learning.

The Oide STE(A)M initiative (www.jct.ie/steAm/steAm), in collaboration with outreach partners from fields of STEM and The Arts, will provide Junior Cycle teachers with rich STE(A)M professional learning experiences in keeping with national and international best standards, and which will allow for interdisciplinary responses to societal challenges in subject specific and cross curricular contexts.

4.2.8 Miscellaneous



Management in each school is required to update their register of teachers with Oide, including their school-based email addresses, and facilitate their attendance at CPD events, where applicable.

Oide collaborates with the Inspectorate and other Department of Education agencies and school support services in the context of design, facilitation, and review of its work.

4.3 Professional Time

The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* recognises that teachers need professional time to engage in a range of professional collaborative activities, a proportion of which will involve collaboration with teaching colleagues, to support teaching, learning, assessment and reporting.

This time will facilitate teachers engaging, as necessary, with a range of professional and collaborative activities, namely:

1. Whole-school professional activities to support the Junior Cycle
2. Individual teacher and subject department professional activities, including activities related to formative assessment, feedback, reporting and inputs being compiled for the JCPA
3. Attendance at Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
4. Preparation for and overseeing the outcomes of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
5. Administration of the Assessment Tasks in classrooms. This will not be required for academic year 2023/2024.

In relation to Youthreach settings, those delivering Junior Cycle are entitled to professional time. This time should come from within existing time for administrative duties and does not therefore lead to a reduction in teaching time.

The provision of individual professional time for teachers reflects the commitment under the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* to provide such support to allow teachers engage in professional collaborative activities to support teaching, learning and assessment. Since September 2017, in all subject areas, full-time teachers involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle have been entitled to 22 hours of professional time, with a pro-rata entitlement for part-time teachers as set out in Appendix 2 of this document. As set out above, this is subject to the full co-operation of a teacher with all elements of the Framework.

The provision of professional time is supported by the allocation of an additional 774 whole-time equivalent posts to schools. This allocation is designed to avoid reducing overall class



contact time for students. The allocation is shown separately on the staffing schedule as set out in the Approved Allocations of Teaching Posts Circulars for individual schools and equates to the additional allocation which would be provided by a reduction in the Pupil Teacher Ratio of 0.53.

The provision of 22 hours maximum professional time for full-time teachers involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle (and pro-rata provision for part-time teachers) means that each full-time teacher's class contact time (including teaching time and time allocated for other assigned management and coordination duties), in a school with a timetable laid out in 40 minute periods, is reduced from 33 teaching periods in the timetable to 32 teaching periods.

The 40 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly, including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to Junior Cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate SLAR meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers' bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting. Each meeting will take approximately two hours. This flexibility will be required for and will generally be restricted to the organisation of SLAR meetings. More detailed information on SLAR meetings is included at Section 3.6 above.

The deployment of all professional time is a matter for the management of the school acting in accordance with the terms of this Circular Letter. All time periods provided to support implementation of the Junior Cycle must be used for this purpose under the overall direction of the school's management and the use of professional time may be subject to inspection in whole-school evaluation and other inspections.

The allocation model for professional time (including the discrete allocation relating to SEN teachers) that was agreed for the 2017/2018 school year is being maintained and, where necessary, will increase to reflect any additional whole-time equivalent teaching positions that arise because of increased student numbers.

4.4 Resources for the co-ordination of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings

An additional two hours will be allocated by school management to a teacher on a rotational basis for the preparation and co-ordination of each SLAR meeting for an individual subject or short course, including providing confirmation to school management that the meeting



has taken place and descriptors awarded and reported. The two-hour allocation may be facilitated through the provision of additional paid substitution hours to the school – not within the Supervision and Substitution scheme. This is in addition to the 22 hours of professional time allocated within the timetable for each full-time teacher from 2017/2018 onwards.

4.5 Management Resources

The board of management of each school or the ETB, as appropriate, along with the in-school management team, will be accountable for the overall implementation of the Junior Cycle in the school, as it is for all other aspects of the school's work. In recognition of the fact that the introduction of the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* has implications for school leaders, extra hours were allocated to schools (via substitution) with effect from 2016 on an interim basis pending the restoration of leadership posts in schools, to help with the facilitation of this additional work. *Circular Letter 3/2018 - 'Leadership and Management In Post-Primary Schools'* provided details regarding the restoration of leadership and management posts in those schools, including some 1,300 leadership posts being restored to post-primary schools, a link to which can be found in Appendix 1.

While these management resource hours were due to lapse at the end of the 2022/2023 school year, the Department has decided, on an interim basis, to continue to allocate these hours under the same allocation model for the school year 2023/2024. This allocation is subject to review at the end of the school year and in the context of full implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework.

The allocation for the academic year 2023/2024 is set out as follows:

Enrolment	Weekly Management Resource Hours
700+	2 hours
600-699	2 hours 40 mins
400-599	2 hours
<399	2 hours

Existing pro-rata arrangements for partial implementation will apply.

Schools are receiving these additional resources on the basis that their Junior Cycle students have access to teaching, learning and assessment practices, including the holding of SLAR meetings, in line with the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* and the



associated specifications designed by the NCCA and approved by the Minister, including all assessment arrangements set out in Junior Cycle circulars.

The Principal will, with the approval of the board of management, following an open invitation for expressions of interest from the teachers in the school, allocate the additional teaching hours granted to the school to support him/her in implementing the Junior Cycle. This additional time allocation is in the form of weekly coordination hours and can be drawn down over the school year.

The hours can be bundled to reflect the fact that the work associated with Junior Cycle co-ordination in a school year may vary in quantity from week to week.

Some or all of the following activities may be included:

- Supporting the Principal/Deputy Principal with planning, communication and organising substitution for teachers attending in-service;
- Scheduling of in-school or online CPD events and liaison with Oide;
- Overseeing the scheduling of SLAR meetings;
- Liaising with the coordinators of SLAR meetings;
- Overseeing the Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) reporting procedures for subjects and for, L1LPs, L2LPs and short courses to parents/guardians;
- Organising administration of the Assessment Tasks and making the necessary arrangements for returning the Assessment Task to the SEC. This will not be required for academic year 2023/2024.

5. Additional Information

5.1 Rules and Programme

All references to Junior Cycle and Junior Certificate examinations in Rules 20,21,32,33 and 34 of the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 2004/2005 are superseded by the provisions within this circular.

5.2 Access to Information

Further information can be accessed on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment website www.ncca.ie and the support service website www.oide.ie and www.curriculumonline.ie

These websites host information and a range of practical materials aimed at supporting school leaders, teachers and parents/guardians.



Access to past papers and sample papers can be found at www.examinations.ie

This Circular Letter may also be accessed at www.gov.ie

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Appendix 1 – Related Documentation

This circular refers to the following documentation:

1. The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, is available at:
<https://assets.gov.ie/24478/f0edee58373142918ad24abf6db8075f.pdf>
2. Junior Cycle Research Study <https://ncca.ie/en/publications-and-research/junior-cycle-research-study/>
3. *School Self-evaluation: Next Steps September 2022 – June 2026*
Circular Number: 0056/2022 at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/e0383-school-self-evaluation-next-steps-september-2022-june-2026/>
4. *Framework for Junior Cycle – History in Schools from September 2020 onwards*
Circular number 16/2020 at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/d1752a-framework-for-junior-cycle-history-in-schools-from-september-2020-on/>
5. *Amendments to Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2 specifications and assessment arrangements for Classroom-Based Assessments 1 and 2*
Circular number 00015/2023 at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/80151-amendments-to-junior-cycle-irish-t1-and-t2-specifications-and-assessment-arrangements-for-classroom-based-assessments-1-and-2/>
6. *Guidance on the Junior Cycle Subject Learning and Assessment Review Process*
Circular Number 00017/2020 at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/bfc17d-guidance-on-the-junior-cycle-subject-learning-and-assessment-review/>
7. The Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (22 May 2015) and its appendix published 5 July 2015 available at
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bb7a69-junior-cycle-reform/>
8. Subject specifications for each of the subjects to be taught at Junior Cycle; these specifications have been developed by the NCCA and approved by the Minister. Each of the subject specifications is available at:
<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/>
9. Level 2 Learning Programmes Guidelines for Teachers. The Level 2 Learning Programmes are designed for students with general learning difficulties/needs in the low mild to high moderate range of ability and are available at:
<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-2-Learning-Programmes/>
10. Level 1 Learning Programmes Guidelines for Teachers. These are designed for students with general learning difficulties/needs in the range of lower functioning moderate to severe and profound categories and are available at:
[https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-1-Learning-Programmes-\(L1LPs\)/](https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-1-Learning-Programmes-(L1LPs)/)
11. More information on Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes can be found at:
<https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/level-one-and-level-two-programmes>
12. Specifications for Junior Cycle short courses designed by the NCCA for use by schools; available at <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses>



13. Guidelines for schools on the development of short courses at Junior Cycle; available at <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/subjects-and-short-courses/develop-your-own-short-course>
14. Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, and other wellbeing planning material, developed by the NCCA 2021: https://ncca.ie/media/4940/updated_guidelines_2021.pdf
15. The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023, July 2018: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/35100b-wellbeing-policy-statement-and-framework-for-practice-20182023/>
16. 2017 Whole School Guidance Framework: <https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/NCGE-PP-WholeSchoolGuidanceFramework-PDF-EN.pdf>
17. Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice; available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/88ca5c44bb1d45e09c2ac3152ea5bcb0/>
18. Assessment and Reporting – NCCA guidelines: <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting>
19. Looking at Our Schools 2022: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools: <https://assets.gov.ie/25261/c97d1cc531f249c9a050a9b3b4a0f62b.pdf>
20. School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-primary: <https://assets.gov.ie/25263/dcc85452ad6d451f89ed8e7b1967f200.pdf>
21. Circular Letter 3/2018 - 'Leadership and Management In Post-Primary Schools: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/293039e549914b1ca7dc87ed5f25ef9b/>



Appendix 2: Pro-Rata Allocation of Professional Time to Part-Time Teachers

The annual pro-rata application of the Professional Time to teachers on less than full hours is set out below:

Hours in teacher's contract	Professional time p.a- Class periods (x40 min)	Professional Time Total p a.
11 hours or less	17	= 11hours 20 mins
11 h 1min- 11h 29 min	17	= 11hours 20 mins
11 h 30 min – 11h 59min	18	= 12 hours
12 hours- 12h 29 min	18	= 12 hours
12 h 30 min- 12h 59 min	19	= 12 hours 40 mins
13 hours - 13 h 29 min	20	= 13 hours 20 mins
13 h 30 min – 13h 59min	21	= 14hours
14 hours- 14h 29min	21	= 14hours
14 h 30 mins- 14 h 59 mins	22	= 14 hours 40 mins
15 hours- 15 h 29 mins	23	= 15 hours 20 mins
15 h 30 mins – 15 h 59 mins	24	= 16 hours
16hours – 16 h 29 mins	24	= 16 hours
16h 30 min -16 h 59 mins	25	= 16 hours 40 mins
17 hours- 17 h 59mins	26	= 17 hours 20 mins
18 hours or more	33	= 22 hours

The total number of hours assigned to a teacher, which encompasses teaching time and other assigned management, and co-ordination duties is the quantum of hours upon which application of the above schedule in respect of professional time is based.



Appendix 3: Options for organising SLAR meetings

Schools should use one of the following options to organise SLAR meetings, while noting the scope to explore digital technologies for the holding of these meetings:

Option A

- Schools may choose to maintain or implement a timetable having four long days and one shorter day.
- This timetable will facilitate SLAR and other meetings relating to Junior Cycle to be held in the period following the conclusion of tuition on the shorter day, or at another time that does not impinge on student tuition time.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student tuition time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Substitution and Supervision must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings to take place.
- A SLAR meeting will be a single meeting of approximately 2 hours duration.

Option B

- An agreement is reached at school level between teachers and management that SLAR meetings will be held at a time suitable to the teachers in the subject groups without impinging on tuition time.
- Should circumstances allow, a meeting, or portion thereof, may take place within normal school tuition hours.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student tuition time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Substitution and Supervision must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings to take place.
- A SLAR meeting will be a single meeting of approximately 2 hours duration.

Option C

- The SLAR process will constitute 40 minutes of preparation time from within a teacher's professional time, and a collaborative portion of a minimum of 80 minutes' duration, the latter to be held as a single meeting.
- Once students have completed their CBA, their subject class teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of the students' learning as developed and evidenced by the CBA process, based on the Features of Quality. These provisional assessments may be modified in light of the discussions that take place at the SLAR meeting.
- In preparation for the collaborative portion of the SLAR process, each teacher will identify one sample of students' work for each descriptor, where feasible, for discussion at the meeting. Each teacher will submit his/her samples to the SLAR Facilitator, together with a brief note on each sample of students' work showing their reasons for their provisional



assessment of the students' work. This will support all relevant teachers in reviewing the samples of students' work in the preparatory phase.

- The SLAR Facilitator will assemble and make available the appropriate examples of student work and attached notes supplied by the subject teachers some days prior to the commencement of the collaborative portion of the SLAR process.
- Teachers will use 40 minutes of their professional time to access this material, examine the samples and attached notes, and familiarise themselves with the content.
- The balance of the SLAR process (a meeting of a minimum 80 minutes' duration) will be held at a time suitable to the teachers in the subject group, without impinging on student tuition time and without the use of any substitution.
- Schools will be required to maintain the currently defined levels of student contact time, i.e. 28 hours per week.
- Schools must not incur any additional costs through Substitution.
- Supervision and Substitution must not be used in facilitating SLAR meetings to take place.



Appendix 4: Reporting on Wellbeing Areas of Learning

Due to technical constraints, it is not possible to reflect subject descriptors for the old Junior Certificate syllabi in the Wellbeing section of the 2023 JCPA. Students who studied the Junior Cycle short courses are not affected by this issue.

As a result, schools which provided the Junior Certificate syllabi in, PE, SPHE and CSPE to students will have to reflect their students' achievements in these areas of learning via the free text box entitled 'Other Areas of Wellbeing'. The descriptor box for PE, SPHE and CSPE will be blank for all students who did not study short courses in these areas of learning and schools may choose to use one of the two suggested pieces of text below to populate the free text box.

Suggested 'Other Areas of Wellbeing' text

The Framework for Junior Cycle provides for an area of learning over the three years of Junior Cycle called Wellbeing. There are three pillars to all Junior Cycle Wellbeing programmes; Physical Education (PE); and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). The student followed a programme of Wellbeing that provided them with opportunities to enhance their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. It supported the student in developing important life skills as well as in building a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community.

(93 words)

Or

The Framework for Junior Cycle provides for an area of learning in Junior Cycle called Wellbeing. Over the three years of Junior Cycle, the learners engaged with Physical Education (PE); and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE).

(43 words)

Alternatively, schools retain the discretion to populate the 'Other Areas of Wellbeing' free text box with appropriate language of their own choosing.

Schools should assign short course descriptors, where appropriate, to students who have undertaken short courses in any of PE, SPHE and/or CSPE. For these students, schools may populate the free text box entitled 'Other Areas of Wellbeing' with appropriate language of their own choosing.

The free text box will not be available for input until the JCPA production facility is opened in the next academic year. Further information regarding the JCPA for 2023 will issue in due course.