

Junior Cycle: A broad education for your child

The new junior cycle will place the student at the centre of the learning process. It allows for new ways of learning and a broader range of skills to be properly assessed. This leaflet aims to inform parents of post-primary school students about the key changes underway.

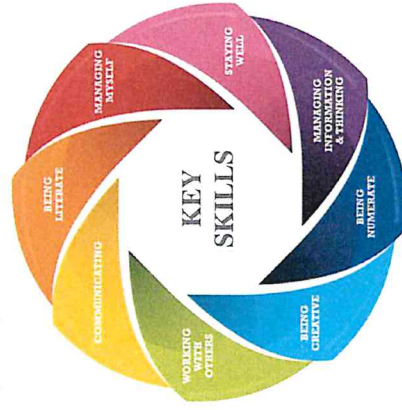
Principles, Key Skills and Statements of Learning

Underpinning the new junior cycle are a set of principles, key skills and statements of learning. These will ensure that your child receives a rich educational experience that has both breadth and depth. Your child will have access to a varied curriculum of knowledge, understandings, skills and values.

Eight principles underpin the framework for Junior Cycle. These inform the planning for, as well as the development and implementation of, junior cycle programmes in all schools. The eight principles of Junior Cycle are:-

- Learning to Learn
- Choice and Flexibility
- Quality
- Creativity and Innovation
- Engagement and Participation
- Continuity and Development
- Inclusive Education
- Wellbeing

Eight key skills permeate across the entire curriculum

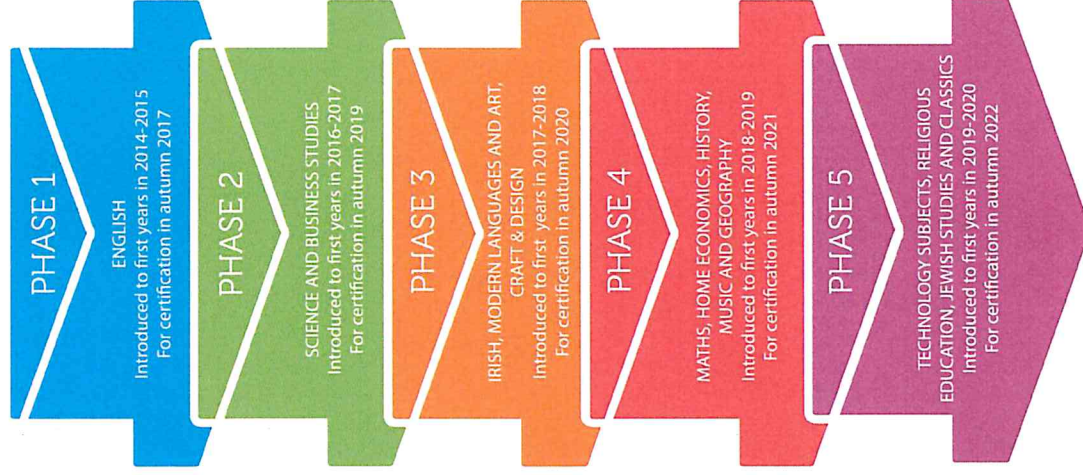


Through engaging with the key skills students will:

- be more actively engaged with learning
- take greater ownership of their learning
- have a critical engagement with digital technology
- be encouraged to problem solve and think critically and creatively

The twenty-four statements of learning describe what your child should know, understand and value having participated in junior cycle. Schools will ensure that all statements of learning feature in the programme offered to their junior cycle students.

New subject specifications are being implemented in schools on a phased basis



How student achievement at Junior Cycle will be assessed
The most significant change in the new Junior Cycle is in the area of assessment. A dual approach to assessment, involving classroom-based assessment across the three years and a final externally-assessed, state-certified examination can enable the appropriate balance between preparing students for examinations and facilitating creative thinking, engaged learning and better outcomes for students. From Autumn 2017, junior cycle students will receive a new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). The JCPA will reflect a much wider range of your child's achievements over the three years of junior cycle. The JCPA will report on a number of areas, including:-

1. Subjects (State Examination and Assessment Task)
2. Classroom Based Assessments
3. Short courses
4. Other Learning Experiences

Subjects

Schools will be able to choose from a total of 21 different subjects for inclusion on their junior cycle programme. All subjects are being revised and each one will have its own specification replacing what was previously known as a syllabus. Each specification describes the learning that takes place as part of the student's study of a subject in junior cycle. By 2019 all new subject specifications will have been introduced. Students can study a maximum of 10 subjects for the JCPA, and if their school offers short courses they can study 9 subjects plus 2 short courses or 8 subjects plus 4 short courses for certification purposes.

The state examination that students sit in their subject at the end of their junior cycle will also be graded differently. Instead of A, B, C, D, E, F and NG the following descriptors will now be used:

Distinction	90	to	100%
Higher Merit	75	to	89%
Merit	55	to	74%
Achieved	40	to	54%
Partially Achieved	20	to	39%
(not graded)	0	to	19%

Classroom Based Assessments

Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and skills in ways not possible in a pen and paper examination, for example, their verbal communication and investigation skills. CBAs will be undertaken in subjects and short courses and will be facilitated by the classroom teacher.



CBAs will be undertaken during a defined time period within normal class contact time and to a normal timetable. Students will complete one CBA in second year and one in third year in most subjects.

CBAs will be reported on in the JCPA using the following descriptors:-

- Exceptional
- Above Expectations
- In Line with Expectations
- Yet to Meet Expectations

Once the second Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) is completed, students in third year will complete a written Assessment Task on what they have learned and the skills and competences that they have developed in that assessment. This task, set by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), is undertaken during normal class time and will be sent to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for marking. This Assessment Task will account for 10% of the overall mark for the final examination. Specific arrangements are made for Visual Art, Music, Home Economics and the Technology subjects. At the end of third year, students will sit the final SEC examination in June, which will account for 90% of the SEC grade.

Short Courses

Schools may offer short courses on their junior cycle programme. A short course is designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement across two or three years of the junior cycle. Short courses have been made available by the NCCA in Coding, Chinese Language and Culture, Digital Media Literacy, Artistic Performance, Philosophy, Civic, Social and Political Education, Physical Education and Social Personal and Health Education. Schools may also develop their own short courses to meet their students' needs.

Other Learning Experiences

Students will have the opportunity to engage with a range of other learning experiences as part of their junior cycle programme and these can be recorded on the JCPA. Other learning experiences play a critical role in ensuring that students are provided with a broad and balanced educational experience. These learning experiences could include student engagement in a science fair, a musical performance or a debating competition.

They could also include extracurricular activities, such as:

- membership of the school student council or school clubs and societies
- participation in school sporting activities

Reporting in Junior Cycle

A new reporting structure at junior cycle will contribute to the personal and educational development of students. It will support and underpin ongoing learning and assessment.

Schools will regularly:

- Provide information to parents about their child's achievement and progress
- Support students in their learning by suggesting next steps and providing feedback to help students' self-evaluation

The reporting process at junior cycle will culminate in the award of the JCPA to students. The JCPA will be awarded for the first time in Autumn 2017.

Student Wellbeing

Your child's wellbeing is of central importance to his/her educational success and overall happiness. Wellbeing will become a core part of your child's junior cycle experience. This area of learning includes, amongst others, Physical Education (PE), Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) [including Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)] and Guidance.

Level 2 Learning Programmes

There is a new junior cycle pathway for students with particular special educational needs called Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs).

These are being successfully implemented in special schools and are available for some students in mainstream post-primary schools also. Students completing this programme will have their results reported on the JCPA.

For further information on the new Junior Cycle visit:- www.curriculumonline.ie for subject and short course specifications and information regarding assessment www.jct.ie for teacher CPD information and general information regarding the new junior cycle



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Junior Cycle Information for Parents of Post-Primary Students

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