



Sacred Heart School Tullamore

SHS -Policy on Assessment in the Sacred Heart School

Sacred Heart School, Tullamore - Mission Statement

To provide a holistic education in the Mercy tradition

Vision

“In keeping with the Mercy tradition, we seek to achieve the holistic development and the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. We strive to ensure that our students leave our school with a healthy self-image, enhanced by the life skills and abilities necessary to make a positive contribution to society.”

A Voluntary Secondary School

Ours is what is known as a Voluntary Secondary School for girls. It dates from 1836 when the Mercy Sisters started a school soon after they arrived in Tullamore and founded their second house here.

The school is now a member of CEIST (Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust) and is managed by a Board of Management.

A Catholic School

A Catholic school helps students to develop their understanding of their faith. Ours is a Catholic school, but it is not a school for Catholics only. Due to the universal, non-discriminatory nature of Catholicism and the value it places on ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, seeing God at work in all people, Catholic schools are open to the admission of pupils of all faiths and none.

Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness and sees the presence of children from other denominations as an enrichment of the educational experience

and an opportunity for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.

Legislation framework for Assessment

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement.

Aims of the Policy to:

1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments
2. List the different types of assessments and their purpose
3. Detail the schedule of assessments and feedback
4. Explain the CBA's and Assessment Tasks (AT's)
5. Outline the New Junior Cycle and reporting of same
6. Outline the New Senior Cycle and reporting of same
7. Detail our use of Psychometric Assessments

Rationale and Definition of Assessment

The term "Assessment" refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and learning needs. Assessment is part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

1. Assessments enable the teacher to monitor a student's progress and make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in advancing the students learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessments help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate.
3. Assessments help identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
4. Assessments assist school management in identifying students, subjects, classes and areas of the curriculum that require further timetabled support.
5. Assessments play an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.
6. Monitor a student's progress and to provide the teacher with information about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the

- teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and to adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.
7. Provide the student and their parents with information regarding their progress.
 8. Establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects
 9. Assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.
 10. Teach students to assess their own work.
 11. Agreed assessment practice among staff is noted as one of the most effective tools in promoting quality teaching & learning.

Assessment for Learning & Assessment of Learning

This policy covers both Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning. Assessment of Learning is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. Assessment for Learning is a continuous process which combines a grade with advice to the student towards further improvement. Both forms of assessment are invaluable, and will be used equally by teachers in this school. This form of assessment will facilitate target setting for individual students in the individual subject areas.

Types of Assessment

The Junior Cycle operates a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning across three years. This approach measures and reports achievement at the end of those three years, reducing reliance on a single externally assessed examination and increasing the prominence given to Classroom-Based Assessment and formative assessment.

This emphasis reflects an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps them understand how their learning can be improved.

Types of Assessment

1. Informal Assessment

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature, and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who will use them constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in this process. Where appropriate, teachers will keep records of these assessments to provide an insight into a students' progress and to fully inform them regarding the learning process.

Informal Assessments methods include –

- Worksheets & written classwork
- Questions and answers in class
- Essays, projects & assignments
- Reading & writing in Class Sample exam questions
- Homework – written or learned
- Presentations/ Performances

Subject Departments are encouraged to plan similar assessments to enhance the practice of collaboration and shared practice.

Correction of assessments is advised to take place within a seven- day period. Research notes that the more immediate the feedback on assessment, the more effective for the student's learning process.

2.Formative Assessment: (Assessment for Learning)

Formative assessment is ongoing and involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding on the next steps to ensure successful outcomes.

It involves a shift from focusing mainly on summative judgments to engaging in ongoing activities that can be used to support next stages of learning. A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students and students' feedback to teachers.

Through a range of assessment for learning strategies the teacher helps the student to identify what has been achieved and where there is room for further learning and development. Classroom-Based Assessments in subjects (CBAs) have been introduced to 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.

They will be used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA.

Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, one in second year and one in third year. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level.

Implementation of Formative Assessment

In our implementation of formative assessment, it may involve using some of the following methods:

- **Learning Intentions:** Teachers will share the learning intentions with students at an appropriate time in each lesson, refer to them throughout the lesson and again at the end of the lesson where deemed necessary. This will help to clarify what the student was supposed to have learned and will assist both teachers and students in determining the levels to which the outcomes have been achieved.

- **Features of Quality/Criteria for Success:** Teachers will tell students in advance of a piece of work what exactly they will be looking for when assessing it. Teachers are aware that it is important to share this information with students beforehand so that they will be in a better position to know what is expected of them. They can also decide how far they want to push themselves.

- **Self-assessment:** Teachers will, from time to time, supervise students to correct their own work, based on a list of criteria for success. Departmental rules/guidelines are applied to suit specific subject needs. Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it.

- **Peer-assessment:** Teachers will also, from time to time, supervise students to correct their peer's work, based on a list of criteria for success. Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it.

- **Formative feedback:** Teachers, from time to time, will engage in comment only feedback. It allows both the teacher and the student to identify the next steps in learning. This includes the following:

- What the student has done well
- Where the areas for improvement are
- How the improvement might be made

Feedback

Oral feedback to students is an effective method of highlighting strengths, weaknesses and target areas for improvement. It is therefore necessary to use effective dialogue appropriate to the student.

Most feedback between students and teachers will be in the form of oral communication. Oral feedback happens frequently and can be given following homework exercises, classwork, class questioning, or examinations. Teachers in the SHS are advised to follow the feedback protocols agreed for this.

Written feedback happens from time to time and can be given following homework exercises, classwork, or examinations. Recording all feedback to learners in written form can impinge on valuable time for learning and teaching. Therefore, it is not expected that all feedback should be provided in written form. In the case of school reports, teachers endeavour to comment on how the student can make progress.

We recognise in the SHS that the following are key classroom practices and strategies needed for AFL:

- a positive classroom culture and ethos, which encourages students to think and talk about their learning and which provides a safe place for open, honest and respectful discussion.
- questioning skills (student to teacher/ teacher to student/ student to student), which stimulate thinking and reflecting on learning and explicit teaching of how to consciously reflect on what one knows and how to make an evaluative comment on it

- frequent identification and review of learning goals through teacher-directed discussion, clearly defining learning objectives and success criteria thereby empowering
- a recognition and acknowledgement of the purpose and importance of collaboration between home and school in the student's learning process. This may be facilitated by various means including web resources.

3. Summative Assessment

Assessment of Learning (AoL) Definition:

Summative Assessment refers to the assessment of learning and aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students, and parents, on the level of each students' attainment and learning in that specific subject area. The following are some of the AoL practices used in the SHS:

- All years have in class tests to provide results for Mid -Term, and Christmas reports. 2nd years and 5th years specifically have Mid Term assessments in Oct. Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate students have Mock examinations in early February and state exams in June. Other years have house exams in May. Certain departments may hold uniform in house tests throughout the term as well as monthly/end of topic/chapter tests. These forms of assessments may also be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis.
- Teachers give regular class tests in various subjects and results are recorded by the student in the relevant pages of the Homework Journal to track academic progress. Results will be returned to students in a timely manner.
- The mode of assessment may include written examinations, practical, aural, oral work, project work, CBAs/assessment tasks.
- Transition Year (TY) assessments may involve the following: external certification, portfolio, oral presentation, work experience evaluation and interview assessment.
- Examinations follow a similar format to the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations and a marking scheme is clearly identified. (Appendix 2 Grading Scheme for Leaving Certificate since 2017)
- Mock Examinations are set and corrected externally for 6th years.

Implementation and Reporting of AoL

Reports are sent to parents/guardians following end of term examinations.

- The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. Marks/grades are awarded, and a comment is added.
- Parents of TY students receive progress reports in the same way as other year groups.
- Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) descriptors are awarded to students on completion of CBA 1 in Second year and CBA 2 in Third year. The descriptors from CBA 1 will be included in the student's end of year report.

- The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will include the student's written exam results from their examinations at the end of Third year, their descriptors from CBA 1 and CBA 2 and results from any short courses undertaken.
- Any Other Areas of Learning from any non-academic achievements will also be included on the JCPA.

Junior Cycle Programme

Since 2022 all subjects have been assessed and examined by the SEC under new subject specifications.

The state exams are no longer than 2 hours, and the results form a part of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). This offers students a more complete report on progress throughout the Junior Cycle. The JCPA will also include descriptors awarded for levels of achievement in classroom-based assessments, short courses and other learning experiences.

The Assessment Task mark will be included in the final examination grade, and both are graded by the SEC. The grading of new subjects will be as follows:

Distinction $\geq 85\%$ to $< 100\%$

Higher Merit $\geq 70\%$ and $< 85\%$

Merit $\geq 55\%$ and $< 70\%$

Achieved $\geq 40\%$ and $< 55\%$

Partially Achieved $\geq 20\%$ and $< 40\%$

Not Graded $\geq 0\%$ and $< 20\%$

Classroom Based Assessment (CBA)

Classroom-Based Assessments emphasise the importance of formative assessment in supporting teaching and learning. In most subjects, students undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher — one in Second Year and one in Third Year. The number of CBAs may vary depending on the subject or short course. Classroom-Based Assessments provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways that would not be possible in a formal examination.

A particular purpose of the Classroom Based Assessments is to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the assessment task and at the end of the process.

Examples of CBA's include oral presentations, written work of diverse types, practical or designing and making activities, artistic performances, scientific experiments, projects, or other suitable tasks. Work related to the Classroom-Based Assessments is best seen as an integral part of ongoing assessment and routine classroom practice. Changes in CBA's are advised by the DES from time to time in response to circumstances arising.

Marking of CBAs.

There are four descriptors of achievement for classroom-based assessment as follows:

- Exceptional.**
- Above expectations.**
- In line with expectations.**
- Yet to meet expectations.**

Teachers develop an understanding of the above descriptors by attending Subject Learning Assessment Review (**SLAR**) meetings. This is when teachers come together in subject departments meetings to discuss the quality of the students work. The SLAR meetings play a key role in helping teachers to understand standards and expectations.

The descriptors from CBA1 and CBA2 will be communicated to parents in reports. The descriptors will also be included on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) that the students receive from the school after the Junior Cycle.

Assessment Task (AT)

The written Assessment Task, marked by the SEC, relates to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. The written Assessment Task may require the student to demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge and skills developed during the second Classroom-Based Assessment.

The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher and will be sent to the SEC for marking along with the script for that subject in the state-certified examination.

Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the presentation of the grade for that subject.

Assessment and Wellbeing

The school takes note of Circular 0055/2019 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

It states: 2.6.1 "Reporting on Wellbeing through the JCPA 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 about Wellbeing as part of ongoing assessment and reporting throughout Junior Cycle. Wellbeing will show in a separate area of the JCPA. It is in this area that schools will report on student achievement in CSPE, SPHE and PE. This will be facilitated using the descriptors which have already been developed and reflect the appropriate language of learning. The Wellbeing area of the JCPA will also include a free text space where schools can report on achievement in Wellbeing.

Project work as part of Assessment:

There are various deadlines for project work, classroom-based assessments, portfolios, and orals to be met by each student at Junior Cert level and Leaving Cert level.

The key dates for the Junior Certificate/Cycle are published by the State Examinations Commission.

It is expected that students do not leave class in a subject to complete project work in another subject except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed by both teachers impacted.

Examples of Projects/Oral Exams Leaving Cert:

Irish: Oral exams during Easter of 6th Year

MFL: Oral exams during Easter of 6th Year

History: Project due in April of 6th Year

Geography: Project due in early April of 6th Year

LCVP: Portfolio due in early March 6th Year

Art: Practical exams in May of 6th Year

Music: Practical after Easter of 6th year

Agricultural Science: Due in March of 6th year

Economics: Research Topic due in 6th Year

Home economics: Project due October of 6th year

Examples of Projects Exams Junior Cycle:

Home economics practical: March/April of 3rd year

Music practical: March/April of 3rd year

AACs Are Now a Core Feature of All New/Revised Subjects

- Under the Senior Cycle Redevelopment programme, all new and revised Leaving Certificate subjects must include an AAC worth at least 40% of available marks.
- This is a fundamental structural shift — AACs are not optional add-ons; they are embedded, compulsory components.
- AACs are designed to be integrated into regular classroom teaching and learning, not treated as standalone or bolt-on assessments.

Irish Bonus Marks Extended to AACs (from LC 2027)

- Circular 0002/2026 confirms that Irish bonus marks have been extended to cover all components of State examinations, including AACs and coursework.
- Previously, bonus marks applied only to written examinations.
- These extended arrangements apply to LC Established and LC Applied subjects examined from 2027 onwards.
- This applies to all school types — Irish-medium, English-medium, and bilingual schools — provided students meet subject-specific requirements.

AACs Must Be Integrated Into Teaching & Learning

- AACs should not be treated as separate examinations sitting outside normal classroom activity.
- Schools must ensure planning, timetabling, and resources support AAC delivery within the natural flow of the two-year senior cycle programme.

- Teachers have a role before and during AACs, including providing appropriate materials, safety oversight (where relevant), and access arrangements for students with additional learning needs.

Reporting on Assessments

Teachers are encouraged to use the teacher journal, student journal, and Compass, to keep records and report progress on assessment. From time to time, teachers may arrange formal and informal meetings with other teachers/ parents and/or students in support of this ongoing progress.

Standard reports are sent to parents to report Christmas and end of year results in June. In addition, students receive reports on mock exams.

State Exams

The school will strive to ensure that all 3rd and 6th Year students participate (as directed by the State Exams Commission) in the many assessments that make up the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be conducted in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission.

The Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations begin the first Wednesday after the June Bank Holiday Monday each year. The exact timetable of examinations is available from the end of January in the examination year.

Leaving Cert Applied and Assessment

Assessment is continuous throughout the course and there is a final examination. Assessment takes place on the completion of modules and practical activities that allow the student to integrate the learning from different courses.

The final examination must be taken in the following areas:

- **English and Communication**
- **Two vocational specialisms**
- **Mathematical Applications**
- **Language**
- **Social Education.**(final year for this is 2026)

There are written and oral examinations in all languages. There are practical examinations in the vocational specialisms.

The written examinations take place in June, at the same time as the examinations for the established Leaving Certificate. Students will sit Gaeilge in Year 1 and Modern Foreign Language Exam in Year 2.

Students who successfully complete the programme are awarded a Leaving Certificate from the Department of Education and Science.

The certificate is awarded at three levels:

Level	Marks and Credits Required
Marking system for examination grades Pass	60-69% (120-139 credits)
Merit	70-84% (140-169 credits)
Distinction	85-100% (above 170 credits)

Candidates who get less than 60% (120 credits) or who do not complete the course, are awarded a Record of Experience.

House Exams

When appropriate, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students, and parents, on the level of each students' attainment and learning in that specific subject area.

Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

First and Second year students will sit their Summer Exams at the end of May.

The duration of these exams currently are as follows:

First Years: 1 hour

Second Years: 1 hour- exams will be given post CBA, if the CBA has been completed.

5th year: students sit their summer exams in early May to allow for a feedback week where teachers can give students actionable insight and supports future learning by identifying specific strengths and gaps. These exams are typically 1-2 hours. These exams are of a serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams.

5th Year and 2nd year Midterm tests – may sit Midterm tests in October during class time.

Transition Year students will have their Portfolio Assessment at the end of May and students sit subject exams as determined by their subject teacher. As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years.

A calendar of exams is shared with parents during Induction Night at the start of the academic year.

Psychometric Assessments

Incoming first years will undertake assessments in Literacy and Numeracy (CAT 4 E) and the NGRT which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability first year classes and to manage the teaching and learning decisions of 1st years. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's academic potential and is completed in November of the entry to first year. Parents are informed of these tests prior to them taking place.

If a student is identified as having a learning need/difficulty the AEN Coordinator will discuss the matter with the AEN Team. Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time, and dictionaries amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the AEN Coordinator in consultation with individual subject teachers. SSPs are drawn up (by the subject teachers) to support the learning progress of such students.

Guidance Counsellors administer the DAT Differential Aptitude Test to determine student individual strengths and potential in subject areas which in turn guide subject choice for the senior cycle. Students who go directly to 5th year complete this later in 5th year as it is age specific, and the norms are related to being aged 16.

The full policy on Psychological Assessments and assessments for RACE provision and exam accommodations is provided for in a separate policy.

The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management, may carry out psychological assessments and other assessments on students at various times throughout the year. This is dependant upon NEPs allocation for the relevant year.

Evaluation and Review of the Policy

The school management will accept feedback from staff, students and parents/guardians made through the appropriate channels. This feedback will inform periodic evaluation and review of the policy.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:

Date: May 12 2026

Signed:



Appendix

1. Policy on Conflict Protocols
2. Grading System for Leaving Cert since 2017
<https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ma>
3. Dept of Education Report on Junior Cycle 2023 [Exploring the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle: A longitudinal study. Interim report No. 2 \(ul.ie\)](#)
4. JCPA Handbook [gov.ie - Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement \(JCPA\) \(www.gov.ie\)](#)
5. Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Assessment for 23-24 [258539_a64f7934-e58a-4a7b-be8b-82894b72a7dc.pdf](#)