



FIRHOUSE
EDUCATE TOGETHER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Assessment and Reporting Policy

Firhouse ETSS offers the choice of an education based on the inclusive intercultural values of respect for difference and, justice and equality for all. In our school, every student will be invited to learn in an inclusive, democratic, co-educational setting that is committed to enabling and supporting each student to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society.

Adapted from Educate Together Mission Statement

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Policy and Patron Context

This policy is reflective of the vision for Educate Together Second-level Schools as promoted in:

- *A Blueprint for an Educate Together Second-level School*
- *Educate Together Second Level Charter*
- *The Ethical Education Curriculum.*

This policy relates to, and should be read in conjunction with, other school policies including:

- *Acceptable Use Policy*
- *Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment Policy*
- *Continuum of Support (AEN) Policy*
- *Leaving Certificate Applied Policy*
- *Relationships and Behaviour Code of Practice.*

This policy is informed by national policy including:

- [*A Framework for Junior Cycle*](#) (DES, 2015)
- [*Ongoing reporting for effective teaching and learning*](#) (NCCA, 2018)
- [*Reporting Guidelines*](#) (NCCA, 2018)
- [*Senior Cycle Programmes*](#) (NCCA)
- [*Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*](#) (DES, 2019).

Glossary of Terms

Assessment	Assessment is the process of generating, gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting evidence of learning in individuals, groups or systems. Educational assessment provides information about progress in learning, and achievement in developing skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes.
Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA)	Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) in subjects and short courses provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways not possible in a formal examination. Classroom-Based Assessments, facilitated by the classroom teacher, are undertaken by students in a defined time period, within class contact time and to a national timetable. (Click 'subjects' on the left for further subject specific information).
Formative assessment	Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process, and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress and to suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. Assessment for learning covers all aspects of formative assessment but has a particular focus on the student having an active role in their learning.
Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)	The JCPA is the award that students will receive at the end of their junior cycle. The award will reward achievement across all areas of learning and assessment including ongoing, formative assessment; Classroom-Based Assessments; and SEC grades, which include results from the final examinations and the Assessment Tasks.
Learning intentions	A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, which describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities.
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are statements in curriculum specifications to describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.
Ongoing assessment	As part of their classroom work, students engage in assessment activities that can be either formative or summative in nature. Teachers assess as part of their daily practice by observing and listening as students carry out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, and by considering how they respond to, frame and ask questions. Teachers use this assessment information to help students plan the next steps in their learning. Periodically, this assessment will be in more structured, formalised settings where teachers will need to obtain a snapshot of the students' progress in order to make decisions on future planning and to report on progress. This may involve the students in doing projects, investigations, case studies and/or written assessments and may occur at defined points in the school calendar.
Specification	A subject or short course specification details the intended learning outcomes, and how they can be achieved and demonstrated. The specification outlines how the learning in any subject or short course is linked to particular statements of learning and key skills.
Success Criteria	Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success looks like. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.
Summative assessment	Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.

Adapted and accessed: <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/glossary/>.

DEY (Department of Education and Youth)

NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)

SEC (State Examinations Commission)

Relationships at the heart of wellbeing and learning in Firhouse ETSS

The *Relationships and Behaviour Code of Practice* in Firhouse ETSS is a statement of good practice that reflects the restorative ethos and values of our school, in line with the school's motto *Be your best self*. The policy promotes the explicit building and maintaining of positive and healthy relationships, recognising the centrality of such relationships to wellbeing and learning for all.

Our school values are represented in our **RESPECT** acronym.

Relationships / Empathy / Safety / Personal accountability / Equity / Community / Trust

RESPECT and unconditional positive regard for all as we are all human beings

Our school ethos and values are reflected in our assessment and reporting practices.

Assessment in junior cycle: placing students at the centre...

The most significant change in the junior cycle curriculum is in the area of assessment. There is a substantial body of research evidence to show that educational outcomes for students can be improved by broadening the approach to assessment. There is also a recognition that no single assessment event can provide evidence of the full range of student achievement. All assessment in Junior Cycle, formative or summative, moment-in-time or ongoing, SEC, NCCA or teacher-designed, should have as its primary purpose, the support of student learning.

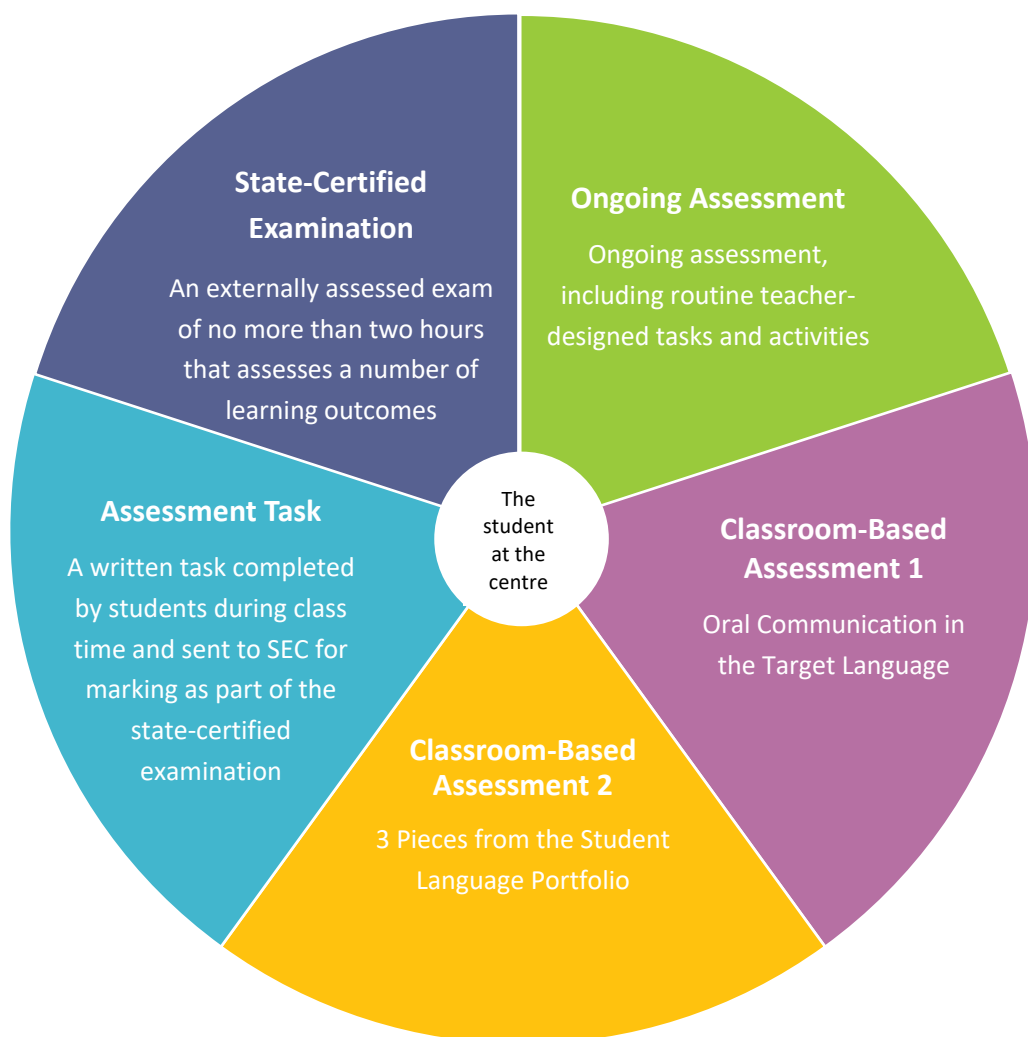
Research shows that the greatest benefits for students' learning occur when teachers provide effective feedback to students that helps them to understand how their learning can be improved. That is why a consideration of approaches to quality learning cannot be separated from a consideration of assessment.

Ongoing classroom assessment practices are of crucial importance in supporting student learning and promoting student achievement. Ongoing assessment involves practice that is both formative and summative. Formative assessment, complemented by summative assessment, is a key feature of junior cycle (Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015, p. 35).

Most of the assessment activities over the three years of junior cycle will be formative in nature. Teachers will use the learning outcomes provided by subject or short course specifications as a starting point for planning a unit of learning and to develop learning intentions and success criteria to be shared and/or co-created, as appropriate, with their students. These learning outcomes will clearly set out what the students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities which they have undertaken during the course of junior cycle.

An overall picture of students' achievement is not possible without the opportunity for ongoing assessment. Schools need to use a variety of assessment approaches that allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that would not be possible in a written examination. Taken together, the assessment elements undertaken will provide a broad picture of the student's learning journey through the three years of junior cycle.

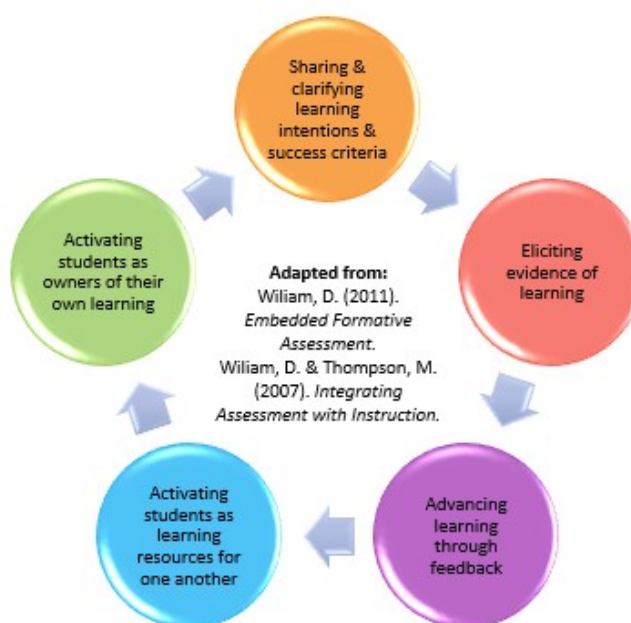
It is helpful to consider the breadth of learning and achievement represented in the image below that captures a student's junior cycle learning journey in French, as an example.



Formative & Summative Assessment

Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process, and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress and to suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. (NCCA, 2020)

Formative assessment is considered to be constituted of five elements, as illustrated in the graphic. It is an integrated system and is at its most effective when all parts are consistently activated across the teaching and learning experience.



All members of the classroom are active agents in the learning process and the more students are included in both teaching and learning processes, the greater their motivation and engagement.

Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or Features of Quality for Classroom-Based Assessments. (NCCA, 2020)

Summative assessment moments in the classroom can be used formatively, to inform next steps for teachers and students. Linking classroom assessment and other assessment with effective reporting that culminates in the awarding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will offer parents/guardians and students a clear and broad picture of the learning journey over the three years of junior cycle.

Effective Feedback

The most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is feedback. This does not mean using many tests and providing over-prescriptive directions. It means providing information about how and why the student understands and misunderstands, and what directions the student must take to improve (John Hattie, *Influences on Student Learning*, Inaugural Lecture at the University of Auckland, 1999).

Feedback is critical to improving learning as it both influences students' motivation to learn and their ability to do so.

Effective feedback:

- focuses on the quality of the student work
- relates to agreed success criteria
- identifies success and achievement
- indicates suggestions for improvement
- prompts student thinking
- allows time for improvement to take place.

Feedback includes telling students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. It also includes reminding students of what they were aiming to achieve (the learning intentions). Finally, high quality feedback is always given against explicit and agreed criteria for success (adapted from *Focus on Learning; Formative Feedback*, NCCA, 2015).

The majority of feedback is provided orally by teachers to students during lessons. A conversation to support reflection on learning and to elicit feedback from the student is hugely beneficial. It can be helpful to ask students to repeat back what they heard in feedback provided to them to make sure they are clear and to take note of it in their copy for future reference. Teachers often give oral and/or written feedback on activities and tasks in OneNote and/or in student copies. Again, students are often asked to respond to this feedback and to reflect on their learning.

Feedback can be provided in many formats depending on the learning context:

- written
- oral; to an individual, pair, group or class-group & voice recorded
- teacher to student
- student(s) to student(s)
- self-assessment.

Our learning and assessment culture

In our school, assessment is in the all day, every day of teaching and learning. Assessment is in support of learning; it shows an understanding of how the student's learning is progressing and gives information in terms of student readiness to proceed in their

learning. As professionals, we are guided by our subject specifications and assessment guidelines. In line with the [Framework for Junior Cycle](#) (2015) and publications related to senior cycle redevelopment, we have a balanced approach to formative and summative assessment as appropriate to the stage of student learning and in support of all student learning across the six year groups. Observation, questioning, meaningful feedback and reflection all combine to move the learning forward. In order to provide feedback to students on their learning, and to ensure we are in a position to make a professional judgement on student progress, we need to gather evidence of the learning. As we plan for teaching, learning and assessment, we reflect on the intended student learning and design experiences to support this. We consider how the planned assessment approaches support student learning, inform us of the progress being made and equip us with the information and evidence needed to guide students in their next steps.

Assessment takes many different forms as teachers plan to support students in demonstrating their learning. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are used to inform planning for learning, providing choice and flexibility in assessment practices, where appropriate. As part of their daily practice, teachers assess students' learning by observing and listening as students carry out activities and tasks, and by considering how they respond to questions and engage in reflection on their learning (Appendix 1). Students engage in rich tasks that support rich feedback – the richer the task, the richer the feedback is our guide. Teachers use the learning intentions and success criteria as the basis for providing feedback to help students plan their next steps in learning. Students are encouraged to reflect on how they are progressing in their own learning and to provide feedback to their teachers. In developing the capacity for self-management and self-awareness, students approach their learning more confidently and are better prepared to meet the challenges of life beyond school.

In order to capture the learning, an assessment moment will usually involve a task, or a series of tasks, in the unit of learning. Tasks typically capture part of the intended student learning in the unit of learning. Tasks are generally accompanied by success criteria that are explained to, or co-created with, the students.

There is no percentage grading system in junior cycle. Students receive regular feedback on their learning based on observation of activities and tasks linked to learning intentions and success criteria.

Students are introduced to Classroom-Based Assessments and descriptors in 2nd Year. CBA descriptors are only used to report on CBAs. CBAs are a reflection of normal classroom practice and allow students to showcase their learning. Students are introduced to final examination grade descriptors from the beginning of 3rd Year.

We want our students to be focused on the process of learning, to develop their growth mindset and positive identity as a learner as is appropriate to their stage of learning.

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs)

Classroom-Based Assessments emphasise the importance of formative assessment in supporting teaching and learning and are at a common level. In each subject, students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments with support and guidance from their teacher during 2nd and 3rd Year.

Classroom-Based Assessments provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a way which would not be possible in a formal examination.

The tasks cover a broad range of activities including oral presentations, written work of different types, practical or designing and making activities, artistic performances, scientific experiments, projects or other suitable tasks as set out for each subject in the relevant Assessment Guidelines. Work related to the Classroom-Based Assessments is best seen as an integral part of ongoing assessment and routine classroom practice.

When assessing the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment teachers use 'on-balance' judgement in relation to the Features of Quality, which are set out in four level descriptors:

Classroom Based Assessment Descriptors
Exceptional
Above Expectations
In Line with Expectations
Yet to Meet Expectations

It is important to note that while CBAs are reported on in a summative way, they have a formative value and should be used as a tool to provide feedback to teachers, students and parents/guardians on student progress and learning.

Junior Cycle Final Examinations

For most subjects, there will be a written examination completed at the end of 3rd Year. Examinations will be set, administered, marked and results shared by the SEC. The written examinations will be of no longer than two hours in duration. The final examination will be available at a common level apart from English, Mathematics and Irish where there will be two levels (higher and ordinary) available.

Student achievement on the externally assessed state-certified examinations, which will incorporate the results of the Assessment Task, also assessed by the SEC, will be recorded using a set of grade descriptors.

Grading of the Final Examination

Grade	Range (%)*
Distinction	≥85% to 100%
Higher Merit	≥70% and <85%
Merit	≥55% and <70%
Achieved	≥40% and <55%
Partially Achieved	≥20% and <40%
Not graded	≥0% and <20%

*The percentages are used here to help our understanding of the grade descriptors

Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

The JCPA offers students, teachers and parents/guardians a clear and broad picture of the students' learning journey over the three years of junior cycle. The JCPA rewards achievement across all areas of learning as applicable:

- subjects
- short courses
- Wellbeing
- Priority Learning Units
- Other Areas of Learning.

The JCPA draws upon and reports on achievement across all elements of assessment including ongoing, formative assessment; Classroom-Based Assessments; and SEC grades which include results from the state-certified examinations and the Assessment Tasks.

Reporting in our school

An effective learning culture is supported by effective reporting. Approaches to ongoing reporting for teachers, students and their parents/guardians involves systems and structures that the school puts in place to report on student progress right across the school year.

Ongoing reporting in our school

Ongoing reporting in our school takes a variety of forms, for example:

- informal oral and written feedback (regular feedback related to units of learning is shared on OneNote and/or in student copies)
- student reflection
- learning check-ins for students with teacher, tutor or progress leader
- Student Progress Meetings
- Winter Check-in / Summer Check-out (end of term/year report) (Transition Year has a different approach to reporting which can be explored below)
- 3rd Year Checkpoint Examinations Report (there is no 3rd Year Summer Check-out Report as it is replaced by the CBA Report and State Examinations)

- 6th Year November Examinations Report and 6th Year Mock Examinations Report (there is no 6th Year Summer Check-out Report as is replaced by the State Examinations)

Ongoing reporting reflects many aspects of school life, for example:

- our school's ethos and values
- our school's calendar and our teaching/learning programmes
- our communication and engagement with parents/guardians
- students' learning progress and achievement in subjects and short courses (classwork and homework, focusing on strengths and areas for development)
- students' learning dispositions (active engagement in classwork and homework, awareness of learning progress, persistence in the face of challenge, ability to ask questions when unsure)
- student wellbeing
- student participation and achievement in extra-curricular activities
- areas such as attendance and punctuality.

Reporting is the part of the assessment process that provides feedback in support of student learning. Effective reporting helps students to feel involved in their learning, to be aware of how well they are progressing and how they can improve.

To ensure our reporting is effective, we are committed to:

- encouraging authentic engagement with students and parents/guardians
- providing opportunities for students, through feedback, to reflect on their learning
- valuing the professional judgements of teachers
- using the language of learning to provide effective feedback
- making it manageable so as not to take time away from learning and teaching
- clearly communicating students' progress in learning
- providing information on a broad range of achievement
- taking an inclusive approach, being sensitive to the self-esteem and general wellbeing of students (Reporting Guidelines, NCCA, 2018, p.5).

Student Progress Meetings

Each year group has a *Student Progress Meeting* once a year. This takes place between November and February and affords students, their parents/guardians and teachers an opportunity to discuss student progress and achievement.

These meetings usually take place on a Wednesday evening from 16:15 - 18:45. Meetings are scheduled for five-minute slots and parents/guardians are invited to select their subject preferences to meet with eight subject teachers. Meetings are very efficient with a focus on student engagement in learning.

Winter Check-in / Summer Check-out Reports

End of term reports happen twice a year for the majority of year groups with a Winter Check-in and a Summer Check-out for each student. This is a meaningful opportunity for

students and parents/guardians to sit, read and discuss the check-in/out together and is in support of student learning, achievement and wellbeing.

When writing the check in/out, and in focusing on **engagement in learning**, teachers are guided by the following:

- feedback is personalised and addressed to the student (e.g., *John, you have shown so much engagement this year. You have completed all of your assignments and shown good time management by submitting them by the deadline set. Your recent project on X shows your knowledge and skills in... An area for development would be...*)
- feedback is based on subject-specific areas relating to the curriculum (learning outcomes, key skills), learning dispositions (active engagement in classwork and homework, awareness of learning progress, persistence in the face of challenge, ability to ask questions when unsure) and task completion. Feedback on student work is focused on what is working well for the student in terms of their demonstration of their learning and areas for development to support their next steps.

Tutors complete a comment on **personal growth** for each student and focus on the student as a person, using our RESPECT values to inform the feedback.

Assessment and Reporting at Senior Cycle

Our senior cycle assessment and reporting practices build upon established practices in junior cycle and are informed by the Department of Education and Youth publications related to senior cycle redevelopment. Our assessment and reporting practices at senior cycle continue to embrace a broad understanding of the value of learning, supported by effective assessment, and are aimed at instilling a love of learning and a growth mindset in our students. As in junior cycle, teachers will continue to use a wide range of assessment modes to support student learning (Appendix 1). The UDL principles will continue to inform planning for learning, providing choice and flexibility in assessment practices, where appropriate.

Our reporting structures at senior cycle reflect both the formative nature of learning and the importance of reflection in this process, in addition acknowledging the need for students to prepare and plan for progression after second level education. Our policy reflects the voice of our students by having a clearly signposted path through senior cycle which provides them with a detailed understanding of how they are progressing and being prepared for their final assessments.

We value the importance of high quality and regular feedback to students in their work as the basis for high quality learning. Teachers provide regular feedback that is crafted to encourage, challenge, and inform students about their learning progress. We encourage students to engage meaningfully with feedback from their teachers to help them

understand how to improve their learning. Peer and self-assessment practices are embraced and guided by teachers to support student agency and deep reflective learning.

To support parents/guardians in engaging with student progression, and to provide a formalised structure for teachers to provide feedback to students, a detailed and regular reporting system is used as set out below.

Transition Year

During the Transition Year Programme, students' learning is assessed as part of ongoing assessment with reported feedback at various intervals throughout the year.

Appropriate modes of assessment, underpinned by the guidelines of UDL, are used to complement the varied nature of students' learning experiences. There are four assessment periods for Transition Year students throughout the year, a process that is designed to ensure students and parents/guardians have a clear and detailed understanding of how students are progressing in their learning. Subjects with two hours of tuition per week will have three assessment moments. Subjects with one hour of tuition per week or short courses will have one or two assessment moments.

Our assessment and reporting practices require regular engagement of students in dialogue with their teachers about their progress. Students are facilitated to develop self-awareness and reflection, supporting them to manage and take responsibility for their learning.

The learning developed over the course of Transition Year is captured in a Student Portfolio, including the areas of study and activities engaged in during the year.

At the end of the programme each student should have:

- a completed folder of course works for personal evaluation
- a certificate of achievement from the school.

Leaving Certificate Established Programme

The Leaving Certificate Established is a two-year programme that aims to provide a broad and balanced education while also offering some specialisation towards a particular area for further study or career options.

Reported Assessment Moments

During 5th Year and 6th Year, each reporting moment is based on a significant piece of work submitted by a student in their given subjects – these will be published on VShare in a timely manner with the dates below being deadlines rather than specific dates.

5th Year		
December	All Subjects	Comment based feedback on engagement and progress.
End of Year	All Subjects	End of year feedback for all subjects accompanied by a LC grade based on formalised summer examinations for examination subjects.
6th Year		
Mid-late November	Examination Subjects Only	Structured examination style assessment moment. Timetable will be paused for 4-5 days to accommodate 2-hour examinations for examination subjects with a LC grade and brief comment provided in winter reports. Final decisions about levels should be made at this stage. Non-exam subject – comment based feedback only.
February	‘Mock’ Examinations	Examination Subjects – ‘Mock’ results, some feedback and subject level recommendation where appropriate.
End of Year	State Examinations	No school reports.

Subject Levels

Teachers will discuss levels of study with students as appropriate during 5th Year with teacher recommendations communicated to parents in the Summer Check-out report. Discussions of appropriate levels of study will continue between teachers and students where necessary over the course of 6th Year also.

Additional Assessment Components

Revised specifications for existing Leaving Certificate Established subjects were introduced in schools from the 2025/26 school year.

Revised subjects will incorporate additional assessment components (AACs) that are not a traditional written examination. These components will be worth at least 40% of the available marks and will be externally assessed by the SEC.

The AACs aim to reduce the pressure on students associated with final assessments based primarily on written examinations conducted at the end of 6th Year. These AACs are designed to assess students’ skills and key competencies, developed through the study of their chosen subject, in a way that is not possible through a terminal written examination.

Final Examination

Subjects that have yet to be revised are assessed by an examination paper and by additional assessment methods including oral and aural examinations, practical examinations and assessment of practical coursework at the end of the two-year programme.

Examinations will be set, administered, marked and results shared by the SEC. The final examination will be available at two levels; higher and ordinary.

Grading of the Final Examination:

Higher Level

Grade	%
H1	≥ 90 to 100
H2	≥ 80 and < 90
H3	≥ 70 and < 80
H4	≥ 60 and < 70
H5	≥ 50 and < 60
H6	≥ 40 and < 50
H7	≥ 30 and < 40
H8	≥ 0 and < 30

Ordinary Level

Grade	%
O1	≥ 90 to 100
O2	≥ 80 and < 90
O3	≥ 70 and < 80
O4	≥ 60 and < 70
O5	≥ 50 and < 60
O6	≥ 40 and < 50
O7	≥ 30 and < 40
O8	≥ 0 and < 30

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is a two-year Senior Cycle programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life with the structure of this programme being clearly set out at national level. This programme is built upon continuous assessment moments and is designed to promote the value of all types of learning in our school.

LCA sets out to recognise the skills of all students and to provide opportunities for developing personal responsibility, self-esteem and self-knowledge, and helps students apply what they learn to the real world.

The two-year programme consists of four half-year blocks called sessions. Achievement is credited in each session. Courses are offered in three main areas: Vocational Preparation; General Education; and Vocational Education. As part of the LCA programme, students options were enhanced by providing access to Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) Mathematics and Modern Foreign Languages from September 2022.

Leaving Certificate Applied Assessment Structure:

Leaving Cert Applied Assessment		
Satisfactory completion of modules + 90% attendance	62 Credits	31%
- Evidence of completion of key assignments for each module - One credit per course module in which there is a final exam - Two credits per course module in which there is NO final exam		

Assessment and Reporting Policy

7 Student Tasks @ 10 credits each					70 Credits	35%
Vocational Preparation		Vocational Education (x2)				
General Education		Contemporary Issue				
Personal Reflection		Practical Achievement				
Final Examinations						
English & Communication <i>Oral and written incorporating audio visual</i>	Vocational Specialisms Hotel & Catering Graphics & Construction <i>Practical and written – practical briefs issued in advance</i>	Languages Irish French <i>Oral and written incorporating aural</i>	Social Education <i>Written incorporating written</i>	Mathematical Application <i>Written</i>	68 Credits	34%
12 Credits	12 credits each	6 credits each	10 credits	10 credits		
Total					200 Credits	100%

Leaving Cert Applied Certification:

Awarded at 3 levels	Credits	%
Pass	120 – 139 credits	60 – 69%
Merit	140 – 169 credits	70 – 84%
Distinction	170 – 200 credits	85 – 100%

Students who do not acquire 120 credits or who leave the programme early will receive a 'Record of Experience'.

Further information about the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme can be found at:
<https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/programmes-and-key-skills/leaving-certificate-applied/>

Consultation and Communication

It is important that every member of the school community can identify with, understand and is familiar with the policy.

The following consultation process followed the writing of the initial draft by the *Learning in Our School Team*:

Staff Team: as part of a team meeting, time was taken to discuss teachers' reflections and ideas on the draft, which had been sent to them a week before. Teachers were invited to submit changes which were then considered.

Students: a student focus group was arranged to discuss the draft policy which was shared with them.

Parents/Guardians: A copy of the draft policy was also sent to the *School Community Association*, in order to ascertain their views and suggested alterations.

Review and evaluate the policy

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated to ensure it is being adhered to and that it continues to meet the needs of the school. Ongoing review should be in line with any changing information or regulations and feedback from parents/guardians, students, staff team members and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

This policy was agreed by the Board of Management:

Signed: 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 12/05/2026

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 12/05/2026

Review date: May 2028

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ongoing Assessment? How do I know they know?

Ongoing Assessment?

How do I know they know?

Portfolio **Debate** **Role Play**
Sketching & Designing **Graphic Organisers**
e.g. mindmaps
Discussion **Questioning**
Feedback **Writing Tasks**
Peer-teaching **Poster Design**
Examination **Worksheets (OneNote)**
Presentations **Podcasting** **Booklet Creation**
(Individual & Group) **Digital Stories** **Projects** **Game Creation**
(Individual & Group) **Progress Journal** **Quizzes**
Reflection **Flashcard Creation**



Appendix 2: FAQs Junior Cycle Learning in Our School

1. What course are students in Firhouse ETSS studying?	Students are following the national curriculum as exemplified in the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and subject and short course specifications designed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).
2. What are the major differences between junior cycle and the junior certificate?	Junior cycle focuses on engagement in learning and development of knowledge, skills, understanding and values across the three years of junior cycle. Assessment is considered in the all day, every day of the learning environment. We focus on depth of learning as opposed to coverage or superficial learning. Assessment at this stage supports students as they develop their identity as learners, their interests and passions.
3. How many subjects and short courses do students take?	Students study 8 subjects (7 for those with an Irish exemption) and 3 short courses.
4. I know that textbooks are not in use in Firhouse ETSS. How do the students access information content?	All teachers in Firhouse ETSS engage in content creation and units of learning are designed just for our students. Teachers create their own support materials (presentations, videos, recordings, worksheets) and share quality resources, which are accessible to the students through Microsoft Teams and OneNote.
5. If students want to revise, where do they locate the relevant materials?	Students refer back to teacher support materials and resources, and their own work and notes using Microsoft Teams, OneNote and copybooks.
6. I've heard of chapters and topics before but what is a unit of learning?	Chapters and topics often are associated with textbooks. Units of learning are designed by our teachers using the junior cycle learning outcomes for each subject specification.
7. Instead of the focus being on percentages, the focus in Firhouse ETSS is on feedback that continually moves the learning forward. Can you go into more detail on why this approach is taken?	Effective feedback is what moves the learning forward for a student. When a student is aware of what is going well for them in their learning and how to improve it, this is what builds confidence and identity as a learner. Percentages change the focus from developing their awareness of their learning and how to improve it to a

	number which in itself gives very little information.
8. Will students be prepared for senior cycle?	Students in Firhouse ETSS will be well set up for senior cycle. Not only will students have knowledge that will support them in senior cycle and beyond, they will also have a deep understanding of values and key skills to support them as learners.

CBA's

1. I've heard the term CBA but what do the letters stand for?	CBA stands for Classroom-Based Assessment.
2. When are CBA's completed and when are they reported?	CBA's are completed throughout 2 nd Year and 3 rd Year. They are reported on in our Winter Check-in and Summer Check-out reports.
3. Do CBA's have different levels (e.g., higher level or ordinary level)?	No. CBA's are all assessed at a common level and are designed to be accessible to all students.
4. Are percentages awarded for CBA's?	No percentages are awarded. Instead, Grade Descriptors are used. These include Exceptional, Above Expectations, In Line with Expectations and Yet to Meet Expectations.
5. Are students in Firhouse ETSS going to be prepared for their CBA's?	CBA's are reflective of everyday classroom practice. Students are accustomed to the learning and demonstration of learning involved in CBA's from 1 st Year.
6. Are the final examinations more important than the CBA's?	No. There are three pieces of assessment information for the majority of subjects (short courses typically only have one CBA and no final examination) that are reported on in the <i>Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement</i> (JCPA): CBA1, CBA2, Assessment Task (where applicable) + Final Examination combined. These are to be equally valued as they each demonstrate a different aspect of a student's learning and development.

Final Examinations

1. What subjects have a final examination?	There are final examinations in English, Irish, Maths, Business Studies, French, Geography, History, Home Economics, Science, Spanish, Technical Graphics, Visual Art and Wood Technology.
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2. When do these final examinations take place?	These final examinations take place in June and are timetabled and coordinated by the State Examinations Commission. All final examinations will be no longer than two hours and there is one examination per subject.
3. When I was in school, all subjects that had final examinations had levels. Is this the same for subjects at junior cycle?	All subjects, except English, Irish and Maths are now examined at common level for final examination purposes. English, Irish and Maths have two levels for final examination purposes: higher level and ordinary level.
4. When do students have to choose levels for final examination for English, Irish and Maths?	The conversation about levels for English, Irish and Maths for final examination will begin around the time of the Student Progress Meetings in 2 nd Year with a recommendation made by teachers involved in the final term of 2 nd Year as part of the Summer Check-out report.
5. Will students receive a percentage or a grade for their final examinations?	Students will not receive percentages or grades for their final examinations. Students will instead receive a final examination descriptor. These are Distinction, Higher Merit, Merit, Achieved, Partially Achieved, Not Graded.
6. Will students in Firhouse ETSS sit 'mock' exams for junior cycle?	Students will sit Checkpoint Examinations in February. These exams take place during class time and regular classroom practice will continue outside of the specified exams. It will be an opportunity for students to experience a more formal examination process without taking away from their ongoing learning and development. A timetable will be sent home closer to the time.
7. How will these Checkpoint Examinations be reported?	These Checkpoint Exams will be reported on through VSware.
8. Is there anything else I should know about the final examinations?	The final examinations will require students to draw on what they have learned and to adapt according to the questions. This is why deep learning and developing our students' critical thinking skills is so important as they will need a level of cognitive flexibility to demonstrate their learning in such a setting. Whereas the old junior certificate examinations had a

	significant level of predictability, the junior cycle final examinations involve greater application of learning during the examinations themselves.
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Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

1. Will students receive a junior certificate?	No. Students will no longer receive a junior certificate. In the first term of Transition Year, students will receive the grade descriptors for their final examinations of junior cycle. It is at this point that the school will capture the journey of the individual student through junior cycle by putting together their individual JCPA.
2. What information will be on the JCPA?	The JCPA details the CBA descriptors for the subjects and short courses undertaken by the individual student, the final examination descriptors for subjects and a section outlining their involvement in school life (Other Areas of Learning).
3. When will students receive their JCPA?	Students will receive their JCPA in the autumn of Transition Year.

Appendix 3: Mathematics and timeline for levels decisions

1st Year	Common Level
2nd Year	Students will be split into Higher Level (HL) and Ordinary Level (OL) classes after winter break in 2nd. Based on: Algebra Assessment (1st Year) Triangles Assessment (2nd Year) Co-ordinate Geometry Assessment (2nd Year) Engagement Students are informed of this recommendation in early December and will be given the opportunity to discuss with their teacher. Parents/Guardians will receive a VS-Mail with this level recommendation in mid-December. Students will be in HL or OL classes from January, with no change from OL to HL allowed from this point. Students may change from HL to OL at the end of each month, following discussion with their teacher.
3rd Year	Students continue with the level determined in 2nd Year No change from OL to HL allowed. Students may change from HL to OL at the end of each month, following discussion with their teacher.
Transition Year	Common Level
5th Year: Leaving Certificate Established (LCE)	Levels for LCE will be recommended and discussed with students in May of Transition Year. Parents/Guardians will receive a VS-Mail with this level recommendation in late May. Recommendations for LCE based off: Junior Cycle Level Algebra Assessment Engagement Students who sit OL maths in Junior Cycle continue with OL LCE. Assessments at October midterm, winter break, spring break, and summer check-out, at which point levels will be discussed.

	No change from OL to HL allowed. Students may change from HL to OL at the end of each month, following discussion with their teacher.
6th Year: Leaving Certificate Established (LCE)	All LCE students will sit a November assessment and mock exam, at which point levels will be discussed, however feedback and advice on levels may occur at other points throughout the year. No change from OL to HL allowed. Students may change from HL to OL at the end of each month, following discussion with their teacher. Should Foundation Level (FL) be considered for a student, a meeting with the guidance counsellor will be advised to discuss implications of same.