



Junior Cycle Level 2 short course

A Personal Project: Caring for Animals

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

First Edition

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Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Level 2 short course, A Personal Project: Caring for Animals*¹. *Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment*, provides:

- General information on Classroom-Based Assessments
- Detail of the nature and scope of the Classroom-Based Assessment described in the specification for the Junior Cycle Personal Project short course.
- The Features of Quality used to describe the level of achievement in the Classroom-Based Assessment
- Guidelines for schools, teachers and students on completing the Classroom-Based Assessment

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the specification for the Junior Cycle Personal Project short course short course and the *Assessment Toolkit* for Junior Cycle. A detailed outline of assessment in Junior Cycle can be found in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, which can be accessed at

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf>.

In Junior Cycle short courses there will be a range of assessment approaches to complement learning. These will include ongoing assessments, including routine teacher-designed tasks and tests; ongoing assessment for students undertaking priority learning units at Level 2; and one classroom-based assessment.

Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific task(s) set out in the NCCA short course specification or in the school developed short course specification. The tasks are described and the Features of Quality, which support teacher judgement, are set out in these guidelines.

Although the assessment is similar to the ongoing assessment that occurs every day in class, in the case of classroom-based assessment the teacher's judgement is used in the school's reporting to parents and students. Students prepare for the Classroom-Based Assessment over a suggested period of time in second or third year. The results of other projects, homework or tests undertaken by the

¹ In the remainder of the document the course will be referred to simply as a personal project

students in the course of their normal classwork do not add up to the award of a descriptor for the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Deciding on the level of achievement

Classroom-Based Assessments are Common Level assessments. The teacher bases the level achieved by the student in the Classroom-Based Assessment on the Features of Quality set out in these guidelines. At Level 2 there one descriptor – *Achieved*. The evidence of work for the award of *Achieved* should closely match all or nearly all the criteria for that level within the Features of Quality and the teacher’s ‘on-balance’ judgement should be that the student’s work is deserving of the Descriptor.

Time for Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessment is included within the time allocated for short courses, which is approximately 100 hours. This Classroom-Based Assessment is the culmination of the work undertaken in the four strands of the personal project short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after work in the four strands has been completed. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment take place over approximately 6-8 hours of class time. However, this is a guideline only. Teachers draw upon their own professional judgement to decide how much time is needed to complete the assessment, depending on the individual needs of the student(s). Whilst the timing of Classroom-Based Assessment in short courses may vary from school to school, Classroom-Based assessments for reporting purposes in the JCPA cannot be conducted in first year.

School autonomy in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment

These guidelines set out a range of options for the Classroom-Based Assessment so that it can suit the particular needs and circumstances of students and the school. A variety of possibilities are presented as to how the Classroom-Based Assessment can be conducted and the role the teacher plays in facilitating students’ needs. Within the parameters set by the guidelines, the range of themes and topics for the assessment can be determined independently by the school, teachers and students.

Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA short course to suit their particular needs and school context. If adapting the course, schools may also need to adapt the Classroom-Based Assessment, so that it reflects the learning their students undertook. Schools may also develop their own short course(s) and related Classroom-Based Assessment. Guidelines for schools who wish to develop their own short course(s) are available.

How the school supports the completion of the assessment

The school supports the completion of the assessment by:

- Ensuring that the *NCCA Specification* and *Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment* are provided to teachers
- Supporting teachers in recording the level Descriptor awarded to each student
- Ensuring accessibility of assessment for all students
- Reporting the outcomes of the Classroom-Based Assessment to students and their parents/guardians as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

In gathering evidence for assessment purposes within the Junior Cycle Short Courses, it is important that teachers use approaches which are sustainable and proportionate. As assessment is about empowering teachers to improve outcomes for students, it is important to ensure that too much paperwork and overly complex processes do not get in the way of learning and teaching. Any paperwork needs to support learning rather than becoming an end in itself.

While assessment judgements should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day learning and teaching there is no need to collect large folios of evidence to support this. In sharing learning intentions and success criteria or the features of quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment, where feasible, teachers should highlight the role students can play in identifying quality evidence from their own work to be used for assessment purposes.

An efficient planning process which identifies when and how key aspects of learning will be captured as evidence for assessment is one way to ensure that assessment in short courses remains manageable and sustainable. This approach avoids excessive and inappropriate evidence being collected about student performance. It also avoids the pressure at the end of the course to search for and identify evidence to support judgements about overall performance.

To facilitate providing feedback to students during their engagement with assessment, the process of completing the Classroom-Based Assessment should be viewed as part of teaching and learning, and not solely for assessment purposes. It is envisaged that teachers will guide, support and supervise throughout the process.

Support may include:

- Clarifying the requirements of the task
- Using annotated examples of student work to clarify the meaning and interpretation of the Features of Quality to students
- Providing instructions at strategic intervals to facilitate the timely completion of the final project

Classroom-Based Assessment in A Personal Project

Assessment in a personal project will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which is the culmination of work undertaken in the four strands of the Personal Project short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after the work in the four strands has been completed. It is important to note that work completed in year one of Junior Cycle cannot be included for reporting in the JCPA.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Presentation

The presentation for assessment is short and provides an opportunity for the student to show what s/he knows. It may require collaboration with others to research, find information, plan and organise what to say and how to say it. It builds confidence, develops communication skills and social interaction with others. It may also provide an opportunity to demonstrate skills in working with digital technology. The title allows for wide interpretation. The Classroom-Based Assessment can include any format – conversation, interview, role-play, spoken, signed or electronic which allows learning to be *presented* by the student. The choice of format is determined by the potential it has to allow the student to best demonstrate their achievements in relation to knowledge or concepts learned and skills developed.

The learning outcomes assessed through the Presentation will, to an extent, depend on the topic and medium of the presentation.

Some that may be particularly relevant are

Classroom-Based Assessment: Presentation
1.3, 1.4, 1.8, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 3.1, 3.6, 3.8, 4.3, 4.6, 4.8

The presentation for assessment promotes student engagement through

- choice about the topic on which to focus
- choice about presentation formats
- the possibilities for student collaboration in investigating background information in preparation for the assessment

Completing the Classroom-Based Assessment in a Personal Project

The student will identify a course-related topic - if necessary with guidance from the teacher. Student interest should guide the choice as well as the student's knowledge of the topic. Subjects that lend themselves to a presentation include:

- The findings of our survey about dogs
- Tips for looking after your dog
- The life of a guide dog
- Signs that tell you your dog is sick
- Why exercise is good for us as well as our dogs
- Keeping your family safe and healthy when there's a dog in the house
- How I would improve the quality of life for a (fictitious) dog whose poor living conditions are presented to me

The student finds out information about the topic and presents some of that knowledge to others.

Students may work in pairs or groups but it should be clear that each student has made a meaningful contribution to the preparatory work and the presentation itself students can work in pairs/groups, it will be the student's individual role and contribution to the presentation that is the focus of reporting in the JCPA.

The length of presentation for the Classroom-Based Assessment should reflect the student's capacity. As a guideline, it should not exceed three minutes, unless this time limit would prevent the student from demonstrating their learning in a meaningful way. Likewise, the three-minute guideline should be interpreted judiciously for pair or group work. It should not follow that the time for pairs should be six minutes or nine minutes for a group of three. The teacher adjusts the time to allow each student to make a significant contribution to the overall presentation.

A student may speak with or without notes, and reading of a prepared script is allowable. Depending on the format of presentation, students may make use of illustrations, special effects or props where appropriate.

Students may be assessed on their task in the presence of peers or on their own, depending on the confidence level of the student, and on whether presenting alone or as part of a group. Teachers may find it helpful to record the student's presentation if possible as this practice supports the processes of review and reflection.

Preparation

Students studying this short course have many opportunities to acquire knowledge and to converse with others. They learn where and who to go to when they need to find out information. They present to their peers or others at various times throughout the course, e.g. to present findings of a survey on why teenagers have animals, to inform them of interesting facts or to explain why exercise is good for dogs. They practise (in real or role-play situations) making telephone calls to various professionals or the emergency services. They become accustomed to finding solutions to fictitious problems (familiar to them) posed in case studies of dogs being kept in unacceptable conditions. This ongoing engagement and communication with others provides the best preparation for the Classroom-Based Assessment. The day of the Classroom-Based Assessment should not be the student's first experience of presenting information to others.

Preparation might involve some original elementary investigative work by the student e.g. survey, interview, emailing or letter-writing. Internet sources might provide information as well as hand outs and information provided by the teacher and/or other adults in a learning environment inside or outside of the classroom. However, the student should record the key messages from the investigative activity using a medium familiar to them (written or audio notes, symbols....). The student may need support in organising the material into a format suitable for presenting a small number of central messages using key vocabulary.

Preparation for the communication of the information is also important. Developing awareness among students of the need to communicate clearly using the chosen medium e.g. oral, digital, dramatic arts or Irish Sign Language (ISL) is important. Students need to recognise the significance of making a connection with one's audience/communicative partner e.g. through eye contact, gestures, the use of humour or choice of props. Other students could be asked to model, at an appropriate level, the features of making effective presentations such as voice projection, pace and tone of voice and use of effective visual or digital support material.

Advice for students

- You will pick a topic you find interesting that relates to this short course
- You can prepare and do research with your classmates
- You can prepare with your classmates but your work will be assessed separately from theirs
- The more of this work you can do on your own the better
- You can ask your teacher how much time you have to prepare
- Choose the way that's best for you to present what you have learnt
- You can present your work by speaking, recording your voice, and/or using video and/or photographs
- Ask questions if there is anything you don't understand or aren't sure about

Deciding on the level of achievement: Features of Quality

Features of quality

Classroom-Based Assessments are Common Level assessments. There is one Descriptor at Level 2:

Achieved.

The teacher's judgement on whether the student's work in the Classroom-Based Assessment is awarded the Achieved Descriptor is based on the Features of Quality for the **Presentation** set out in these Guidelines.

The features of quality are the criteria used to assess the student work.

Features of Quality: Presentation
<p>Achieved</p> <p>The presentation communicates a small number of key messages (2-3).</p> <p>An appropriate form of communication with additional visual or electronic supports/prompts (if appropriate) is used.</p> <p>The presentation is delivered at a pace that allows the audience to hear/assimilate what is said/conveyed.</p> <p>There is evidence of an attempt to connect with the audience (e.g. by making eye contact, using humour, using props).</p> <p>There is a definite introduction and conclusion to the presentation.</p>

The decision about whether the student's work is allocated the 'Achieved' Descriptor is based on the teacher coming to a judgement that the student's work *on balance* matches the Features of Quality as set out above.

Using feedback

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step to support learning. Students will be informed about whether or not they have been awarded the 'Achieved' Descriptor once the teacher's judgement has been reached. However, effective feedback goes beyond the naming of the Descriptor awarded. Feedback on the strengths of the student's work, and on areas for improvement can be used to support their future learning. Further information on the use of feedback can be found at <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>.

Querying a result

Queries in relation to the awarding of the Descriptor for the Classroom-Based Assessment, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.