



Junior Cycle Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) short course

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

First Edition

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Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) short course: 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 CSPE 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 CSPE 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 and may also be recorded for learning and assessment review meetings. 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 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

There are four level descriptors of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment: *Exceptional*, *Above expectations*, *In line with expectations*, and *Yet to meet expectations*.

Teachers use the Features of Quality, set out in these guidelines (p12), to decide the level of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the following Descriptors:

Exceptional describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

Above expectations describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback from the teacher might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention or polishing, but on the whole the work is of a high standard.

In line with expectations describes a piece of work that reflects most of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand and is free from significant error. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention or correction, but the work is generally competent and accurate.

Yet to meet expectations describes a piece of work that falls somewhat short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated Features of Quality. Perhaps the student has made a good attempt, but the task has not been grasped clearly or is marred by significant lapses. Feedback will draw attention to fundamental shortcomings that need to be addressed.

When using the Features of Quality to assess the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. The teacher should read the Features of Quality (starting with *Yet to meet expectation*) until they reach a descriptor that best describes the work being assessed. Where it is not clearly evident which quality descriptor should apply, teachers must come to judgment, based on the evidence from the student's work, to select the descriptor that best matches the student's work overall. This 'best fit' approach allows teachers to select the descriptor that 'on balance' describes the work being assessed.

Teachers should not assume that the results of a group of students being assessed will follow any particular distribution pattern, as the students work is being judged only against the Features of Quality rather than other students' performances.

Time for Classroom-Based Assessments

Classroom-Based Assessment is included within the time allocated for short courses, which is approximately 100 hours. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment take place over approximately 6-8 hours of class time. Whilst the timing of Classroom-Based Assessment in short courses may vary from school to school, Classroom-Based assessment 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. Within the parameters set by the guidelines, the range of themes or 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 interests, 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 assessments by:

- Ensuring that the NCCA Specification and Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment are provided to teachers
- Supporting teachers in recording the level Descriptors awarded to each student
- Retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Learning and Assessment Review
- Applying the guidelines for Learning and Assessment Review
- Ensuring accessibility of assessment for all students

- Reporting the outcomes of Classroom-Based Assessments 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 that paperwork and complex processes do not get in the way of learning and teaching. 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, 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 and allows for review meeting discussions to be taken forward in a structured way. 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 Report
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN)

Classroom-Based Assessment in CSPE (short course)

Assessment in CSPE is be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which can be undertaken in second or third year, depending on how the short course is timetabled. 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: Citizenship Action Record

Students complete at least three citizenship actions as part of their learning across the three strands of the CSPE short course. Students create an Action Record for one of these as their Classroom-based Assessment.

What is a Citizenship Action Record?

A Citizenship Action Record shows how a student has actively engaged in an issue or topic of interest and captures both the action undertaken and the students' reflections on it.

Students have choice in how they present their Citizenship Action Record. The Classroom-based Assessment can be produced in written, digital, visual and/or audio formats and it may be supported through the use of an interview or presentation. In creating their Action Record students may be guided by, but not confined to, these questions:

- why I chose this action
- what the aims of my action were and what means I chose to achieve the aims
- how I sourced and used research
- how I worked with others in carrying out the action
- how I organised and managed myself
- key moments or milestones
- any challenges I encountered
- evidence of my individual participation in the action
- my overall reflections on what I have learned and the skills I developed through planning and participating in the action
- what I/we achieved

Students may undertake group actions. This is important in CSPE where students are learning the potential power of working with others to bring about change. However, each student must create an

individual Citizenship Action Record and the student's individual role and contribution to the work will be the focus of this classroom-based assessment. Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for reporting in the JCPA.

The main learning outcomes to be assessed in this Classroom-Based Assessment are:

Classroom-Based Assessment: Citizenship Action Record
Learning outcomes 1.1, 1.8, 1.11, 1.12, 2.1, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 3.1, 3.2, 3.13

Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment:

Assessment in CSPE is directly related to the aim and learning outcomes of the short course. The course places a strong emphasis on the development of skills for active citizenship, as well as those that build the student's capacity to reflect on their learning and on their actions. Students are not only learning about human rights and responsibilities, global citizenship, sustainable development, democracy etc, they are exercising responsibility and decision-making in the ways in which they are learning and being assessed. It is important that assessment in CSPE contributes to the empowerment of young people to become more informed, active, and reflective citizens.

STEPS

- As a class group, or in small groups, the students will decide on an issue that is of genuine interest and concern to them, related to one or more of the strands they have studied. Different possible actions are suggested under each strand in the specification and these are designed to offer choice and to meet a range of interests and abilities among students. There is also scope for teachers and students to choose actions other than those suggested at the end of each strand.
- Students will research the topic, consider the range of possible actions that might be undertaken, weigh up the merits of different actions, look for data or information to inform their decision, consult with groups or organisations already working on this issue, and use this information to inform their action plan. Some of the research and planning may be undertaken as student homework.
- Students develop an action plan ensuring that each group member is allocated a significant role.
- Implement the action, documenting each student's individual contribution to the group's work.

- Decide how to present the Citizenship Action Record – written, digital, visual and/or audio format. For example, the Record can be handwritten, an oral presentation, a video, a digital presentation, a poster presentation or a mix – and create Citizenship Action Records.

Students might also be given the opportunity to present elements of their Action Record to a suitable audience at the conclusion of this process.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Advice for students

- You should choose an action that you care about as then you will find the whole process, including creating their Citizenship Action Record, more interesting and engaging.
- It is important to keep a journal to record your research, planning, steps taken, reflections and learning, along the way. This journal will be very helpful when you come to produce your Citizenship Action Record.
- Think of ways that you can use your creativity in both capturing and presenting your Citizenship Action Record
- Take photos throughout the action to capture images of key events and to show the role you played in undertaking the action. These photos may be a useful part of your final Action Record.
- The preparation part of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be monitored by your teacher. Work which cannot be authenticated by your teacher will not be accepted for assessment.
- While you may work in groups to undertake group actions, each student must produce an individual Citizenship Action Record. It will be the student's individual role and contribution to the work that is the focus of reporting on CSPE in the JCPA.

Deciding on the level of achievement

Features of Quality

Key Features of Quality in support of student and teacher judgement for the Classroom-Based Assessment: Citizenship Action Record are described here. The Features of Quality are the criteria used to assess the student work as best fitting the Descriptors:

Exceptional describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

Above expectations describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback from the teacher might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention or polishing, but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.

In line with expectations describes a piece of work that reflects most of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand and is free from significant error. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention or correction, but the work is generally competent and accurate.

Yet to meet expectations describes a piece of work that falls somewhat short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated Features of Quality. Perhaps the student has made a good attempt, but the task has not been grasped clearly or is marred by significant lapses. Feedback will draw attention to fundamental errors that need to be addressed.

Features of Quality: CSPE – Citizenship Action Record

Exceptional

The action record shows how the student fully and effectively engaged in meaningful action.

The student's personal reflections on the action are of excellent quality.

The record is presented in a comprehensive, creative and highly effective manner.

Above expectations

The action record provides evidence of how the student engaged in meaningful action.

The student's personal reflections are of good quality.

The record is presented in an organised, creative and effective manner.

In line with expectations

The action record provides evidence of the student's engagement in the action.

There is some evidence of personal reflection.

The action record is presented in an organised manner with some creativity.

Yet to meet expectations

There is limited evidence of personal engagement in the action taken.

There is very limited evidence of student reflection.

The action record provides a very basic summary of information although it may lack detail and creativity.

Learning and Assessment Review meetings

Shared understanding of standards within junior cycle short courses will arise through professional discussion in Learning and Assessment Review meetings. Teachers gather examples of student work and compare their judgements with other colleagues. Over time, this process will help develop a greater understanding of standards and ensure consistency of judgement about student performance.

When there is a single teacher of a short course in a school, where feasible, the teacher will participate in a Learning and Assessment Review meeting with another school. The potential of ICT to support such meetings will be explored.

Further details on managing and participating in Learning and Assessment Review meetings can be accessed at <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment> .

Following the Learning and Assessment Review each individual teacher re-considers the judgement they had made of their student's work, based on the outcomes of the meeting, and where necessary makes the appropriate adjustments to the level of achievement awarded to the work. The Descriptors awarded are used in reporting progress and achievement to parents and students as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Using feedback

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step to support learning. Students will be informed of the Descriptor they have been awarded once the review meeting has taken place and its outcomes have been processed. 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 Descriptors awarded for the Classroom-Based Assessment, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.