

# Junior Cycle Chinese Language and Culture short course

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

First Edition



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# Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Chinese Language and Culture 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 Chinese Language and Culture 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 Chinese Language and Culture 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. This Classroom-Based Assessment is the culmination of work undertaken in the four strands. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment will 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. A variety of possibilities are presented as to types of projects that students might undertake, ways of presenting evidence of their learning and the role the teacher plays in supporting the process. 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 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 assessments

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
- 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 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, 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 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 Assessments 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. If a student requires more than what could be deemed as a reasonable level of support, having discussed it with the student, the teacher can make a note of the level of assistance provided. This will assist the teacher when using the Features of Quality to make judgements about the level of achievement of the student's work.

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
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN).

## Classroom-Based Assessment in Chinese Language and Culture (short course)

Assessment in Chinese Language and Culture will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which is the culmination of work undertaken in the four strands of the 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: Language and Culture Project

Students will complete a language and culture project as their Classroom-Based Assessment. Students are given an opportunity to choose a topic or issue that is of interest to them and to carry out an exploration on it leading to an oral presentation. The aim of this project is to enable students to demonstrate their cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness, as well as their emerging skills of oral production and interaction in the target language. Other skills which will be demonstrated include basic research skills, organising material, using key phrases and questions to give shape to ideas, as well as creative skills needed to prepare a presentation.

This Classroom-Based Assessment provides opportunities for use of a range of oral presentation styles such as an oral interview, role-play, poster presentation, digital presentation, etc. In addition, the activity offers students opportunities, where appropriate, to collaborate with classmates and others, as they undertake their project and prepare for their presentation.

Students may undertake group projects and presentations. If working in groups, groups should be limited to teams of two or three. Each student's individual role and contribution to the project and



presentation will be the focus of the assessment. Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

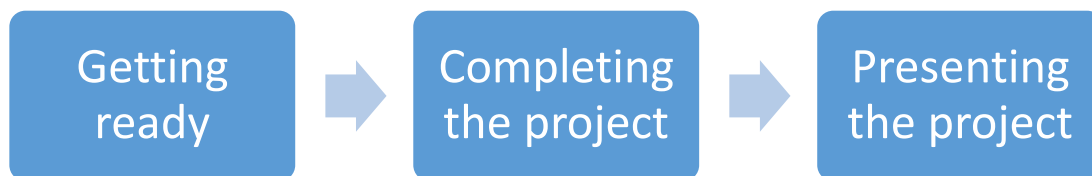
Presentations should last approximately 3 minutes (if individual), or 4 - 5 minutes (in the case of small group presentations). Students can use both Chinese and English/Irish in their oral presentation. A number of words, phrases or sentences in Chinese should be included by each student presenting. Sample sentences which could be useful in this context are set out in the different strands of the sample exponents.

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

Classroom-Based Assessment: Language and Culture Project
Learning Outcomes: 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.12

## Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: Language and Culture project

The steps involved in undertaking the Classroom-Based Assessment are outlined below.



### STEPS

#### Getting ready

- As an individual, or in small groups of two or three, students decide on a topic that is of genuine interest to them, related to one or more of the strands they have studied.
- If working in small groups, students make an action plan ensuring that each group member plays a significant and meaningful role in creating and presenting the project.

### **Completing the project**

- Students research the topic, find and organise information, collate visual aids, and gather useful phrases, sentences and words which can be integrated into the project and presentation.
- In monitoring this part of the work, the teacher can provide students with feedback and students can also provide peer feedback in support of learning as they undertake their projects.

### **Presenting the project**

- Students decide how to present their projects. They can use a combination of written, digital, visual or audio aids. The format can be
  - a. a presentation, speaking with or without notes, using a choice of media and/or props.
  - b. an interview, where either the teacher interviews the student/s on the topic or the student responds to questions from another student.
  - c. a role-play, where students take on the persona of specific characters and interact in pairs, to explain a specific situation or setting.

Other formats can also be agreed in advance with the teacher. In agreeing a format for the presentation, it is important that group presentations make equal demands on all students involved.

- Students present their projects to a suitable audience.

## Classroom-Based Assessment: Advice for students

- Choose a topic that is of genuine interest to you as this will make your project work and presentation more interesting and engaging.
- Use your creativity in presenting your project.
- The preparation part of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be monitored by the teacher. Work which cannot be authenticated by your teacher will not be accepted for assessment purposes.
- While you may work in a small group to undertake your project, each student's individual role and contribution to Classroom-Based Assessment is the focus of assessment.

## 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: Chinese Language and Culture project 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: Chinese Language and Culture project**

**Exceptional**

The student's presentation contains excellent material and is very well researched  
It demonstrates excellent spoken production of the language at this level  
It shows highly developed intercultural awareness and understanding of Chinese culture  
There is excellent engagement with the audience which is sustained throughout

**Above expectations**

The student's presentation contains very good material and is well researched  
It demonstrates a good ability to communicate in Chinese at this level  
It shows a very good awareness of Chinese culture  
There is effective engagement with the audience

**In line with expectations**

The student's presentation contains some good material based on good research  
It demonstrates a basic ability to communicate in Chinese at this level  
It shows a good awareness of Chinese culture  
There is some degree of engagement with the audience

**Yet to meet expectations**

The student's presentation contains insufficient evidence of research  
It demonstrates a very limited ability to communicate in Chinese at this level  
It shows a very limited awareness of Chinese culture  
Engagement with the audience is haphazard or lacking completely

## **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.

Where 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 meeting 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.