



# **Short Course** **Physical Education**

**Specification for Junior Cycle**



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# Introduction to junior cycle

Junior cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

Junior cycle allows students to make a strong connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity and enterprise. The student's junior cycle programme builds on their learning in primary school. It supports their further progress in learning. It helps students to develop the learning skills that can assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

# Rationale

Young people in junior cycle are at an important stage in their lives where they are developing rapidly; physically, psychologically and socially. Increasingly, they are making their own lifestyle decisions, including whether and/or how they will participate in regular physical activity. Physical education can provide all students with enjoyable and worthwhile learning opportunities where they develop the movement skills and competencies to participate and perform in a variety of physical activities competently, confidently and safely. It builds students' motivation in and commitment to physical activity and sport within and beyond school. It can encourage students to get involved in both participation and leadership roles, irrespective of their previous experiences of or ability in physical activity.

In this short course, students learn to appreciate the importance of regular health-enhancing physical activity and to make informed choices about how to include physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. Such informed choices are key to the development of lifelong habits of physical activity; thus student choice and consultation with students are given particular emphasis in the course and assessment design. The course builds on learning in physical education in primary school and lays the foundations for their learning in senior cycle physical education.

This short course contributes to important learning in the school's Wellbeing programme within junior cycle. As a result of their learning in physical education, students should be better able and more motivated to include regular physical activity in their lives thereby contributing to their overall sense of wellbeing.

In junior cycle, six indicators—Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware—have been identified as central to students' wellbeing. PE provides learning opportunities which contribute to each of these wellbeing indicators.

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# Aim

The short course in physical education aims to develop students as knowledgeable, skilful and creative participants who are confident and competent to perform in a range of activities safely. The course aims to build students' appreciation of the importance of health-enhancing and inclusive physical activity and a commitment to it now, and in the future.

# Overview: Links

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages show how PE may be linked to central features of learning and teaching in junior cycle.

## PE and statements of learning

**Table 1: Links between junior cycle PE and the statements of learning**

Statement	Examples of related learning in the course
SOL 12: The student is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active.	Students become more confident and competent as they learn to participate in a range of challenging and developmentally appropriate physical activities. They set goals and plan to improve their competence, physical fitness and engagement in physical activity.
SOL 11: The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others.	Students reflect on their own physical activity levels and plan for regular, meaningful engagement in physical activity. They engage in activities which promote positive relationships and which require cooperation and respect for differing abilities.  Students learn to apply safety procedures across the variety of activities. They plan, lead and take part in appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities.
SOL 4: The student creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved.	Students create and perform individual and group dance and/or gymnastic performances in accordance with the criteria for artistic performance. They refine their performances based on reflection and feedback.

## PE and key skills

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The junior cycle curriculum focuses on eight key skills.

Figure 1: Key skills of junior cycle



This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some of the elements that are related to learning activities in PE. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Table 2: Links between junior cycle PE and key skills

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Exploring options and alternatives	Students discuss and agree solutions to problems posed in various physical activities.
Being literate	Expressing ideas clearly and accurately	Students discuss different solutions to tasks in physical education with their peers.
Being numerate	Gathering, interpreting and representing data	Students complete statistical analysis of their own and others' performance, present it graphically, and use the findings to evaluate performance and plan for improvement.
Communicating	Listening and expressing myself	Students solve problems and negotiate solutions respectfully with fellow students in a range of physical activities.
Managing information and thinking	Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating information	Students gather and organise data to provide evidence about their own performance and that of others. They use this information to plan for improvement.
Managing myself	Setting and achieving personal goals	Students devise and undertake plans to achieve personal or group goals.  They reflect on their progress and learning and make the necessary adjustments to their goals.
Staying well	Being healthy, physical and active	Students learn to make informed decisions about their participation in physical activity.  Students learn to demonstrate care and respect for themselves and others as they participate in different activities.
Working with others	Co-operating	Students engage in a number of peer and group tasks which require co-operation to achieve common and challenging goals.



# Overview: Course

The specification is structured around four strands: **Physical activity for health and wellbeing; Games; Individual and team challenges;** and **Dance and gymnastics.**

## Strand 1: Physical activity for health and wellbeing.

This strand aims to build students' understanding of and commitment to regular health-enhancing physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. Students apply their learning as they design, implement and evaluate their own physical activity programme.

## Strand 2: Games.

This strand focuses on building students' competence and confidence in two of the following games categories: divided court, invasion and striking and fielding games. Students learn how to develop a range of transferable movement skills and competencies and the ways in which these can be used within and across the different games categories.

## Strand 3: Individual and team challenges.

This strand focuses on building students' competence and confidence in **two** of the following physical activity areas: orienteering and team challenges, aquatics and athletics. Students are encouraged to set challenging goals for themselves individually and/or as part of a team and to reflect on the experience and progress made. In this strand, schools may choose an adventure activity other than orienteering if their location facilitates this choice.

## Strand 4: Dance and gymnastics.

This strand aims to build students' competency in and understanding of artistic and aesthetic movement, as they create and perform in a group for an audience in **either** gymnastics or dance. The process of creating the dance or gymnastic movement sequence is seen as being equally important as the final performance.

Each school will decide the order in which the strands are taught and, where appropriate, provide an equal time weighting for each strand to ensure a broad, balanced and developmentally appropriate programme **covering all four strands of the course.**

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined below reflects the learning students undertake in this NCCA short course. 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.

The learning outcomes of this course are broadly aligned with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1).

The PE short course has been designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement.

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# Expectations for students

*Expectations for students* is an umbrella term that links learning outcomes with annotated examples of student work. For NCCA developed short courses, in some cases examples of work associated with a specific learning outcome or with a group of learning outcomes will be available. Schools who design their own short courses may wish to create a bank of examples of student work for discussion and for future reference.

## Learning outcomes

*Learning outcomes* are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate having completed this junior cycle short course in PE. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students and represent outcomes for students at the end of their period of study (approximately 100 hours).

The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply any hierarchy of importance across the outcomes themselves.

# Strand 1: Physical activity for health and wellbeing

## Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
How to monitor and improve their physical fitness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 set SMART improvement goals informed by their health-related and/or performance-related fitness results and advised by norms for their age and sex</li> <li>1.2 apply principles of training within a personalised physical activity programme (minimum duration of six weeks) designed to improve their health-related and/or performance-related fitness, documenting their progress</li> <li>1.3 evaluate their engagement and progress in the programme, providing evidence of progress made and identifying ways they can further develop</li> </ol>
Physical activity for all	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.4 use a range of measurement techniques to monitor and analyse physical activity levels across a sustained period of time</li> <li>1.5 identify a range of strategies to support ongoing participation in health-related physical activity</li> <li>1.6 lead physical activities that young people find enjoyable and can undertake to achieve the minimum physical activity recommendations for health</li> </ol>

# Strand 2: Games

Students learn about **two** of the games categories.

## Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Invasion games	2.1 use a wide range of movement skills and strategies effectively to enhance their performance
Striking and fielding games	2.2 take responsibility for improving their own performance based on personal strengths and developmental needs 2.3 modify activities to promote inclusion and enjoyment in a safe manner
Divided court games	2.4 demonstrate activities to enhance their health-related and/or performance-related fitness for the particular game, including warm-up and cool down 2.5 respond, individually and as part of a team to different games' scenarios

# Strand 3: Individual and team challenges

Students learn about **two** of the physical activity areas.

## Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Orienteering and team challenges	3.1 use orienteering strategies and map-reading skills to complete a variety of orienteering events safely and confidently, showing respect for the environment 3.2 contribute to team challenges that require co-operation and problem-solving skills to achieve a common goal 3.3 reflect on their personal contribution and their team's effectiveness in completing a group challenge
Aquatics	3.4 perform competently and confidently in a range of swimming strokes 3.5 respond appropriately to a range of water safety scenarios 3.6 take responsibility for improving their own performance, based on personal strengths and developmental needs
Athletics	3.7 perform competently, confidently and safely in a range of athletics events 3.8 demonstrate activities to enhance performance in athletic events, including physical and mental preparation 3.9 take responsibility for improving their own performance, based on personal strengths and developmental needs

# Strand 4: Dance and gymnastics

Students learn about **either** gymnastics or dance in this strand.

## Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Creating a sequence of movement	4.1 create a dance on their own or with others, incorporating a selected dance style and a variety of choreographic techniques and suitable props and music
	<b>OR</b> 4.2 create a sequence of movement or routine based on a gymnastic theme (on their own or with others), incorporating a variety of compositional techniques and gymnastics skills
Reflecting on performance	4.3 refine their performance based on a critique of a video of their performance and/or feedback from others
Performing	4.4 perform the dance/gymnastics sequence of movement for an audience incorporating appropriate music and/or props
	4.5 reflect on their experience of creating and participating in a performance

# Assessment and reporting

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. This short course supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. Some learning outcomes lend themselves to once-off assessment, others to assessment on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as discussing, explaining, researching, presenting, planning and taking action. In these contexts, students with their teachers and peers reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work. They plan the next steps in their learning, based on feedback they give and receive. Ongoing assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this short course.

It is envisaged that students will provide evidence of their learning in a variety of ways, including digital media, audio recordings and written pieces.

Assessment is most effective when it moves beyond marks and grades and reporting focuses not only on how the student has done in the past but on the next steps for further learning. Student progress and achievement in short courses, both in ongoing assessments and in the specific Classroom-Based Assessment relating to this short course will be communicated to parents in interim reporting and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). To support teachers and schools, an Assessment Toolkit is available online. Along with the guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process, the Assessment Toolkit will include learning, teaching, assessment and reporting support material.

## Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessments are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Junior cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment. Where feasible, teachers of short courses will participate in learning and assessment review meetings.

## Classroom-Based Assessment: Selecting evidence of learning

Each strand of this PE short course includes different kinds of psycho-motor learning experiences and provides opportunities for students to receive developmental feedback as they learn. Students will gather evidence of what they have learned in that particular strand through ongoing assessment during and/or the end of each strand.

In third year, when they have completed the four strands, students select evidence of their learning in one strand to submit for their Classroom-Based Assessment.

The Classroom-Based Assessment can be presented in written, digital, visual or audio formats and it may be supported in these formats through the use of an interview or presentation.

## Features of quality

The features of quality support student and teacher judgement of the Classroom-Based Assessments and are the criteria that will be used by teachers to assess students' Classroom-Based Assessment.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this PE short course, including features of quality and details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of this Classroom-Based Assessment, will be available in separate assessment guidelines for PE. The guidelines will include, for example, the suggested length and formats for student pieces of work, and support in using 'on balance' judgement in relation to the features of quality.

## Inclusive assessment

Inclusive assessment practices, whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessment, are a key feature of teaching and learning in schools. Accommodations, e.g. the support provided by a special needs assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year.

Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Accommodations which enable all students to access learning and assessment are based on specific needs. For example, a student who cannot physically type may use free dictation software to complete ongoing assessments and the Classroom-Based Assessment. Equally, a student who cannot speak may draw/write/type/create visuals and subtitles to present and communicate ideas. A student with a specific learning difficulty may benefit from having learning tasks and activities presented in a different way. Comprehensive guidelines on inclusion in post-primary schools are available [here](#) and guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities are available [here](#).



# Appendix 1:

## Level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, for Level 3 certification and awards, the knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.

<b>NFQ Level</b>	3
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Breadth</i>	Knowledge moderately broad in range
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Kind</i>	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
<b>Know-how and skill</b> <i>Range</i>	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
<b>Know-how and skill</b> <i>Selectivity</i>	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
<b>Competence</b> <i>Context</i>	Act within a limited range of contexts
<b>Competence</b> <i>Role</i>	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
<b>Competence</b> <i>Learning to learn</i>	Learn to learn within a managed environment
<b>Competence</b> <i>Insight</i>	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour



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