



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

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

Second 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 teachers and schools 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 Classroom-Based Assessment for CSPE is described and the Features of Quality, which support teacher judgement, are also 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.

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. This Classroom-Based Assessment can be completed during second or third 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. 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 [here](#).

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 descriptors awarded to each student
- retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- applying the guidelines for Learning and Assessment Review meetings set out in this document
- 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 help stimulate students' thinking
- providing formative feedback to students at key moments to ensure that students stay on track
- providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN).

It is not envisaged that the level of support involved requires teachers to edit draft reports or to provide model text or answers to be used in the student's evidence of learning.

Classroom-Based Assessment in CSPE (short course)

Assessment in CSPE will 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 will 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.

The Citizenship Action Record is more than a report. It conveys how the student personally engaged in a citizenship action of interest to him/her and what they have learnt from the experience. It is important that students don't see the production of the Citizenship Action Record as something that happens after the Action. As they plan, research and implement their citizenship action they need to capture evidence of each step along the way (using photos, video, scrapbook, OneNote or similar. This evidence will show how they personally engaged in the action and forms a vital part of their Record.

Students have choice in how they present their Citizenship Action Record. It 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 might find it helpful to frame their reflections around some guiding questions. The following are offered as **sample reflection questions**. Students may be guided by these, but are not confined to them.

- Why I chose this action/issue?
- What I/we hoped to achieve?
- How I contributed to the action?
- What I learnt about the issue/topic?
- What skills I developed?
- How have my opinions or attitudes been changed, challenged or confirmed?
- What are my overall reflections on my learning and what does this mean for me now and into the future?

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 CBA. Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for reporting in the JCPA.

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, law and democracy they are exercising rights, responsibilities 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

- ◆ A good CBA is predicated on good teaching and learning. Therefore, it's important not to rush into undertaking the CBA without spending enough time engaging in learning activities that relate to a selection of relevant learning outcomes.

- 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 the topics 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 decide on 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, remembering that each student should document their individual contribution to the work and reflections on it along the way.
- Decide how to present the Citizenship Action Record. For example, the Record can be handwritten, an oral presentation, a video, a digital presentation, an interview, a poster presentation or a mix.

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

Students should remember these things:

- You should choose an action that you care about. This will make the whole process, including creating your Citizenship Action Record, more interesting and engaging.
- It is important to keep record your research, planning, events organised, people consulted, key points of learning and your reflections along the way. This will be the basis for your Citizenship Action Record.
- Take photos throughout the action to capture images of key moments or events and to show the role you played in undertaking the action. Screen shots can also be useful too as these can show emails you sent or received, information you sourced or data you gathered. These photos and screen shots will form a key part of the final Action Record.
- Think of ways that you can use your creativity in both showing how you implemented the action and in presenting your record. (Your teacher will share ample reflection questions with you, see p.10).
- Familiarize yourself with the Features of Quality which your teacher will share with you. These are the criteria that will be used to assess your Action Record.
- 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.
- While you may work in groups to undertake group actions, each student must produce an individual Citizenship Action Record. It will be your individual role and contribution to the work that is the focus of reporting on CSPE in the JCPA.

Levels of achievement for the Classroom-Based Assessments

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 for success that are shared with the students and used to assess the student work.

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

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 expectations) until they reach a descriptor that best describes the work being assessed. While it should be noted that none of the descriptors imply faultless achievement, evidence of work for the award of Exceptional should closely match the criteria for that level within the Features of Quality. 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.

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 reflections¹ on their learning 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 on their learning 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 on their learning.

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 on learning.

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

¹ Students can be guided by sample reflection questions p.10 or similar

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 <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings>.

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 in supporting 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 formative feedback can be found at www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/focus-on-learning.**

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.

Appendix 1 NEW!

Template to support planning of CSPE CBA

Year group:	Teacher name:	Date:
1. Title of CBA (short, concise description. e.g. <i>organise an awareness event</i>)		
2. Learning outcomes in focus (select a number of learning outcomes from the CSPE short course which will be the focus of teaching and learning and will be assessed through the CBA)		
3. Teaching and learning context (short description of the learning activities leading up to CBA)		
4. Features of Quality (note: these are a student-friendly version of the Features of Quality) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Action Record shows what I did and how I engaged in meaningful action.• I have reflected on what I learned and what it means for me now and in the future.• My Action Record is presented in a comprehensive, creative and effective manner.		
5. In what formats will the CBAs be presented? (e.g. video, written, oral presentation, mix of formats)		

