

# Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and  
Assessment Task



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# Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task*, provides

- general information on Classroom-Based Assessments
- detail of the nature and scope of the two Classroom-Based Assessments described in the curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages
- the Features of Quality used to decide the level of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment
- guidelines for schools, teachers and students on completing the Classroom-Based Assessments
- details of the Assessment Task in Modern Foreign Languages and how the school supports its completion.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages and the *Assessment Toolkit* for junior cycle, which includes further details of the Subject Learning and Assessment Review process and other aspects of junior cycle assessment set out in these guidelines.

All documentation can be accessed at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Modern-Foreign-Languages>. An outline of assessment in junior cycle can be found in the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* which can be accessed at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf>.

## Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific tasks set out in the NCCA subject specification. They are included within the time allocated for Modern Foreign Languages, which is a minimum of 200 hours. The Classroom-Based Assessments 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 Assessments the teacher's judgement is recorded for Subject Learning and Assessment Review and is used in the school's reporting to parents and students. Students prepare

for the Classroom-Based Assessments over specified periods of time in second and 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 in Classroom-Based Assessments

There are four level descriptors of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment: *Exceptional*, *Above expectations*, *In line with expectations*, and *Yet to meet expectations*. All work submitted is judged to fit one of these four descriptors.

Teachers use the Features of Quality, set out in these guidelines, 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<sup>1</sup>:

**Exceptional** describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. The strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws.

**Above expectations** describes a piece of work that reflects these features very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback might point to the necessity to address some aspects of the work in need of further attention but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.

**In line with expectations** describes a piece of work that reflects most of these features well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention but the work is generally competent.

**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

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the definition of the descriptors, as used in other subjects, has been amended slightly to reflect the MFL context and to broadly align expectations with the A band (A1 to A2, basic user) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

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 a 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.

Teacher judgements about the quality of student work, with the aim of arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations, are supported by annotated examples of student work published on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie); by the Features of Quality in these guidelines; and by collaboration and discussion with colleagues during Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings.

## The autonomy of the school in preparing students for the Classroom-Based Assessments

These guidelines set out a range of options for the Classroom-Based Assessments so that they can suit the particular needs and circumstances of students and the school. A variety of possibilities are presented as to how the Oral Communication assessment can be conducted, the nature of the communication itself and the role the teacher plays in facilitating the student's communication. Similarly, variation might occur in the kinds of texts that can be included in the Student Language Portfolio, e.g. oral recordings, hand-written, typed, digital, multi-modal texts, and so on. Within the parameters set by these guidelines, the range of themes and topics for the assessments can be determined independently by the school, teachers and students.

## How the school supports the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessments

The school supports the completion of the assessments by

- ensuring that the NCCA *Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages: Curriculum Specification and Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task* 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 Subject Learning and Assessment Review
- applying the guidelines for Subject Learning and Assessment Review
- supporting teachers and students in the completion of the Assessment Task
- following arrangements for the transfer of the completed Assessment Tasks to the State Examinations Commission for marking
- applying inclusive assessment practices and 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 on-going reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

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.

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

Note that only work which is the student's own can be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

## Inclusive assessment practices

Schools facilitate inclusive assessment practices whether as part of ongoing assessment or Classroom-Based Assessments. 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 Classroom-Based Assessments. The 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.

# Classroom-Based Assessments in Modern Foreign Languages

There are two Classroom-Based Assessments in Modern Foreign Languages. They are assessed at a common level. They relate to specified learning outcomes and are scheduled to be undertaken by students in a defined time period within class contact time to a national timetable (as advised by the NCCA) in the school calendar. This timetable for Classroom-Based Assessments for all subjects will be provided on an annual basis at [www.ncca.ie/junior-cycle](http://www.ncca.ie/junior-cycle) and at [www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle).

Following the second of these assessments students will complete an Assessment Task which is marked by the State Examinations Commission as part of the state-certified examination in Modern Foreign Languages. The Classroom-Based Assessments for Modern Foreign Languages and indicative timings are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Classroom-Based Assessments for Modern Foreign Languages

Classroom-Based Assessment	Format	Student preparation
<b>Oral Communication in the target language</b>	Individual, pair or group communication using an interview, role-play, presentation (accompanied by question-and-answer session) or conversation in response to stimulus material	During a maximum of three weeks, with support and guidance from teacher
<b>Student Language Portfolio</b>	Three items chosen by the student from his/her collection	Texts produced over time with support and guidance by teacher

## The Assessment Task

The Assessment Task is a written task completed by students during class time. It is not marked by the class teacher, but is sent to the State Examinations Commission for marking as part of the state-certified examination in Modern Foreign Languages. The Assessment Task is specified by the NCCA and is related to the learning outcomes on which the second Classroom-Based Assessment is based. In the case of Modern Foreign Languages, this is the Student Language Portfolio. The details of the Assessment Task are set out in these guidelines and are outlined in Table 2 below.



Table 2: Assessment Task for Modern Foreign Languages

	<b>Format</b>	<b>Student preparation</b>	<b>Completion by</b>
<b>The Assessment Task (AT)</b>	Students complete a specified written task which is sent to the SEC for marking. Questions and answers will be in the language of schooling <sup>2</sup>	The Assessment Task will be based on the Student Language Portfolio	Following completion of the second Classroom-Based Assessment in Year 3

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<sup>2</sup> As the Assessment Task is likely to focus on the ability to reflect on language learning it is unreasonable to expect that all students at this age and stage of learning can do so in the target language. The language of schooling refers to the principal language of teaching and learning in the school.

# Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Oral Communication

The Classroom-Based Assessment, Oral Communication, has as its purpose to develop and enhance the students' skills of oral production and interaction.

*The purpose of this Classroom-Based Assessment is for the student to demonstrate the skills of oral production and oral interaction. However, other skills may be developed, e.g. reading, writing, listening, basic research. In completing the oral communication activity students may use any one of the following formats: interview, role-play, presentation (accompanied by question-and-answer session), or conversation in response to stimulus material. For this oral communication, the student will focus on an aspect of the target language country(ies) or culture; or on a simulation of an experience in a target language country; or on a topic or stimulus of interest.*

*Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages: Curriculum Specification (2016)*

The main learning outcomes to be assessed through **Oral Communication** are below, illustrating the interdependence and integration of the strands. The learning outcomes assessed, may, to an extent, depend on the format and topic, stimulus or role-play scenario chosen by the student(s).

<b>Communicative competence - 1.1, 1.3, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13</b>			
1.1 identify the general topic of a conversation on familiar topics when it is expressed clearly	1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation	1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language	1.13 ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics in everyday exchanges
1.3 identify familiar information in texts related to familiar topics such as announcements, conversations, simple news items	1.10 convey simple descriptions, presentations or announcements on familiar topics	1.12 use simple polite forms in formal and informal situations such as greetings, thanks, introductions and respond appropriately	
<b>Language awareness – 2.1, 2.2, 2.3</b>			
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions	2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama	2.3 recognise how gender and social conventions influence target language usage	
<b>Socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness – 3.1, 3.4, 3.7</b>			
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food	3.4 identify and explain some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviour, social conventions	3.7 analyse similarities and differences in relation to their peers' lives in the target language country/countries in areas of daily life and present them using a range of media	

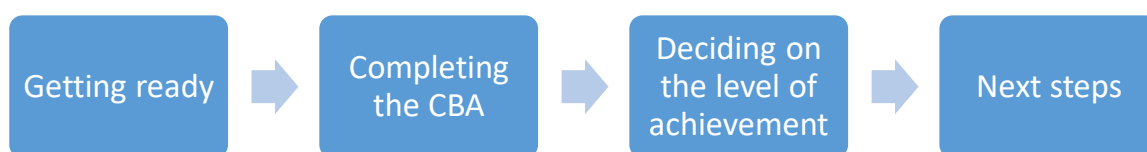
There are two areas of activity to the assessment of Oral Communication: preparation and communication. Preparation will focus primarily on oral and aural interaction in the target language, building on students' language learning to date. Students may also find it beneficial to listen to and read texts in the target language which will support their preparation for their Oral Communication. Evidence of the preparation will be demonstrated during the Oral Communication itself. Teachers will interact with students during their Oral Communication to ensure that both spoken production and spoken interaction skills are demonstrated and to gauge students' comprehension and capacity to respond to simple, unscripted questions, at a level appropriate to this age and stage of language learning.

The Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment promotes student engagement through

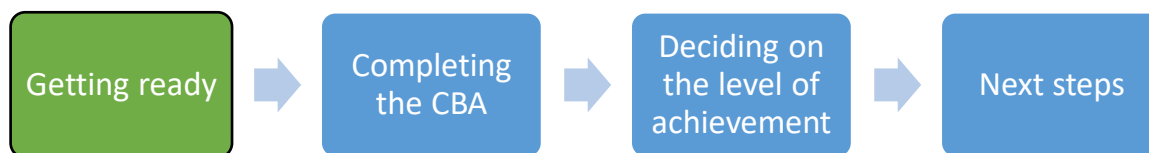
- choice of topic, stimulus or role-play scenario on which to focus
- choice of communication formats
- the possibilities for student collaboration, including, where appropriate, pair work or a group presentation in which each group member has a meaningful part to play. The number of students in a group should be such as to allow each member to make an individual contribution to the assessment.

Figure 1 sets out the process for conducting a Classroom-Based Assessment. The aim of this process is to provide guidance for teachers as they support their students completing their Classroom-Based Assessments.

Figure 1: Process for conducting a CBA



## Getting ready



### Student preparation

The most effective preparation for the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment is ongoing use of the target language and regular participation in a variety of communicative activities, both within and beyond the classroom from year one. Students gradually become accustomed over time to communication using a variety of formats, including but not restricted to interview, role-play, presentation and response to stimuli. As the purpose of this assessment is to further develop confidence and proficiency in oral communication, students should be encouraged to experiment with their oral communication by interacting with other students, or with a recording device. While the Classroom-Based Assessment is summative, it has a formative value and should be used as a tool to provide feedback to students, parents and teachers on student progress and learning. At an appropriate moment in their language learning, students should be familiarised with the Features of Quality used to judge the quality of their oral communication.

While oral communication will form part of everyday learning and teaching across all three years of junior cycle, the preparation for and completion by students of their Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment is carried out during a defined time period of up to three weeks within class contact time to a national timetable. Following the assessment each student completes a Student Reflection Note (see Appendix A). Completion of the note is the student's declaration of the part that he or she has played in the assessment. The note is submitted to the teacher.

With the agreement of the teacher, students may collaborate with classmates in choosing a format, and then planning, preparing and participating in the Classroom-Based Assessment as part of a pair or group in which each member has a meaningful part to play. Each student, however, must complete **his/her own** Student Reflection Note.

Although this phase of the task is monitored by the teacher, the preparation is the student's own, carried out individually or in active, meaningful interaction and collaboration as part of a pair or group. Students select a topic, stimulus or role-play scenario at the beginning of the three-week preparation period; one which they have not previously practised or prepared.

## Teacher preparation

In order to prepare for the Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers should familiarise themselves with the following documentation

- Junior Cycle MFL curriculum specification
- Assessment Toolkit
- annotated examples of student work.

Schools may have one teacher or more than one teacher of the modern foreign language(s) teaching students in junior cycle. The information outlined below has been written to address Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings with these different contexts in mind.

### **Schools with more than one teacher of the modern foreign language in question<sup>3</sup>**

Classroom-Based Assessment 1 *Oral Communication* is undertaken within the three-week timeframe stipulated by the NCCA. It is recommended that MFL teachers discuss the assessment with colleagues and plan for teaching and learning together. It will be important to set the times and dates for carrying out the assessment as early as possible. It is recommended that a date for a language-specific Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting is established at the outset to assist in the planning, implementation and reviewing of the Classroom-Based Assessment. Once the school has decided this date, teachers and students can prepare for the completion of the *Oral Communication* Classroom-Based Assessment. This Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed by the end of second year.

Where schools have a teacher of a modern foreign language who is not currently teaching the student cohort completing their classroom-based assessment (e.g. second years), this teacher may participate in a subject learning and assessment review meeting with a colleague/colleagues. This teacher will not have examples of student work from this student cohort to bring to the meeting.

### **Schools with one teacher of the modern foreign language in question**

Classroom-Based Assessment 1 is undertaken within the three-week timeframe stipulated by the NCCA. In a school with one teacher of the modern foreign language in question, it is recommended that the teacher discuss the assessment arrangements with their school facilitator/management with a view to contacting and coordinating with teachers of that modern foreign language from other, preferably nearby schools. The teacher can then plan any teaching and learning that may be required and along with their colleagues from other schools, agree a date for a language-specific Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. It will be important to agree the times and dates for

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<sup>3</sup> Inserted 31/05/2018 to offer clarification re: language-specific SLAR meetings.

carrying out the assessment as early as possible and notify all school management teams of these dates. It is recommended that a date for Subject Learning and Assessment Review is established at the outset to assist in the planning, implementation and review of the Classroom-Based Assessment. Where possible, one school should host the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, with this school also supplying the facilitator. If a school is used, the location of the meeting should rotate between all schools involved for each successive year. However, other venues, with the agreement of all involved may also be used. Once the date has been decided, teachers and students can prepare for the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment. As schools with only one teacher of the language are sharing in Subject Learning and Assessment Review, a common timeframe should be agreed at the outset.

## Completing Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Oral Communication



In completing this Classroom-Based Assessment students may choose **any one** of the formats in Table 4 below. As a guideline, Oral Communication should last about three to four minutes, **including the teachers' unscripted questions, prompts and/or contributions**, and time for students to pause, think, self-correct pronunciation, ask for a question to be reformulated etc. In the case of a pair or group task, Oral Communication should last enough time for each student to make a meaningful contribution. In all formats, both spoken production and spoken interaction are assessed. The topic, stimulus material or role-play scenario chosen by the student may in some way relate to the target language country and/or culture.

Table 3: Formats for the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment

<b>1. Interview</b>	A student, pair or group choose a topic or area of interest and respond to questions asked by the teacher, and by each other in a pair or group setting, about this topic or interest. Some of the teacher questions will be unscripted.
<b>2. Role-play</b>	A student, pair or group choose a role-play scenario, such as booking a holiday, a shopping trip or interacting with a host family. During the role-play, students interact with each other and/or the teacher. The role-play is supported by unscripted questions by the teacher.
<b>3. Presentation</b>	A student, pair or group choose a topic or area of interest and present on this topic or interest. Students may use media and/or props. The presentation is followed by unscripted questions by the teacher.
<b>4. Conversation in response to stimulus material</b>	A student, pair or group select stimulus material—visuals, written text, aural text, props and so on—which will prompt or guide oral communication. A conversation between two or more students is followed by unscripted questions by the teacher; a teacher/student(s) conversation incorporates unscripted questions.

Note that the teacher asks a number of questions, irrespective of the format chosen, to help gauge student comprehension and capacity to respond to simple, unscripted questions, appropriate to the age and stage of language learning.

## Oral Communication: Advice for students

The preparation for this assessment will be monitored and supported by your teacher.

You will have freedom to choose a format from the options outlined and a topic/role-play scenario/ stimulus of interest to you, bearing in mind the following:

- remember that this is an oral communication task, so think about how you will communicate and interact with your teacher and/or classmates
- you will be asked some simple, unscripted questions and you can ask your teacher to repeat or rephrase a question if you don't understand it.

With the agreement of your teacher you may collaborate with classmates in the following ways:

- choosing a format, planning, preparing and interacting
- participating in the communication as part of a group in which each member has a part to play.

Following your Oral Communication you complete a written Student Reflection Note. This will include an account of the part you played and the materials or sources you accessed during your preparation and a short personal reflection on your Oral Communication.

Even if you collaborate with classmates on the Oral Communication, you must complete *your own* Student Reflection Note.



## Deciding on the level of achievement: Oral Communication



Key Features of Quality in support of student and teacher judgement for Oral Communication are described here. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess student work as best fitting one of the descriptors below. They are broadly aligned with the A band (A1 to A2, basic user) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). **Students complete oral communication towards the end of year two and expectations of the standard they achieve will be at a level appropriate to their age and experience at that stage in their language learning in junior cycle.**

These features of quality will be applied to authentic examples of student work. Arising from this process:

- adjustments may be made to the Features of Quality
- amended Features of Quality, where necessary, will be published in the assessment guidelines
- annotated examples of student work will be published on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie).

Features of Quality: Oral Communication in the target language	
<p><b>Exceptional</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects these features to a very high standard. The strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws.</p>	<p><b>Spoken production:</b> the student’s communication is very clear, with very good fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Spoken interaction:</b> the student understands and responds coherently and without undue effort to questions/prompts</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows very good awareness of language patterns and conventions and self-corrects if appropriate</p>
<p><b>Above expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects these features very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback might point to the necessity to address some aspects of the work in need of further attention but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.</p>	<p><b>Spoken production:</b> the student’s communication is clear, with good fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Spoken interaction:</b> the student shows good understanding and responds coherently to questions/prompts which are slowly and clearly articulated</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows good awareness of language patterns and conventions and may self-correct if appropriate</p>
<p><b>In line with expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects most of these features well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention but the work is generally competent.</p>	<p><b>Spoken production:</b> the student’s communication is clear enough to be understood, with limited fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Spoken interaction:</b> the student shows some understanding and responds coherently, for the most part, to questions/prompts provided they are slowly and clearly articulated</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows limited awareness of language patterns and conventions</p>
<p><b>Yet to meet expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that falls some way short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated features. 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.</p>	<p><b>Spoken production:</b> the student’s communication is frequently unclear and is limited to very basic words and phrases</p> <p><b>Spoken interaction:</b> the student shows little understanding of or response to questions/prompts which are slowly and clearly articulated</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows little or no awareness of language patterns and conventions</p>

Students complete oral communication towards the end of year two and expectations of the standard they achieve will be at a level appropriate to their age and experience at that stage in their language learning in junior cycle.

## Next steps



### Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

Shared understanding of standards within junior cycle will arise through professional discussion in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings, where staff bring their own examples of student work and compare their judgements with other colleagues and with annotated examples of student work provided by the NCCA. Over time, this process will help develop a greater understanding of standards and ensure consistency of judgement about student performance.

Samples of Oral Communication by students will be recorded for discussion at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings. An example at each of the four descriptor levels, where feasible, will be needed for this purpose. Any audio or audio-visual recording device, such as a tablet, mobile phone, laptop or video camera, available in the school can be used for this purpose. The recording should take place with cognisance of child protection guidelines and in line with the school's acceptable use policy. **Further details on managing and participating in the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting are included in the Appendix and are available online at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings>**

### Recording and reporting CBA results

Following the Subject 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 ongoing reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Where it arises that a student does not submit any work for their Classroom-Based Assessment, a descriptor cannot be awarded, as there is no work to discuss against the Features of Quality. In such cases, 'Not reported' should be selected when inputting results for their JCPA. Further information in relation to reporting Classroom-Based Assessment descriptors for the JCPA is available from the DES at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services>Returns/Post-Primary-Online-Database-P-POD-Project/junior-cycle-profile-of-achievement-jcpa-handbook-for-schools-2017-.pdf>

### **Using feedback**

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step in using Oral Communication to support learning. Students will be informed of the descriptor they have been awarded once the SLAR 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 Assessments, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.

## Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The Student Language Portfolio

*The student language portfolio will include a broad range of items, such as written texts, projects, audio-visual materials, learning logs, student reflections and learning goals. It is recognised that in this context the student’s created texts may be presented in different formats—handwritten, digital, multi-modal, and so on. Students learn a lot from the process of language acquisition when they are taught how to use a portfolio to document and reflect on their learning. They need to develop confidence in interaction and an awareness of the process of language acquisition.*

*Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages: Curriculum Specification (2016)*

The main learning outcomes to be assessed through the **Student Language Portfolio** are below, illustrating the interdependence and integration of the strands. The learning outcomes assessed, may, to an extent, depend on the texts chosen by the student to submit for assessment.

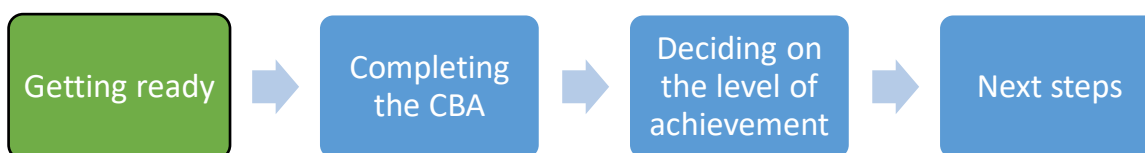
<b>Communicative competence - 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.17, 1.19, 1.20, 1.22</b>			
1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation		1.17 write words and create short sentences using various media (emails, letters, blogs, postcards...) on everyday topics with accuracy	1.20 write short descriptions of present, part and future events, activities and personal experiences, as well as imaginative texts
1.10 convey simple descriptions, presentations or announcements on familiar topics			
1.11 interact in routine exchanges with pronunciation and intonation which is clear enough to be understood and with appropriate non-verbal language		1.19 create texts about aspects of their lives and topics that interest them such as family and friends, school, holidays, leisure activities, fashion, sport, celebrities	1.22 produce and edit texts and interact with others in writing using appropriate digital technologies
<b>Language awareness – 2.1, 2.2, 2.7</b>			
2.1 recognise, describe and use language patterns such as word order, verbal system, nouns, adjectives, spelling and punctuation conventions		2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama	2.7 monitor and assess their own learning using feedback they receive to reflect on what they need to improve and to set goals for improvement
<b>Socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness – 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8</b>			
3.1 name and describe some features of the target language country/countries such as geographical features, weather, places and landmarks, food	3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target language country/countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous people	3.4 identify and explain some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviour, social conventions	3.7 analyse similarities and differences in relation to their peers’ lives in the target language country/countries in areas of daily life and present them using a range of media
			3.8 compare and contrast aspects of personal interest in the target language country/countries with those in their own country and present them using a range of media

The Student Language Portfolio promotes student engagement when students

- develop texts through engagement with a wide variety of stimulus materials
- have opportunities to collaborate
- reflect on their language learning

Whilst students begin compiling a portfolio of their language learning from first year onwards, only texts (oral, written, digital) which are created in second and third year of their junior cycle can be submitted for the purposes of assessment and reporting in the JCPA.

### Getting ready



### Student preparation

The specification recommends that students build up their portfolio over time with guidance and direction from the teacher. In the majority of cases, the work in the student's portfolio will arise from normal classwork. So a student might write a simple blog entry or an email, or might make a short video, and then select that piece of work for inclusion in the portfolio. If, at a later date, the student considers another piece of work to be of better standard, then that piece can be added to or can replace the former. The portfolio helps students to capture their language learning and develop cultural awareness; to reflect on their language development and to develop confidence in their communicative abilities in the target language. Building up a language portfolio also helps to develop key skills such as being creative, and managing information and thinking.

The focus of activity will be on the creation of a range of texts which might include items such as: short pieces of descriptive writing (handwritten or digital) relating to the student's own world or to the countries/culture of the target language; project work on aspects of the target language countries/culture; cartoons with text; audio or video clips; blogs or emails; simple narrative or diary excerpts; expressive pieces (such as a poem). Note that the list of items suggested here is not intended to be exhaustive, but to suggest that the student's portfolio should be a varied one.

While the Classroom-Based Assessment is summative, it has a formative value and should be used as a tool to provide feedback to teachers, students and parents on student progress and learning. Where appropriate, the teacher gives feedback to students in the target language and/or the language of schooling. At an appropriate moment in their language learning, students should be familiarised with the Features of Quality used to judge the quality of their work in this area.

Students, in consultation with their teachers, select three pieces to submit for the Student Language Portfolio Classroom-Based Assessment.

### **Teacher preparation**

In order to prepare for the Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers should familiarise themselves with the following documentation:

- Junior Cycle MFL curriculum specification
- Assessment Toolkit
- annotated examples of student work.

Schools may have one teacher or more than one teacher of the modern foreign language(s) teaching students in junior cycle. The information outlined below has been written to address Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings with these different contexts in mind.

### **Schools with more than one teacher of the modern foreign language in question<sup>4</sup>**

Classroom-Based Assessment 2 *The Student Language Portfolio* is completed over time and within the timeframe stipulated by the NCCA. It is recommended that MFL teachers discuss the assessment with colleagues and plan for teaching and learning together. It will be important to set the times and dates for carrying out the assessment as early as possible. It is recommended that a date for a language-specific Subject Learning and Assessment Review is established towards the beginning of third year to assist in the planning, implementation and reviewing of the Classroom-Based Assessment. Once the school has decided this date, teachers and students can prepare for the completion of The Student Language Portfolio Classroom-Based Assessment. This Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed by the end of term one in year three.

Where schools have a teacher of a modern foreign language who is not currently teaching the student cohort completing their classroom-based assessment (e.g. third years), this teacher may participate in a subject learning and assessment review meeting with a colleague/colleagues. This teacher will not have examples of student work from this cohort to bring to the meeting.

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<sup>4</sup> Inserted 31/05/2018 to offer clarification re: language-specific SLAR meetings.

**Schools with one teacher of the modern foreign language in question**

Classroom-Based Assessment 2 The Student Language Portfolio is completed over time and within the timeframe stipulated by the NCCA. In a school with one teacher of the modern foreign language in question, it is recommended that the teacher discuss the assessment arrangements with their school facilitator/management with a view to contacting and coordinating with teachers of that modern foreign language from other, preferably nearby schools. The teacher can then plan any teaching and learning that may be required and along with their colleagues from other schools, agree a date for a language-specific Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. It will be important to agree the times and dates for carrying out the assessment as early as possible and notify all school management teams of these dates. It is recommended that a date for Subject Learning and Assessment Review is established towards the beginning of third year to assist in the planning, implementation and review of the Classroom-Based Assessment. Where possible, one school should host the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, with this school also supplying the facilitator. If a school is used, the location of the meeting should rotate between all schools involved for each successive year. However, other venues, with the agreement of all involved may also be used. Once the date has been decided, teachers and students can prepare for the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment. As schools with only one teacher of the language are sharing in Subject Learning and Assessment Review, a common timeframe should be agreed at the outset.



## Completing Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The Student Language Portfolio



Completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment process involves each student choosing three texts from the portfolio to submit for assessment, one of which will be in oral format. Students are free to choose any three items they have worked on over the time period, with the proviso that at least one text selected is in oral format, and at least one text demonstrates awareness of aspects of the target language country/countries and/or culture<sup>5</sup>.

A Student Reflection Note must be included with each of the three texts. A template for a Student Reflection Note is provided in Appendix B. The note provides space for the student to set out a very brief aim or intention for the piece of work and spaces to include reflection on what has been learnt and what the student might do differently on another occasion.

The note is used as a support for the student's ongoing language learning. Student reflection is more meaningful if undertaken simultaneous to the creation of texts, where authentic opportunities arise, rather than weeks or months later.

Previous drafts of written pieces, where they exist, may assist students in completing the Student Reflection Note. Whilst students are encouraged to improve their texts based on feedback from their teacher and peers, note that only work which is the student's own can be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that one text may meet both of these requirements, for example, an audio or video recording of a student interacting with a student from a target language country or a video diary where the student speaks about similarities and differences between aspects of their culture and the culture of a target language country or countries.

## The selection of texts from the student's portfolio: advice for students

Work for this assessment will be monitored and supported by your teacher. You are free to choose any three items you have created over the time period, as long as

- at least one item you choose is in oral format
- at least one text you choose shows some awareness of the culture or country/countries of the language you are learning – this could be a spoken or a written piece
- remember to choose those texts that you think represent your best work **and/or** consult with your teacher as to which items in your portfolio represent your best work.

You must complete a written Student Reflection Note for each one. This will include the title or topic, a brief note as to why you chose this item and a reflection on what you learnt from creating it. You may find it easier to reflect and make notes on each text immediately after you create it, rather than waiting until you are selecting your best texts for your Classroom-Based Assessment.

## Deciding on the level of achievement: The Student Language

### Portfolio



### Features of Quality

Key Features of Quality in support of student and teacher judgement for the Student Language Portfolio are described here. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess student work as best fitting one of the descriptors below. They are broadly aligned with the A band (A1 to A2, basic user) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). **Students compile their portfolio over time and select their best texts towards the end of term one, year three. Expectations of the standard they achieve will be at a level appropriate to their age and experience at that stage in their language learning in junior cycle.**

These features of quality will be applied to authentic examples of student work. Arising from this process:

- adjustments may be made to the Features of Quality
- amended Features of Quality, where necessary, will be published in the assessment guidelines
- annotated examples of student work will be published on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie).

Features of Quality: Student Language Portfolio	
<p><b>Exceptional</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects these features to a very high standard. The strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws.</p>	<p><b>Clarity:</b> ideas are communicated clearly, with good fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows very good awareness of language patterns and conventions and self-corrects as appropriate</p> <p><b>Culture:</b> at least one text shows impressive awareness of aspects of the target language country/countries and/or culture</p>
<p><b>Above expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects these features very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.</p>	<p><b>Clarity:</b> ideas are communicated clearly, with reasonable fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows some awareness of language patterns and conventions and self-corrects regularly</p> <p><b>Culture:</b> at least one text shows good awareness of aspects of the target language country/countries and/or culture</p>
<p><b>In line with expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that reflects most of these features well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention but the work is generally competent.</p>	<p><b>Clarity:</b> ideas are communicated clearly enough to be understood, with limited fluency, accuracy and range of vocabulary</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows limited awareness of language patterns and conventions</p> <p><b>Culture:</b> at least one text shows some awareness of aspects of the target language country/countries and/or culture</p>
<p><b>Yet to meet expectations</b></p> <p>A piece of work that falls some way short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated features. 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.</p>	<p><b>Clarity:</b> ideas are communicated in a very limited way, with little or no fluency and/or accuracy</p> <p><b>Language awareness:</b> the student shows little or no awareness of language patterns and conventions</p> <p><b>Culture:</b> the texts show little or no awareness of aspects of the target language country/countries or culture</p>

Students select their best texts towards the end of term one, year three. Expectations of the standard they achieve will be at a level appropriate to their age and experience at that stage in their language learning in junior cycle.

## Next steps



### Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

As with the first Classroom-Based Assessment, a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting will be organised to take place subsequent to completion of the second Classroom-Based Assessment.

**Further details on managing and participating in the Subject Learning and Assessment Review process are included in the Appendix and can be found online at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings>**

In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of students' work for each descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting.

If possible, there should be discussion of at least two samples for each descriptor and the facilitator should ensure that each teacher has at least one of their samples discussed during the meeting. A variety of text types, including texts in oral format and texts exploring aspects of the target language country/countries and/or culture, should also be included.

### Recording and reporting CBA results

Following the Subject 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 ongoing reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Where it arises that a student does not submit any work for their Classroom-Based Assessment, a descriptor cannot be awarded, as there is no work to discuss against the Features of Quality. In such cases, 'Not reported' should be selected when inputting results for their JCPA. Further information in relation to reporting Classroom-Based Assessment descriptors for the JCPA is available from the DES at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services>Returns/Post-Primary-Online-Database-P-POD-Project/junior-cycle-profile-of-achievement-jcpa-handbook-for-schools-2017-.pdf>

## The Assessment Task

Students undertake a written Assessment Task to be submitted to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for marking as part of the state-certified examination for Modern Foreign Languages. The Assessment Task will be allocated 10% of the marks used to determine the overall grade.

The Assessment Task is directly related to the second Classroom-Based Assessment, the Student Language Portfolio, which mainly assesses the following learning outcomes:

Communicative competence	Language awareness	Socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness
1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.17, 1.19, 1.20, 1.22	2.1, 2.2, 2.7	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8

The Assessment Task is offered at a common level and the questions posed will take into account the broad cohort of students taking the assessment. The Assessment Task consists of two stages: firstly, engaging with a piece of stimulus material to prepare for the written task; and secondly, reflecting upon and writing about their experiences as language learners. As the key purpose of the Assessment Task is to encourage student reflection on the process of language learning, the questions and answers will be in the language of schooling.

The Assessment Task will comprise of **some or all** of the following:

- Engagement with a short stimulus in visual, written, audio or audio-visual format to prepare for the written task.
- A written task that tests the students in one or more of the following:
  - their ability to outline and/or discuss their experience of compiling their Student Language Portfolio
  - their understanding and evaluation of that experience
  - their capacity to reflect on the skills they have developed
  - their understanding of a cultural aspect of the target language country as explored in one or more texts in their Student Language Portfolio.

Including the experience of the stimulus material, the Assessment Task takes a double class period or two single class periods (i.e. a minimum of 80 minutes) to complete. The first class period should be given over to engagement with stimulus material made available by the NCCA, and to student

reflection on their Student Language Portfolio in preparation for completion of the answer booklet. The completion of the answer booklet will take place in the second period. The student response is written into a pro-forma booklet and the school forwards the completed student booklets for the Assessment Task along with the final examination scripts in accordance with arrangements set out by the SEC.

The Assessment Task for Modern Foreign Languages will be undertaken following the completion of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. Schools will have some flexibility in choosing the two class periods for completion, with a period of one week being identified during which the Assessment Task must be undertaken by students.

Where a student is absent for the completion of all or part of the Assessment Task, schools should make local arrangements in the school to allow the student to complete the task as close as possible to the timeframe scheduled for completion.

The mark awarded for the Assessment Task will be aggregated by the SEC with the mark awarded for the examination to determine the overall grade for the state-certified final examination in Modern Foreign Languages.

Examples of Assessment Tasks, stimulus materials and guidelines on how to organise and manage the Assessment Task across two class periods will be available at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) and in the *Assessment Toolkit*.

### **The timeline the school follows for the Student Language Portfolio and the Assessment Task**

Students build their portfolio of texts over time. The Student Language Portfolio Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed by the end of term one in year three. Once the school has decided a final date for completion, teachers and students can establish the period over which the Student Language Portfolio Classroom-Based Assessment will be worked on and completed. The timing of the process may vary from school to school but within national timelines<sup>6</sup>. Table 5 below illustrates indicative timelines for 2019.

### **Appealing or querying a result**

Student appeals regarding the state-certified examination grade, inclusive of the Assessment Task, will be processed as per the current appeal arrangements. Queries in relation to all other aspects of the JCPA, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.

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<sup>6</sup> A national timetable for all CBAs for all subjects will be provided on an annual basis.

## Appendix A: Oral Communication: Template for Student Reflection

### Note

<b>SCHOOL:</b>		<b>STUDENT:</b>	
<b>TOPIC, ROLE-PLAY or STIMULUS:</b>			
<b>How I used my language learning to date to prepare for the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment:</b>			
<b>Personal reflection on the Oral Communication</b>			
One important thing I learned from doing the task:		Things I would change or try to improve on:	
<u>Student</u>		<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Date</u>



## Appendix B: The Student Language Portfolio: Template for Student Reflection Note

<b>SCHOOL:</b>		<b>STUDENT:</b>	
<b>TITLE or TOPIC:</b>			
<b>I chose this text item because...</b>			
<b>My assessment of my work</b>			
What I learned from creating this text/item:		What I would do differently next time:	
<u>Student</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Date</u>	

## Appendix C: Support for teacher judgement: Subject Learning and Assessment Review

Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings enable teachers to collaboratively reach consistency in their judgments of student work against common, externally-set Features of Quality. Greater understanding of standards and expectations will develop over time as teachers come together in professional discussion to reflect on the quality of their own students' work, informed by the subject specification, assessment guidelines and other support material including annotated examples of students' work provided by the NCCA.

### Overview

The review process is centred on teachers discussing student work at structured meetings. It will play an important role in helping teachers to develop an understanding of standards and expectations by enabling them to reflect on the evidence of students' work and to share the learning and teaching strategies supporting that work.

The objectives of the review process are to achieve

- greater consistency of teachers' judgement
- better feedback to students
- greater alignment of judgements with expected standards

and to assure parents and others that students are receiving appropriate recognition of their achievements in line with standards and expectations.

The time for review meetings will be provided for in the school calendar from the allocated 22 hours of professional time for each full-time teacher each year. One teacher of each subject will be allocated two additional hours by school management to prepare for and coordinate each review meeting. This role will normally be rotated among the relevant teachers.

Each meeting will

- be subject-specific
- be approximately two hours long
- take place at a time as near as possible to the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment
- involve the review of student work related to a specific Classroom-Based Assessment.

Where there is a single teacher of a subject in a school, the teacher can be facilitated to participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting in another school. In the case of an Irish-medium school, the single teacher of a subject can participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting in another Irish-medium school.

## Facilitator's guide

Teachers will fulfil the role of facilitator during Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings on a rotational basis. The facilitator will model effective questioning during the discussion of the samples of student work focusing on how well students' work matches the Features of Quality. During review meetings, where it is not clearly evident which descriptor should apply, the group should look for the evidence in the student's work that matches all or nearly all of the Features of Quality associated with a particular descriptor. This 'best fit' approach allows teachers at the review meeting to select the descriptor that 'on-balance' best matches the work being assessed. The facilitator will submit a short report (see Appendix D) of the review meeting to the school principal.

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

### **Before the meeting**

As a first step, teachers may find it helpful to review some of the relevant NCCA-annotated examples prior to coming to decisions about their own students' work.

Once students have completed their Classroom-Based Assessment, the teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of the students' work based on the Features of Quality. These provisional assessments may be modified in light of the discussions that take place at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting.

The teacher will make a note of the descriptor allocated to each student and any other point they may wish or find useful to refer to during and after the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. This note will be for the teacher's own use.

In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of student's work for each descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting.

**During the meeting**

The facilitator leads the meeting and keeps the record of the decisions made in a template, which is used to generate the report of the meeting (see Appendix D). It is recommended that the meeting should generally follow this sequence:

- The facilitator explains that the purpose of the meeting is to support consistency of judgement about students' work and to develop a common understanding about the quality of student learning. The value of the meeting in providing feedback to students on how they might improve their work should also be highlighted.
- The facilitator asks one member of staff to introduce a sample of work they have assessed as Yet to reach expectations.
- Following a short introduction by the teacher, the facilitator leads a general discussion on the extent to which the student's work matches the relevant Features of Quality. If the meeting affirms the judgement, this is noted in the meeting record by the facilitator.
- Where there is a lack of agreement, the facilitator should refer to relevant annotated examples of student work provided by the NCCA and, if appropriate, a couple of examples of student work that other teachers in the group have assessed and awarded that descriptor to.
- The facilitator should look to establish consensus during the discussion of examples but the emphasis should be on developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills rather than on seeking unanimous agreement over every Feature of Quality in every example.
- The emphasis in affirming judgements during the review meetings should always be on a 'best fit' approach which allows teachers to agree the descriptor that 'on-balance' is most appropriate for the work being assessed.
- While reasonable time should be allowed for discussion, the facilitator should use his/her professional judgement to decide when it would be appropriate to proceed to the next sample.
- If possible, there should be discussion of at least two samples for each descriptor and the facilitator should ensure that each teacher has at least one of their samples discussed during the meeting.
- The process is repeated, in turn, with samples assessed as In line with expectations, Above expectations and Exceptional being discussed and shared in the group. At the end of the meeting, the facilitator briefly summarises the key points from the discussion.

- It is important that each teacher notes the implications of the decisions made during the meeting for the rest of the student work they have already assessed, particularly in the case of descriptors where their judgement did not align with the view of the majority of teachers at the meeting.

### **After the meeting**

After the meeting, each teacher considers the assessment of their students' work based on the outcomes of the meeting and, where it is considered necessary, makes the appropriate adjustments to their provisional assessments. Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, the facilitator submits their report from the meeting focusing on the outcomes of the discussion of student work at the meeting, and submits it to the school principal.

The facilitator may also ask teachers, should they wish, to contribute some student work to a bank of examples

- to support the induction of new teachers
- to support future Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- to use with students and parents in demonstrating the standard of work achieved.

## Appendix D: Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting: Facilitator’s Report

Subject:	Date/time:
<b>Attendance</b>	
<b>Key decisions taken</b>	
<b>Points of note for future review meetings</b>	
<b>Any further comment?</b>	
<p>Facilitator</p> <p>Date</p>	

