



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curraclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Junior Cycle Religious Education

Guidelines for the Classroom-
Based Assessments and
Assessment Task

July 2021

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 1 |
| <i>Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information</i> | 2 |
| The autonomy of the school in preparing students for the Classroom-Based Assessments | 2 |
| How the school supports the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessments ... | 3 |
| Inclusive assessment practices | 4 |
| Classroom-Based Assessments in Religious Education | 4 |
| Assessment Task | 6 |
| Classroom-Based Assessments: Advice for students | 8 |
| <i>Classroom-Based Assessment 1: A Person of Commitment</i> | 9 |
| The Learning Outcomes on which Classroom-Based Assessment 1 is based | 11 |
| Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: A Person of Commitment | 12 |
| Deciding on the level of achievement in Classroom-based Assessments | 16 |
| Features of Quality: A Person of Commitment | 189 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Next steps | 21 |
| <i>Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The human search for meaning</i> | 23 |
| Possible ways of selecting a topic for exploration | 24 |
| The Learning Outcomes on which Classroom-Based Assessment 2 is based | 25 |
| Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: The human search for meaning | 26 |
| Features of Quality: The Human Search for Meaning | 30 |
| <i>The Assessment Task</i> | 33 |
| <i>Recording and reporting CBA results</i> | 35 |
| <i>Appendix A: Classroom-Based Assessment 1: A Person of Commitment</i> | 37 |
| Checklist for the Student | 37 |
| <i>Appendix B: A Person of Commitment: Template for students to complete individually if they have completed a group project</i> | 38 |
| <i>Appendix C: Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The Human Search for Meaning: Checklist for the Student</i> | 39 |
| <i>Appendix D: The Human Search for Meaning: Template for students to complete individually if they have completed a group project</i> | 40 |
| <i>Appendix E: Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting: Facilitator’s Report</i> | 41 |
| <i>Appendix F: Support for teacher judgement: Subject Learning and Assessment Review</i> | 42 |

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task*, provides

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

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Religious Education and the NCCA's online assessment and reporting support material for junior cycle.

All documentation can be accessed at [https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Religious-Education-\(1\)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Religious-Education-(1)). An 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>.

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 subject specification. They are included within the time allocated for Religious Education, 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 (SLAR) 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.

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 Classroom-Based Assessments can be conducted and presented for assessment to allow students to pursue their interests and work to their strengths. For both Classroom-Based Assessments, students are encouraged to draw upon a variety of support materials and to present their work in a variety of formats. Within the parameters set by these guidelines, a range of ways of approaching and presenting the Classroom-Based 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 Religious Education Specification and Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment 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 meeting
- applying the guidelines for Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting
- supporting teachers and students in the completion of the Assessment Task
- following arrangements for 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 formative feedback to students at key moments to ensure that students stay on track
- 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 supports 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. These supports 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 Religious Education

There are two Classroom-Based Assessments in Religious Education. 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. 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 Religious Education. The timetable for Classroom-Based Assessments for all subjects will be provided on an annual basis at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle>.

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

The Classroom-Based Assessments for Religious Education are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Classroom-Based Assessments for Religious Education

| Classroom-Based Assessments | Format | Student preparation |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| A Person of Commitment | Individual or group report that may be presented in a wide range of formats | During a period of 3 weeks, with support/guidance by the teacher, students will research and report on a person who, because of their religious beliefs or worldview, has had a positive impact on the world, past or present. |
| The Human Search for Meaning | Individual or group report that may be presented in a wide range of formats | Students will, over a period of 3 weeks, with support/guidance by the teacher, explore artistic or architectural or archaeological evidence that shows ways that people have engaged in religious belief/the human search for meaning and purpose of life. |

The CBAs are designed to support students' engagement in enquiry, exploration and reflection and action.

Enquiry

This element focuses on stimulating students' curiosity and prompting their engagement in a topic or question. Through a process of enquiry, students engage with a range of stimulus materials to uncover ideas, facts, information, images and perspectives related to a topic or question.

Exploration

This element focuses on examining a topic or question in detail, questioning, probing, discussing, listening, imagining, interpreting and drawing conclusions, for the purpose of discovery. It also focuses on encouraging dialogue and appreciation of the diversity of interpretations and responses that may exist.

Reflection and action

This element focuses on students reflecting on what they have learnt and on their own experience of, and/or response to, the topic. It encourages students to examine what they have learnt in order to gain deeper insight and understanding. It prompts thinking about the 'why' and 'how' of learning as well as 'what now?' It also enables students to consider how the learning relates to their lives and/or to the lives of others.

While students may draw on their own experience, their personal faith commitment or affiliation to a particular religious group will not be subject to assessment.

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

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

part of the state-certified examination in Religious Education. The Assessment Task is allocated 10% of the marks used to determine the overall grade.

The Assessment Task is specified by the NCCA and is related to the learning on which the second Classroom-Based Assessment is based. In the case of Religious Education this is *The Human Search for Meaning*. The details of the Assessment Task are set out in these guidelines and summarised in Table 2 below, with further information provided on page 31 of these guidelines.

Table 2: Assessment Task for Classroom-Based Assessment 2, *The Human Search for Meaning*

| | Format | Student preparation | Completed |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| The Assessment Task (AT) | Students complete a specified written task which is sent to the SEC for marking | The Assessment Task will link to <i>The Human Search for Meaning (CBA2)</i> | Following completion of the second Classroom-Based Assessment in Year 3 |

Classroom-Based Assessments: Advice for students

- You should choose a topic for exploration that really interests you. This will make the whole process more enjoyable and worthwhile.
- It is important to keep a record of your research including, people consulted or interviewed, sources of information, key points of information and learning and your reflections on these. This will all help you as you prepare your report.
- If you use the internet as a source of information be sure to use credible and reliable websites and reference accurately the sites where you have sourced information, photos or images.
- Familiarise yourself with the Features of Quality for each Classroom-Based Assessment which your teacher will share with you. These are the criteria that will be used to assess your Classroom-Based Assessments.
- The preparation part of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be monitored by the teacher and your teacher will give you guidance and feedback along the way. But the CBA is your work. Work which cannot be authenticated by your teacher will not be accepted for assessment.
- You can choose to work on the Classroom-Based Assessments individually or in pairs or small groups. Student collaboration is encouraged. However, if you undertake a CBA as part of a pair or group, it is important to keep a note of your own part in the process and your contribution to the work. It is your individual contribution to the work that is the focus of assessment in the CBAs. Each student needs to show evidence of how s/he has achieved the Features of Quality.

Classroom-Based Assessment 1: A Person of Commitment

This CBA is designed to facilitate students in undertaking an investigation into a person of personal interest

- who has shown personal commitment to a particular religious belief or a non-religious world-view
- who is recognised as having made a positive impact on the life of others/the world, either past or present
- whose religious beliefs or worldview has directly influenced how or why they have had a positive impact on the world.

This CBA invites students to consider the role that commitment to beliefs (whether religious or non-religious) can play in a person's life and to examine how people live out of their beliefs.

Students have autonomy in selecting a person of commitment for their study. There are no parameters or restrictions in terms of place or time when s/he lived. **The chosen person should be agreed in consultation with the teacher, who will be able to advise on the appropriateness for research of the person selected, in the context of the aim of junior cycle Religious Education. The suitability of the person chosen can be judged in terms of whether the person's actions or ideas made a positive contribution to the world. Importantly, the student must be able to find evidence to demonstrate a link between the person's faith/belief/worldview and their actions.**

Each student or group of students will identify **one person**. In general, subjects chosen may range from a person living today to a person living in the past, and from a person who is well known to a person who may not be well known.

Note that the list of possible ways of selecting a person for the focus of this CBA suggested below is not meant to be exhaustive. Considerable variation in the persons selected for exploration by students is to be expected.

Teacher professional judgment and **guidance for students is important in helping students identify persons of commitment who are compatible with the aims of this CBA and clearly align with the learning outcomes in the RE specification.**

Possible ways of selecting a person of commitment

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| A person known to the student who is living a life of commitment and making a positive difference in the world at a local, national or international level | The founder or member of an organisation or of a community committed to helping others. | A religious leader or world leader who has made a positive impact on the world | A person of faith associated with one of the five major religions studied in the specification or belonging to another major world religion. | A person who does not associate him/herself with any religion yet demonstrates commitment to a worldview and set of values that have impacted positively on the world at a local, national or international level. |
|--|---|--|--|--|

Note that in this CBA students are asked to **research** and **report** on a person whose religious beliefs or worldview have had a positive impact on the world around them, past or present.

Research involves finding information on their chosen person; sorting, recording, analysing the information and drawing conclusions.

Report implies presenting a written, visual or oral account. Students may choose to report in a variety of formats – written, audio, performance or multimodal - such as an essay, blog, script for a broadcast, letter, obituary, interview, speech, oral presentation.

The Learning Outcomes on which Classroom-Based Assessment 1 is based

This CBA requires students to demonstrate learning in a range of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes assessed will, to an extent, depend on the person chosen. The following learning outcomes are particularly relevant to CBA 1: *A Person of Commitment* and teaching these learning outcomes is essential for students' successful engagement in the CBA.

Classroom-Based Assessment: A Person of Commitment

Strand 2: Exploring Questions

Students should be able to:

- 2.8 present stories of individuals or of groups in the history of two major world religions that have had a positive impact on the lives of people because of their commitment to living out of their beliefs.

Strand 3: Living our Values

Students should be able to:

- 3.1 examine different sources of values and ways in which the values of a person relate to their everyday life choices, their relationships, and their responsibilities to others.

Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: A Person of Commitment

Figure 1 below sets out the process for conducting the Classroom-Based Assessment



GETTING READY

Students are free to choose a person for their research in accordance with the advice set out in these guidelines and under the supervision of their teacher. The aim is for students to engage in studying a person about whom they have a genuine curiosity and which can inspire in them an authentic, personal response.

Students may wish to start considering possible people and formats for the CBA shortly before the three week period of work on the assessment begins.

If students decide to work in groups it is advisable that groups are not generally larger than three to four students, to ensure that all students can work effectively together. Also, if students are working in pairs or small groups then it is important to ensure that the role and contribution of each student is clear and significant so that it can be assessed by the teacher. Where students decide to work together they may or may not decide to create a shared report. Whatever their choice, it is important to be aware that each student must be able to show evidence to meet the Features of Quality for the assessment and will be awarded an individual descriptor.

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. From the outset, students should be familiar with the Features of Quality that will be used to judge the quality of their work.

TEACHER PREPARATION

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

- Junior Cycle Religious Education curriculum specification
- Annotated examples of student work
- Assessment and reporting in junior cycle: <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting>
- Developing the key skill of working with others is critically important in the context of students undertaking effective and genuine group work. Methodologies to support the development of this skill can be found at https://www.ncca.ie/media/1147/workingwithothers_april2015.pdf

The project should be undertaken over three weeks, within a national timeframe provided by the NCCA. It is recommended that teachers discuss the assessment with colleagues and plan any teaching and revision that may be required.. It is recommended that a date for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review 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 *A Person of Commitment* Classroom-Based Assessment. The timing of the process may vary from school to school. However, *A Person of Commitment* Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed by the end of second year.

COMPLETING THE CBA

A *Person of Commitment* will be completed over a three-week period. Students will engage with their chosen person across four stages of activity:

Enquiry into their chosen person and formulating questions

In undertaking this CBA students might find it helpful to frame their initial enquiry around some guiding questions such as the following, although students are not confined to these:

- Why is the person I have chosen worth exploring?
- What are the religious beliefs or worldview that the person has shown commitment to?
- In what ways has he/she shown commitment to these beliefs or worldview?
- How is the person's commitment to religious beliefs or worldview been a positive influence on the world?
- Is there a specific aspect of his/her life or event that shows the person's commitment to their beliefs or worldview?
- What questions will guide my research? What do I want to find out? Where can I find evidence?

Exploration of their chosen person

The students are engaging in exploration in order to draw their own personal conclusions, for the purpose of discovery. To begin this exploration students might consider:

- Where will I find information? e.g. emailing, newspapers, websites, social media, library, contacting a place or organisation associated with the person, etc. Where possible, students should be encouraged to use more than one source/perspective. This is particularly important where students use internet-based sources.

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

- How can I ensure that my research is broad and balanced and draws on a range of perspectives?
- Is there anyone I can consult about this person or interview?
- What beliefs or worldview shaped this person's life? Can I name these?
- Can I provide evidence of how the person's beliefs or worldview has influenced his/her life? In other words, can I show a link between the person's actions and their beliefs/worldview?
- Is this person recognised as having made a positive impact on the world – whether at a local or wider level?

Reflection and action

It is important that students are encouraged to consider what they have learned through their exploration, how they have learned it and what it might mean for them now or in the future. When reflecting on their learning some useful prompts are listed below. Students should not feel tied to these or feel they need to use them all.

- I chose this person because...
- I now understand...
- I now realise...
- For me this is important because...
- It made me think...
- I now wonder...
- I am left with the question...
- Doing this research was interesting for me because...
- The things I learned from studying my chosen person will influence my own life by ...

Reporting on a Person of Commitment:

Students may choose to report in a variety of formats – written, audio, performance or multimodal - such as an essay, scrapbook, blog, script for a broadcast, letter, obituary, speech, oral presentation, interview, etc. Students may work individually and report individually. If they work in pairs or small groups and they can then choose to report individually or as a group, keeping in mind that each student will be assessed for their individual work against the Features of Quality.

Where students choose to present their report orally, it is useful to advise them that the report should last about three minutes. Where students are reporting orally as a small group, the duration of each student's contribution should be such as to allow each group member to make a meaningful contribution linked to the 3 features of quality, although groups of three do not necessarily need to create a 9-minute oral report.

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 of each Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the following Descriptors:

Exceptional describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the

strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

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

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

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

When using the Features of Quality to assess the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. The teacher should read the Features of Quality (starting with *Yet to meet 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 a judgement, 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.

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

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. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that students' work is being judged only against the Features of Quality rather than other students' performances or previous performances or work.

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 curriculum online; by the Features of Quality in these guidelines; and by collaboration and discussion with colleagues during Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings.

Features of Quality: A Person of Commitment

The features of quality are the criteria used to assess the student work.

| Exceptional | Features of Quality |
|--|---|
| <p>A piece of work that reflects these Features 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.</p> | <p>The report displays exceptional research in both its scope and skills of enquiry.</p> <p>The report provides a thoroughly convincing and focused account of how the person of commitment made a positive difference to the world and how this was influenced by his/her commitment to religious belief, personal values or worldview.</p> <p>There is evidence of insightful personal reflection on the learning and awareness of what it means for the student.</p> |
| Above expectations | Features of Quality |
| <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 or polishing, but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.</p> | <p>The report displays very good research in both its scope and skills of enquiry.</p> <p>The report provides a convincing and focused account of how the person of commitment made a positive difference to the world and how this was influenced by his/her commitment to religious belief, personal values or worldview.</p> <p>There is good evidence of personal reflection on the learning and what it means for the student.</p> |

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>In line with expectations</p> <p>A piece of work that reflects most of these Features 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.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays good research in both its scope and skills of enquiry.</p> <p>The report provides a reasonably clear and coherent account of how the person of commitment made a positive difference to the world and how this was influenced by his/her commitment to religious belief, personal values or worldview.</p> <p>There is some evidence of personal reflection on the learning and what it means for the student, albeit rather limited.</p> |
| <p>Yet to meet expectations</p> <p>A piece of work that falls somewhat 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 errors that need to be addressed.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays limited research in both its scope and skills of enquiry.</p> <p>The report identifies a person of commitment but it is unclear how the person of commitment made a positive difference to the world and there is no evidence of how they were influenced by their religious belief, personal values or worldview.</p> <p>There is little or no evidence of personal reflection on the learning and what it means for the student.</p> |

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

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.

Sample CBAs by students will be gathered for discussion at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of students' work for each of the four descriptors, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting. Any audio or audio-visual recording device, such as a tablet, mobile phone, laptop or video camera, available in the school can be used. School rather than personal devices should be used. The recording should take place with cognisance of child protection guidelines and in line with the school's acceptable use and GDPR policies. (This only applies to situations where students will be recorded)

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

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

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

USING FEEDBACK

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step in using the Classroom-Based Assessment 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 <https://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 Assessments, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.

Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The human search for meaning

This CBA is designed to support students in exploring artistic, architectural, or archaeological evidence that shows ways people have engaged in the human search for meaning and purpose in life. It aims to develop their curiosity and understanding about the many ways that humans have expressed the search for meaning – a quest that transcends cultural and generational boundaries.

As human persons, we all seek meaning and purpose in life and there are some common questions that underpin this search such as: what is the purpose of life? why am I here? what makes for happiness? can one life make a difference? what happens when we die? is there a God/gods/Divine Reality? These questions are common (shared by everybody); central (help us understand ourselves and our world); and contestable (can lead to different and sometimes competing understandings). It is important that this CBA explores one of more of these questions drawing upon artistic, architectural, or archaeological evidence.

For the purpose of this CBA, the term **artistic evidence** can be taken to mean work produced by an artist¹, craftsperson or musician. **Architectural evidence** refers to buildings and physical structures. **Archaeological evidence** refers to material remains of past human life (such as monuments, artifacts and other physical remains).

Students have autonomy in selecting evidence for their CBA. There are no parameters or restrictions in terms of place or time. **The focus for exploration should be agreed in consultation with the teacher** and students should be discouraged from simply

¹ For the purposes of this CBA, artistic evidence may include literature and films

downloading and presenting information. Rather students should be encouraged to explore and demonstrate how their chosen topic links to the human search for meaning and purpose, keeping in mind that the search for meaning in life refers to attempts to understand what one's life as a whole means, rather than efforts to understand the meaning of a particular event.

Religion is one of the major resources used to generate a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Students should demonstrate an awareness of this and where relevant, be able to show their understanding of how religious belief systems have enabled people to construct life meaning. Social and secular influences that provide life meaning may be relevant, depending on the focus of study.

Possible ways of selecting a topic for exploration

In consultation with the teacher, students have autonomy in selecting an area for exploration. **Note that the list of possible ways of approaching *the human search for meaning* included below is not meant to be exhaustive.** Considerable variation in the topics selected for exploration by students is to be expected.

| Artistic | Architectural | Archaeological |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| A painting/series of paintings | Cemetery | Ancient temples |
| A statue or sculpture | Grave stones | A sacred river |
| A musical composition or song | Mosque | A burial tomb |
| A film | Temple | A pilgrim path |
| A piece of literature | Shrine | A holy well |
| | Church or Cathedral | |
| | Memorial or monument | |

The Learning Outcomes on which Classroom-Based Assessment 2 is based

The learning outcomes assessed will, to an extent, depend on the topic chosen. The Learning Outcomes that may be particularly relevant to *The human search for meaning* are set out below. Teaching these learning outcomes is essential for students' successful engagement in this CBA.

Classroom-Based Assessment: The Human Search for Meaning

Strand 1: Expressing Beliefs

Students should be able to:

- 1.1 explore the presence of religious themes in contemporary culture through an examination of art, music, literature or film.

Strand 2: Exploring Questions

Students should be able to:

- 2.1 research artistic, architectural or archaeological evidence that shows ways in which people have searched for meaning and purpose in life.
- 2.2 consider responses from one major world religion and from a non-religious world-view to some big questions about the meaning of life, such as, why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die?

Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: The human search for meaning

Figure 2 below sets out the process for conducting the Classroom-Based Assessment



GETTING READY

It is advisable that students start considering a focus for their study shortly before the three week period of work on the assessment begins and are encouraged to select a focus that is of genuine interest to them.

Students are free to choose a focus for their exploration in accordance with the advice set out in these guidelines and under the supervision of their teacher.

If students decide to work in groups it is advisable that groups are not generally larger than three to four students, to ensure that all students can work effectively together and make a meaningful contribution. Also, if students are working in pairs or small groups then it is important to ensure that the role and contribution of each student is clear and significant so that it can be assessed by the teacher. While students might decide to work together and may create a shared presentation each student must be able to show evidence that they have fulfilled the Features of Quality and will be awarded an individual descriptor. Each student's individual evidence of learning is the focus of assessment for the JCPA.

From the outset, students should be familiar with the Features of Quality that will be used to judge the quality of their work.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The project should be undertaken over three weeks within a timeframe provided by the NCCA. It is recommended that teachers discuss the assessment with colleagues and plan any teaching and revision that may be required. 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 the Subject Learning and Assessment Review 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 Human Search for Meaning* Classroom-Based Assessment. The timing of the process may vary from school to school.

COMPLETING THE CBA

The human search for meaning will be completed over a three period. Students will complete this CBA as they move through four stages of activity:

1. **Enquiry** into their chosen area

In undertaking this CBA students might find it helpful to frame their initial enquiry around some guiding questions such as the following:

- What area is of most interest to me – the artistic, architectural or archaeological?
- What aspect of the human search for meaning is of interest to me? Is there a particular 'big question' that I'd like to explore? What is this?
- How can I connect the two?

2. **Exploration** of evidence

Having identified an area for exploration students might consider:

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

- How/where will I find information? e.g. websites, social media, library or museum visit, etc. Where possible, students should be encouraged to use more than one source. This is particularly important where students use internet-based sources.
- How will I keep a record of information and ideas that I gather?

Different methodologies might be employed, such as:

- Website or other electronic sources of information
- Interview
- Visit a relevant site, monument, building, tomb, art gallery, museum, either physically or virtually.

3. Reflection and action: It is important that students are encouraged to consider what they have learned through their exploration and draw their own personal conclusions about what this means for them. The key reflection question which students need to address is: *Having completed this project, my own personal conclusions are ...*

To support students in reflecting on their learning some further useful prompts are listed below. Students should not feel tied to these or need to use them all.

- I chose this question because...
- For me this is important because...
- It made me think about ...
- Doing this research was interesting for me because...
- The main thing I learned from exploring this question ...
- I now wonder...

4. Report of the Human Search for Meaning:

Students may choose to report in a variety of formats – written, audio or multimodal - such as an essay, poster, PPT, audio or video presentation, etc. If students work in pairs or small groups they can choose to report individually or complete a group report, remembering that **each student will be assessed for their individual work against the Features of Quality.**

Where students choose to present their report orally, it is useful to advise them that the report should last about three minutes. Where students are reporting orally as a small group, the duration of each student's contribution should be such as to allow each group member to make a meaningful contribution, although groups of three do not necessarily need to create a 9-minute oral report.

Features of Quality: The Human Search for Meaning

Features of Quality: Religious Education – The human search for meaning

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Exceptional</p> <p>A piece of work that reflects these Features 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.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays exceptional research and a clear understanding of how religious belief/the human search for meaning has been expressed in their chosen topic.</p> <p>The report is compelling and comprehensive in showing how the topic explored relates to one or more of life’s big questions.</p> <p>The report includes an insightful personal response which shows the student has engaged with the topic and come to their own considered conclusions.</p> |
| <p>Above expectations</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 or polishing, but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays very good research and understanding of how religious belief/the human search for meaning has been expressed in their chosen topic.</p> <p>The report shows very clearly how the topic explored relates to one or more of life’s big questions.</p> <p>The report includes an authentic personal response which shows the student has engaged with the topic and come to their own considered conclusions.</p> |

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>In line with expectations</p> <p>A piece of work that reflects most of these Features 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.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays reasonably good research and understanding of how religious belief/the human search for meaning has been expressed in their chosen topic.</p> <p>The report shows in a reasonably clear manner how the topic explored relates to one or more of life's big questions.</p> <p>The report includes some personal response, albeit rather limited, showing the student has made some effort to draw their own considered conclusion.</p> |
| <p>Yet to meet expectations</p> <p>A piece of work that falls somewhat 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 errors that need to be addressed.</p> | <p>Features of Quality</p> <p>The report displays limited research and understanding of how religious belief/the human search for meaning has been expressed in their chosen topic.</p> <p>The report makes limited or little connection between the topic explored and one or more of life's big questions.</p> <p>There is little or no evidence of a personal response in the report or evidence of coming to their own considered conclusions.</p> |

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

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

The Assessment Task

The Assessment Task for Religious Education will be undertaken following the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment: *The Human Search for Meaning*.

The Assessment Task asks students to write a reflection on what has been learnt in the second Classroom-Based Assessment.

The Assessment Task will assess students' ability to reflect on the following:

- new knowledge or understanding that has emerged through their experience of the Classroom-Based Assessment and what that means for them
- the skills, attitudes and values they have developed
- the beliefs and perspectives they have encountered through the experience of the Classroom-Based Assessment and their personal response to this.

The Assessment Task is submitted to the State Examinations Commission for marking as part of the state-certified examination for Religious Education. It will be allocated 10% of the marks used to determine the grade awarded by the State Examinations Commission. 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 Religious Education.

Schools have some flexibility in choosing the 2 class periods for completion, within a period of time identified by the NCCA during which the Assessment Task must be undertaken by students. The first class period is used for preparation purposes. The second class period is used for writing up their response. The student response is written into a pro-forma booklet provided by the State Examinations Commission and the school forwards the completed

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks

student booklets for the Assessment Task in accordance with arrangements set out by the SEC.

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.

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 the 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/>

USING FEEDBACK

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step in using *The Human Search for Meaning* 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

<https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/focus-on-learning>

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.

Appendix A: Classroom-Based Assessment 1: A Person of Commitment

Checklist for the Student

Have I

- chosen a person who has strong religious beliefs, values or worldview
- named the beliefs, values or worldview that really matter to this person
- shown how the person's religious beliefs or worldview connect to their actions (in other words have I explained how s/he lived out their beliefs)
- given concrete examples of key events or people who influenced his/her values/beliefs/worldview
- shown how the person has made a positive contribution to the world
- reflected on what I have learned through doing this project
- given my personal thoughts on what I have learned and what it means for me
- chosen a suitable format for presenting my report (remembering that spending time clearly and succinctly presenting the above points is more important than lots of visual images)
- made sure that I noted the sources of any images/videos/research taken from the internet
- had a discussion with my teacher about the features of quality
- taken on board feedback from my teacher to make sure that my work is in line with the features of quality

Appendix B: A Person of Commitment: Template for students to complete individually if they undertake a group project

| | |
|---|--|
| Student name: | Other group members: |
| Person chosen: | |
| 1. My individual contribution to the project | |
| What I did? (Specific tasks) | |
| 2. Personal reflections | |
| What I learned? | My personal conclusions are ... |

Appendix C: Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The Human Search for Meaning: Checklist for the Student

Have I

- shown an understanding of what is meant by the human search for meaning?
- considered and shown an understanding of religious and non-religious ways of answering life's big questions
- focused in on a 'big question' that is part of the human search for meaning?
- considered how this question can be answered in different ways
- explained how this big question has been explored using evidence from art, or architecture or archaeology.
- reflected on what I have learned through doing this project
- given my personal thoughts and drawn some conclusions on what I have learned
- chosen a suitable format for presenting my report (remembering not to get carried away with lots of visual images at the expense of showing my learning and understanding of the topic)
- made sure that I noted the sources of any images/videos/research taken from the internet
- had a discussion with my teacher about the features of quality
- taken on board feedback from my teacher to make sure that my work is in line with the features of quality

Appendix D: The Human Search for Meaning: Template for students to complete individually if they undertake a group project

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Student name: | Other group members: |
| Focus for our CBA | |
| 1. My individual contribution to the project | |
| What I did? (Specific tasks) | |
| 2. Personal reflections | |
| What I learned? | Why this was interesting for me? |

Appendix E: Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting: Facilitator's Report

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

Appendix F: 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.

Junior Cycle Religious Education: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks