

Consulting students about the short courses

Purpose of the consultation: Background information for students:

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education and Skills about curriculum (what is taught in schools) and assessment (how to collect evidence about what students have learnt).

Right now, the NCCA is designing a new Junior Cycle. In September 2014, students starting in post-primary school will be able to study short courses as well as subjects. These short courses allow students to learn about a broad range of subjects that are interesting and enjoyable for them in junior cycle.

Short courses will be half the length of subjects. They will cover a whole range of topics including PE, SPHE, CSPE, Programming and Coding, Digital Literacy. Students are encouraged to be actively involved in their own learning in all of these short courses. Students will be able to show what they have learnt in the short course in a variety of different ways including projects, performances and presentations.

This student consultation is about the short courses that the NCCA is currently developing. These courses are in

- Physical Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- Social, personal and health education
- Programming and coding
- Digital media
- Artistic performance
- Level 2 short course- Personal project: Caring for animals

We want to hear your ideas about the short courses that we are developing. Your teacher will help you to collate your feedback at the end of the class and you will be asked to send it back to us electronically by logging on to [this link](#). We will use the feedback we receive from students to inform the final version of the short course.

We will acknowledge your participation in the consultation report and we will let you know when the report is available on line.

Thank you

Student consultation – Planning for Focus group

In preparation for the focus group session, you will need:

- A copy of the short course available on juniorcycle.ie under the Consultation banner.
- Six table mats made using butcher paper or large A3 sheets. Alternatively, the table mat design on **Appendix 1** can be photocopied onto A3 paper and **Appendix 2** demonstrates different group layouts when using it. Please write one of the following questions into each section of the table mat:
 - We are glad to see
 - We would like more of
 - We would like less of
 - Assessment tasks are enjoyable and worthwhileWhy? Why not?
- Stick four big sheets of paper on the classroom wall with one of the following sentences on the top of each one:
 - We are glad to see
 - We would like more of
 - We would like less of
 - Assessment enjoyable and worthwhileWhy? Why not?
- Eight markers for the completion of wall charts.
- Six copies of the handout in **Appendix 3**, one for each group outlining the different roles
- Laptop and data projector to show PowerPoint presentation outlining the main features of the short course.

Focus group design

Divide the class **into a maximum of six groups** with not more than five students in each group.

Each group appoints

- **A chairperson** – poses the questions and keeps the group on task. He/she also ensures that each member of the group is heard.
- **Note taker** – takes notes about what is said in the group on the paper ‘table mat’ supplied to each group
- **Timekeeper** – keeps the group working within the time allocated
- **Inputter** – **At the end of the session**, this student inputs the main feedback agreed by the whole group into the survey monkey link supplied by the teacher.

(Each group is given a copy of Handout 2)

Activity 1: (5 minutes) Whole class activity

Brainstorm:

You may be familiar with the subject/short course you are about to discuss.

What do you enjoy most about learning in this subject? What would you change?

The responses can simply be acknowledged and/or recorded on a flip chart.

If the short course is in a new area, e.g. Programming and Coding, simply brainstorm the title of the short course and ask students what words/phrases come into their heads when they see this short course title.

Activity 2: Table Mat Task (25 minutes)

Run through the relevant subject/short course PowerPoint, using the notes included with each slide to give more details.

Complete the Table Mat Task in your group:

What are you glad to see included?

What would you like less of?

What would you like more of?

Would you find the assessment tasks enjoyable and worthwhile to do? Why? Why not?

Take 3 minutes at the end to agree the three most important points made in relation to each question

Activity 3: (10 minutes)

Each group adds their three agreed points to the relevant master sheets displayed on the wall of the classroom. If the point has already been included by another group, do not write it again. Simply put a tick beside it.

The class take this time to look over what has been written on the charts.

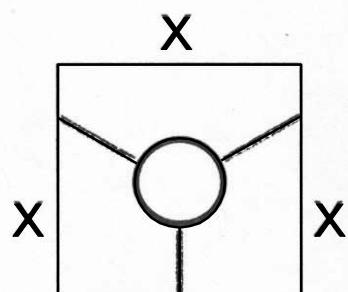
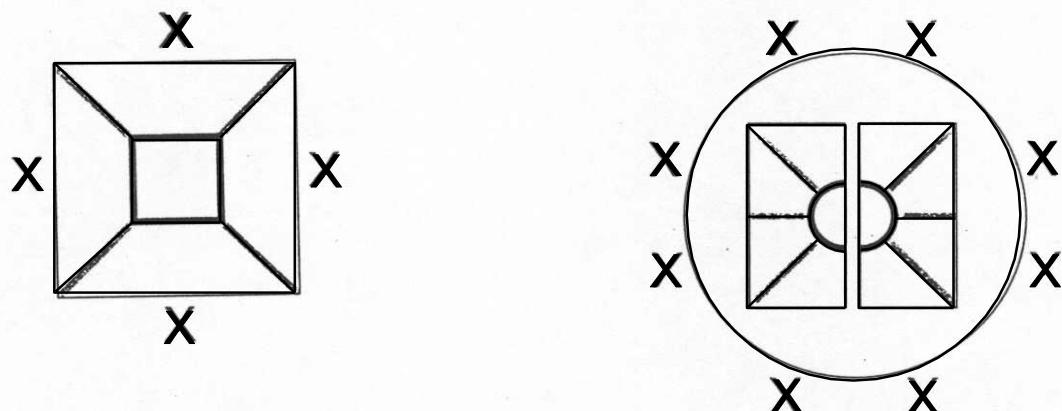
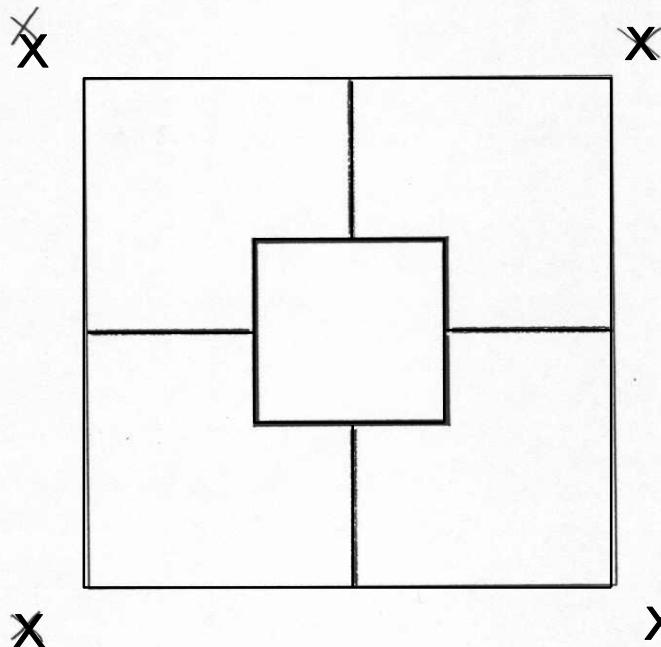
Their response should be given to the students who will be inputting the results of the focus group into the [survey](#).

Thank you very much for participating. Your comments will form part of the consultation report which will be published early in the New Year. Your participation will be noted on the report. Once the consultation is finished, all of the feedback that we received will inform the final version of the short course. The student voice is very important in this regard.

Appendix 1 Table Mat Task (enlarge onto A3 paper)

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>What are you glad to see included?</p> | <p>What would you like less of?</p> |
| <p>What would you like more of?</p> | <p>Would you find the assessment tasks enjoyable and worthwhile to do? Why? Why not?</p> |

Appendix 2 Table Mat Exercise



Different ways of designing your placemats depending on the number of students in each group. A large poster or flip chart paper works great. Each X represents a student.

Appendix 3

Each group agrees four students to undertake the following roles:

| | |
|--|--|
| Chairperson – poses the questions and keeps the group on task. Also ensures that each member of the group is heard. | Note taker – takes notes about what is said and agreed in the group on the paper ‘table mat’. |
| Inputter – At the end of the session, this student inputs the main feedback, agreed by the group, into the <u>survey link</u> supplied. | Timekeeper – keeps the group working within the time allocated. |