



# Junior Cycle English

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and  
Assessment Task

First Edition



# Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
ASSESSMENT IN JUNIOR CYCLE ENGLISH	7
The central purpose of assessment in Junior Cycle English	7
Links to assessment in primary school	7
Assessment supports learning	7
CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENTS: GENERAL INFORMATION	8
Levels of achievement for the Classroom-Based Assessments	8
Deciding on the level of achievement	8
Time for Classroom-Based Assessments	9
School autonomy in preparing for Classroom-Based Assessments	9
How the school supports the completion of the assessments	9
SUPPORT FOR TEACHER JUDGEMENT: SUBJECT LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW	11
Subject Learning and Assessment Review	11
Inclusive assessment practices	11
Facilitating the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting	12
Before the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting	12
Assessing students' work prior to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting	13
At the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting	14
After the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting	15
JUNIOR CYCLE ENGLISH: CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENTS AND THE ASSESSMENT TASK	16
Classroom-Based Assessments	16
The Assessment Task	16
CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT 1: ORAL COMMUNICATION	18
Completing Oral Communication	18

<b>Choosing the topic</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Inclusive assessment</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Oral Communication: advice for students</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Assessing Oral Communication</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>How the school supports the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>The timeline the school follows for Oral Communication</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT 2: THE COLLECTION OF THE STUDENT’S TEXTS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Completing The Collection of the Student’s Texts</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Student Reflection Note</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Collection of the Student’s Texts: advice for students</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Assessing The Collection of the Student’s Texts</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>How the school supports the Collection of the Student’s Texts</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>THE ASSESSMENT TASK</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The timeline the school follows for The Collection of the Student’s Texts and the Assessment Task</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appealing or querying a result</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 ORAL COMMUNICATION: TEMPLATE FOR STUDENT REFLECTION NOTE</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 THE COLLECTION OF THE STUDENT’S TEXTS: TEMPLATE FOR STUDENT REFLECTION NOTE</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3 FACILITATOR’S REPORT</b>	<b>36</b>

# Introduction

A detailed 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>. The extract below is of particular relevance to the content of assessment guidelines at junior cycle.

*There will be a range of assessment approaches to complement learning:*

- *Ongoing assessments, including routine teacher-designed tasks and tests*
- *One or two Classroom-Based Assessment tasks in short courses*
- *Ongoing assessment for students undertaking priority learning units at Level 2*
- *Structured Classroom-Based Assessments for subjects conducted in second and third year*
- *A written Assessment Task for subjects that will be based on the second Classroom-Based Assessment and will be submitted to the SEC for marking along with the state-certified examination*
- *An externally assessed, state-certified examination for subjects at the end of third year*
- *Specific arrangements for 'practical' subjects.*

Framework for Junior Cycle (DES, 2015, p34)

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

- General information on Classroom-Based Assessments
- Support for teacher judgement through the process involved in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- Detail of the nature and scope of the two Classroom-Based Assessments described in the curriculum specification for English
- Guidelines for schools, teachers and students on completing the Classroom-Based Assessments in English
- Details of the Assessment Task in English and how the school supports its completion.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the curriculum specification for *Junior Cycle English* 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. Extensive continuing professional development (CPD) events for teachers will also focus on the content of the guidelines, the introduction of the Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task, and the operation and management of Subject Learning and Assessment Review.

All documentation can be accessed at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/English>

# Assessment in Junior Cycle English

## The central purpose of assessment in Junior Cycle English

The curriculum specification closely links assessment with student learning and emphasises the importance of feedback in support of learning.

Assessment in Junior Cycle English rests upon the provision for learners of opportunities to set clear goals and targets in their learning and upon the quality of the focused feedback they get in support of their learning. Providing focused feedback on their learning to students is a critical component of high-quality assessment and a key factor in building students' capacity to manage their own learning and their motivation to stick with a complex task or problem.

(Specification for Junior Cycle English)

In this sense, assessment should be experienced by students in junior cycle as part of their learning.

## Links to assessment in primary school

Assessment in junior cycle builds on the experience of assessment in the primary school. This is characterised by a clear focus on the student's learning, and high-quality feedback that students and parents receive from teachers. Assessment in the junior cycle years essentially fulfils the same function, while also leading ultimately to the state-certified examination and the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement issued by the school.

## Assessment supports learning

Students know that assessment is supporting their learning when it links directly with their ongoing work in the subject, when they know and understand the criteria being used to assess their work, and when they get clear feedback from their teachers and others about how well they are doing and how they can improve. These features of assessment also help students prepare for assessment at future stages of education or training.

## 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 subject specification. The tasks are clearly described, as are the criteria for assessment to support teacher judgement. The criteria are found in the Features of Quality linked to each Classroom-Based Assessment.

Although the assessment is similar to the formative assessment that occurs every day in class, in the case of classroom-based assessment the teacher's judgement is recorded for Subject Learning and Assessment Review, and is used in the school's reporting to parents and students. Classroom-Based Assessment is not continuous assessment. Students prepare for the tasks over time, but the results of 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.

### Levels of achievement for the Classroom-Based Assessments

The Classroom-Based Assessments are Common Level assessments, therefore students are not required to indicate their intention to take the state-certified examination in English at Higher or Ordinary Level at this point in their junior cycle. The teacher bases the level achieved by the student in each of the assessments on the relevant Features of Quality set out in these guidelines.

### Deciding on the level of achievement

When using the Features of Quality to assess the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. Features of Quality are set out for each of four level descriptors – *Exceptional*, *Above expectations*, *In line with expectations*, and *Yet to meet expectations*.

While it is anticipated that most student work would be judged to be *In line with expectations* or *Above expectations* and that much less would be judged as *Exceptional* or *Yet to reach expectations*, it is not envisaged that schools would limit the allocation of students to the four level descriptors based on a fixed quota system. The decisions about which descriptors are appropriate would be based on the teacher coming to a judgement about the student's work matched against the Features of Quality.

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.



In cases where it is not clearly evident which descriptor should apply, the teacher looks for the evidence in the student's work on the Classroom-Based Assessment that best matches a particular descriptor. This 'best-fit' approach allows teachers to select the achievement level that 'on-balance' describes the work being assessed. Teachers develop this skill through ongoing discussions with the students themselves and with other colleagues through the Subject Learning and Assessment Review. The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will assist teachers in developing their own knowledge and skills through professional discussion with the purpose of arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations. This understanding is most likely to be developed when teachers come together to reflect on the quality of their own students' work informed by the curriculum specification, guidelines and other support material including annotated examples of students' work provided by the NCCA.

## Time for Classroom-Based Assessments

The Classroom-Based Assessments are included within the time allocated for English, which is a minimum of 240 hours. They should be seen as part and parcel of normal classroom assessment. In English, the specific assessment tasks emerge from the texts and topics the students engage with as part of their everyday work. They are designed to allow students to demonstrate the skills they continue to develop across the three subject strands of Oral Language, Reading, and Writing.

## School autonomy in preparing for 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 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 collection of the student's texts, e.g. hand-written, typed, digital, multi-modal texts, and so on. Within the parameters set by the guidelines, the range of themes and topics for the assessment can be determined independently by the school, teachers and students.

## How the school supports the completion of the assessments

The school supports the completion of the assessments by:

- Ensuring that the NCCA *Specification and Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments* 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 set out in this document
- Supporting teachers and students in the completion of the Assessment Task
- Following set arrangements for the transfer of the completed Assessment Tasks to the State Examinations Commission for marking
- Applying inclusive assessment practices as set out in these guidelines
- Reporting the outcomes of Classroom-Based Assessments to students and their parents/guardians as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

# Support for teacher judgement: Subject Learning and Assessment Review

## Subject Learning and Assessment Review

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, these guidelines and other support material including annotated examples of students' work provided by the NCCA.

The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will play an important role in helping teachers to develop this understanding 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 and greater alignment of judgements with expected standards. The process of Review will also help to assure parents and others that students are receiving appropriate recognition of their achievements in line with standards and expectations.

Growing understanding of standards over time is also more likely to be developed where teachers use other opportunities they may have – at staff meetings, in-school in-service days or subject department meetings – to discuss examples of student work. This would help to ensure that the review and discussion of student work that takes place at Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings becomes a familiar feature of the school and contributes to developing assessment and reporting practice across the whole junior cycle.

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.

## Inclusive assessment practices

Special provisions may be put in place by schools for a student with a specific physical or learning difficulty to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the student's performance in both Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement. The accommodations—for example, the use of Irish Sign Language, 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 school year and are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.

## Facilitating the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

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 focussing 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.

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 Subject Learning and Assessment Review 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. A sample template for use in compiling the note will be available in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit.

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.

## Assessing students' work prior to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

### **Classroom-Based Assessment - Oral Communication**

A two-stage process will apply for both Classroom-Based Assessments. In Oral Communication, teachers will make an initial judgement, while watching and listening to a student carrying out the Oral Communication, as to whether the student has *Yet to meet expectations*. This will establish a basic threshold for what is considered to be *In line with expectations* in relation to the Features of Quality.

If appropriate, the teacher will then proceed to move up through the Descriptors until one is reached where the student's Oral Communication clearly does not match **all or nearly all** of the Features of Quality. The student's Oral Communication will therefore be assessed as being at the preceding Descriptor, where it is clear that the student's work matches **all or nearly all** of the Features of Quality at that level.

The teacher will need to keep a note of the Descriptor awarded to each student for her/his Oral Communication assessment.

A small sample of the students' oral communications will be recorded once by the teacher to bring to, and discuss, at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. Where feasible, a sample of a student at each of the four Descriptor levels will be recorded. The teacher's decision on the particular students to record will be based on the range of achievement as he/she would predict at the time, based on students' previous performance. Therefore, teachers' professional judgement underpinned by a good understanding of the Features of Quality, with knowledge of the students' strengths and areas for development, will be important factors in identifying the sample of students to be recorded.

### **Classroom-Based Assessment - Collection of the Student's Texts**

In a similar way to Oral Communication, judgements about the student's work should be made in two stages.

- In the first stage, the teacher makes an initial judgement on whether the student's work has *Yet to reach expectations*. If that descriptor does not match the work, then the teacher moves on to the second stage.
- In the second stage, the student's work is then assessed using the other three descriptors, starting with *In line with expectations* and working up until a descriptor is reached where the work being assessed **clearly does not match all or nearly all** the Features of Quality. The work is then allocated

to the preceding descriptor where it is obvious that the student's work matches **all or nearly all** of the Features of Quality.

## At the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

The facilitator leads the meeting and keeps the record of the decisions made in a [template](#) (see Appendix 3)

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's 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.
- Advice and support for facilitators in managing the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will be available in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit.

## After the Subject Learning and Assessment Review 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 generates a short report, focusing on the outcomes of the discussion of student work at the meeting (see the report template at Appendix 3), and submits it to the school principal.

The facilitator may also ask teachers, should they wish, to contribute some of their samples of 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 English: Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task

## Classroom-Based Assessments

There are two Classroom-Based Assessments in English. 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, in Year Three, will complete an Assessment Task which is sent to the State Examinations Commission, with the final examination script for that subject, for marking. The Classroom-Based Assessments for English are outlined in Table A below.

**Table A: Classroom-Based Assessments – English**

Classroom-Based Assessment	Format	Student preparation	Completion by
<b>Oral Communication</b>	Individual or group communication <b>or</b> presentation	During a period of three weeks, with support and guidance by teacher	End of Year Two <sup>1</sup>
<b>The Collection of the Student's Texts</b>	Two texts chosen by the student from his/her portfolio of texts	Texts produced over time with support and guidance by teacher	End of term 1, Year Three

## The Assessment Task

The Assessment Task is a written task completed by students during class time, which is not marked by the class teacher, but is sent to the State Examinations Commission for marking. 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 English this is The Collection of the Student's Texts. The details of the Assessment Task are set out in these guidelines and are outlined in Table B below.

<sup>1</sup> In the first year when Classroom-Based Assessments are introduced, 2016, the Oral Communication may be completed at the end of Year Two or in the first term of Year Three.



**Table B: Assessment Task – English**

	<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	The AT will be based on The Collection of the Student's Texts	Following completion of the second Classroom-Based Assessment

## Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Oral Communication

The Classroom-Based Assessment, Oral Communication, has two priorities – the development of students’ basic research skills and the communication.

*Students are given an opportunity to choose a topic or issue that is of interest or importance to them and to carry out an exploration over time. The development of basic research skills will be central here, e.g. searching for information, reading and note-making, organising material, using key questions to give shape to ideas, developing a point of view, preparing a presentation, using props, hand-outs etc. This task provides useful opportunities for practice of a range of oral presentation styles. In addition, the task offers students opportunities, where appropriate, to collaborate with classmates and others in gathering and developing materials, leading to the Oral Communication for summative assessment.*

Junior Cycle English: Curriculum Specification (2014)

The main learning outcomes to be assessed through **Oral Communication** are:

Oral Language	Reading	Writing
OL 1, 5, 7, 9, 13	R 3	W 3, 5

There are two areas of activity to the assessment of Oral Communication: preparation and communication. Students will be credited for preparation they have done for their Oral Communication. The evidence of this preparation will be demonstrated during the Oral Communication itself.

Oral Communication promotes student engagement through:

- Choice about the topic on which to focus
- Choice about communication formats
- The possibilities for student collaboration, including, where appropriate, 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 group member to make an individual contribution to the assessment.

### Completing Oral Communication

In completing the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment students may use **any one** of the following formats:

<b>1. Performance</b>	The student may participate in a scripted or improvised performance, including drama, alone or with others.
<b>2. Presentation</b>	The student may speak with or without notes, and a reading of a prepared script is allowable.
<b>3. Interview</b>	The student may respond to questions asked by the teacher and/or other students; the student may assume the role of interviewer as well as respondent in a dialogue setting.
<b>4. Response to stimulus material</b>	Stimulus material—visuals, written text, aural text, and so on—may be used by the teacher and/or student/s to promote, prompt or guide oral communication.

Oral Communication can be completed by the student as **an individual** or as **a member of a group**. The number of students in a group should be such as to allow each group member to make a meaningful contribution.

## Choosing the topic

Each student or group of students will identify **one topic**. In general, topics may range from school-based or course-related topics —e.g. an exploration of or response to a text being studied—to surveys regarding matters of interest to students, to investigations of issues outside school.

The suggested topics are:

An interesting sports person; writer, performer, or film director; hobby etc.	An organisation with which the student is involved	An investigation of a text, or writer, or film	An activity or interest or pastime the student is involved in, e.g. music, sport, fashion, reading, drama, film <sup>2</sup> etc.
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<sup>2</sup> This final suggested topic might involve choosing a question or issue and finding the answer, e.g. *Social media: tips and pitfalls*. Topics might arise from interests of a cross-curricular nature, e.g. from history, CSPE, SPHE, and so on.

## Preparation

While oral communication will form part of everyday learning and teaching across Years One and Two, the preparation for and communication by students of their Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed over a period of three school weeks.

Preparation might include some original investigative work by the student e.g. interview, survey, emailing, letter writing, and so on. Where sources are used, the use of more than one source will give students scope to cross-reference. This is particularly important where students use internet-based sources, where they should be encouraged to search effectively and ethically, and to evaluate and synthesise material. As the purpose of this assessment is to encourage confidence and proficiency in oral communication, students should be encouraged to experiment with their oral communication or presentation by practising short pieces on other students where possible or with a recording device.

In preparation for the assessment each student must complete a Student Reflection Note (see Appendix 1). 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.

Although this phase of the task is monitored by the teacher, the preparation is the student's own work, carried out individually or in active, meaningful collaboration as part of a group.

## Communication

As a guideline, Oral Communication by a student should last about three minutes, including time set aside for engagement with the listener/audience. Teacher support for the student's communication, in the form of questions or interventions, may be part of Oral Communication.

## Inclusive assessment

Where a school has accommodations and supports (e.g. the use of Irish Sign Language, support provided by a Special Needs Assistant, or the support of assistive technologies) in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year, these supports should also be in place for the Classroom-Based Assessments. In these cases, the school will have decided that the student has a specific physical or learning difficulty and will use reasonable accommodations to remove as far as possible the impact of the difficulty on the student's performance in assessments, so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement. The accommodations are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.

## Oral Communication: advice for students

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

As part of your preparation for Oral Communication you must complete a written Student Reflection Note. This will include:

- A title
- An account of the part you played and the materials or sources you accessed during your preparation
- A short personal reflection on your Oral Communication.

You will have freedom to choose the topic from the options outlined, bearing in mind the following:

- Even at the start of your preparation remember that this is an oral communication task, so think about how you will communicate with your listener/audience.
- The topic should be interesting for you but remember you need to complete your preparation and practice within the time allowed.
- Ask yourself one or more key questions about the topic or issue to help you focus and organise your preparation and communication.

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

- Choosing a topic
- Planning and preparation
- Practising and finalising the communication
- Participating in the communication as part of a group in which each member has a part to play.

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

## Assessing Oral Communication

### Features of Quality

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 the student work as best fitting one of the following Descriptors:

**Exceptional** describes a piece of work that reflects all of 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 appreciation of purpose and register, and the work is praised for its consistency. 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 errors that need to be addressed.

<b>Features of Quality for Oral Communication</b>
<p><b>Exceptional</b></p> <p>The student’s communication is remarkable for its fluency and its control of material used.</p> <p>The communication is imaginatively shaped to a very clear purpose.</p> <p>The student’s engagement with the audience/listener is compelling and sustained.</p>
<p><b>Above expectations</b></p> <p>The student’s communication is clear and convincing, and material has been very well chosen.</p> <p>Communication is fully shaped to its intended purpose.</p> <p>Engagement with the audience/listener is highly effective.</p>
<p><b>In line with expectations</b></p> <p>Communication is clear and convincing for the most part, showing knowledge of the subject of the communication.</p> <p>Communication is shaped to a purpose.</p> <p>Engagement with the audience/listener is reasonably well sustained.</p>
<p><b>Yet to meet expectations</b></p> <p>Communication is unconvincing although some knowledge of the subject of the communication is shown.</p> <p>The purpose of the communication is often unclear.</p> <p>Engagement with the audience/listener is haphazard or poorly sustained.</p>

Students will 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 of junior cycle.

## How the school supports the Oral Communication Classroom-Based Assessment

The process to be supported is as follows:

- Student preparation for and completion of their oral communication assessment is carried out during a defined time period of three weeks within class contact time to a national timetable.
- The assessment involves each student (as an individual or as part of a group) making a short oral communication or presentation based on the preparation they have done.
- Teachers will record samples of Oral Communications by students that they will use 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.
- Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review, 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).

## The timeline the school follows for Oral Communication

The period for completion of the Oral Communication and potential dates for related work for 2016 are set out in Table C.

**Table C: Completion of *Oral Communication***

	<b>Spring completion</b>	<b>Autumn completion<sup>3</sup></b>
Period for work on and completion of Oral Communication	Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> April to Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2016	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> September to Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2016
Latest date for provisional award of Descriptors by the teacher	Wednesday May 25 <sup>th</sup> 2016	Wednesday October 5 <sup>th</sup> 2016
Latest date for Subject Learning and Assessment Review	Friday May 27 <sup>th</sup> 2016	Friday October 7 <sup>th</sup> 2016

<sup>3</sup> In the first year when Classroom-Based Assessments are introduced, 2016, the Oral Communication may be completed at the end of Year 2 or in the first term of Year 3.



## Classroom-Based Assessment 2: The Collection of the Student's Texts

*Creative writing is a vital part of English, but students are not 'born' writers. They need to develop a voice and an identity, a good sense of audience, and an awareness of the process of writing – making notes from their reading and personal experience, trying things out, revising, and polishing for 'publication'. This is best done over time, with supportive feedback and scaffolding from the teacher. This assessment offers students a chance to celebrate their achievements as creators of texts by compiling a collection of their texts in a variety of genres over time and choosing a number of pieces to present for assessment.*

Junior Cycle English: Curriculum Specification (2014)

The main learning outcomes to be assessed through **The Collection of the Student's Texts** are

Oral Language	Reading	Writing
OL 1	R 2, 6, 8	W 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11

In the majority of cases, the work in the student's collection will arise from normal classwork. So a student might write a report having studied report writing and then select that piece of work for the collection. 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 replace the former. The development of the student's skills and appreciation of writing, as well as attendant skills in oral communication and reading, is the main purpose of the process.

The Collection of the Student's Texts promotes student engagement when students:

- Think about and choose what the text will be about
- Choose the formats in which to create texts, including digital texts
- Can develop texts through engagement with and creative imitation of a wide variety of texts encountered in junior cycle
- Collaborate through the discussion and exploration of topics and texts, along with their responses to them.

## Completing The Collection of the Student's Texts

The focus of activity will be on the creation of a range of student texts which might include pieces in the following genres: opinion piece, descriptive piece, a functional writing piece, autobiography, humorous piece, media piece, critique, narrative, an expressive piece (including a poem), drama or film script, and so on.

Note that the list of text types or genres suggested here is not intended to be exhaustive, but to suggest that the student's collection should be a varied one. Furthermore, some overlap between text forms and genres is to be expected e.g. a descriptive poem, a humorous opinion piece etc.

For the purposes of this assessment students will, during Years Two and Three, plan to complete and retain at least four pieces of work (texts). The texts retained should cover at least four genres.

Underlying and informing this task is a focus on the developmental nature of writing and on developing the student's understanding of the writing process. This will be best supported by consistent student practice in the art and craft of writing. To this end, students will include any draft work relating to the piece of writing although this work will not be assigned a Descriptor.

In preparation for the Classroom-Based Assessment in Year Three, the student will choose two texts to submit. A Student Reflection Note must be included with each of the texts.

### The Student Reflection Note

A template for a Student Reflection Note is provided in Appendix 2. 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 from creating the text and what the student might do differently on another occasion.

The note is used in the following ways:

- Students use it as a support for their ongoing practice in the art and craft of writing
- A completed Reflection Note accompanies each text to be included in The Collection of the Student's Texts.

Previous draft work related to each piece of writing may assist students in completing the student reflection note and undertaking the assessment task.

## The Collection of the Student's Texts: advice for students

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

In choosing your two texts you must complete a written Student Reflection Note for each text. This will include:

- The title and genre
- A brief note as to why you chose this genre
- A reflection on the piece of work.

You are free to choose any two texts you have worked on over the time period, bearing in mind that you may:

- Choose those texts that you think represent your best work **and/or**
- Consult with your teacher as to which texts represent your best work.

## Assessing The Collection of the Student's Texts

### Features of Quality

Key Features of Quality in support of student and teacher judgement for The Collection of the Student's Texts are described here. 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 all of 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 appreciation of purpose and register, and the work is praised for its consistency. 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 errors that need to be addressed.

<b>Features of Quality for The Collection of the Student’s Texts</b>
<p><b>Exceptional</b></p> <p>The student’s text shows creativity and command of the chosen genre.</p> <p>The writing is highly competent, marked by original ideas, and imaginative word choices are perfectly suited to the purpose of the text.</p> <p>The work is fully shaped for its intended receiver/audience.</p>
<p><b>Above expectations</b></p> <p>The student’s text shows very good control of the chosen genre.</p> <p>The writing is consistently competent, and effective word choices are very well matched to the purpose of the text.</p> <p>The work is clearly shaped with the receiver/audience in mind.</p>
<p><b>In line with expectations</b></p> <p>The student’s text shows good awareness of the chosen genre.</p> <p>The writing is generally competent, and word choices match the purpose of the text well.</p> <p>Content and development of ideas reveal consistent awareness of the receiver/audience.</p>
<p><b>Yet to meet expectations</b></p> <p>The student’s text shows little awareness of the chosen genre.</p> <p>The writing lacks competence, and word choices may be inappropriate to the intended purpose of the text.</p> <p>Content and development of ideas reveal little awareness of a receiver/audience.</p>

## How the school supports the Collection of the Student's Texts

In brief, the process to be supported is as follows:

- The specification recommends that students build up their varied collection of texts over time with guidance and direction from the teacher.
- Completion of the process involves each student choosing two texts from the collection to submit for assessment.
- The school or individual subject department retains a small sample set of final texts in support of the process of Subject Learning and Assessment Review.
- Teachers will retain samples of The Collection of the Student's Texts (both texts) that they will use 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.
- Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review 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).

## 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 English. The Assessment Task is based on the principal objective of The Collection of the Student's Texts, which *offers students a chance to celebrate their achievements as creators of texts by compiling a collection of their texts in a variety of genres*. The knowledge and skills developed by students during this Classroom-Based Assessment emerge from their growing awareness of *the process of writing*.

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

- Engagement with a short stimulus in written, audio, audio-visual or multi-modal format to prepare for the written task
- A written task that tests the students in one or more of
  - their ability to outline and/or discuss their experience of compiling The Collection of the Student's Texts
  - their understanding and evaluation of that experience
  - their capacity to demonstrate and reflect on the skills they have developed.

The Assessment Task relates to the second Classroom-Based Assessment, The Collection of the Student's Texts, which assesses the following learning outcomes

Oral Language	Reading	Writing
OL 1	R 2, 6, 8	W 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11

These outcomes encourage the student to read, write and listen to a wide variety of texts and registers. It is expected that, at a level appropriate to their age and experience, students will have developed an awareness of key features of a range of texts, such as purpose, register and audience and will have developed some familiarity with the process of drafting and editing.

The Assessment Task consists of two stages: firstly, engaging with and discussing a piece of stimulus material to prepare for the written task; and secondly, reflecting upon and writing about their experiences as creators of texts. 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.

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 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 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 English.

Examples of Assessment Tasks and guidelines on how to organise and manage the Assessment Task in the time provided are available at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) and in the *Assessment Toolkit*.

## The timeline the school follows for The Collection of the Student's Texts and the Assessment Task

Students build their collection or portfolio of texts over time. The key date to establish at the outset is the date to be set aside for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review. In setting the date the school should be guided the timeline provided in these guidelines and by its own local circumstances bearing in mind that the assessment of students' texts must be completed by end of year three. Once the school has decided on this date the teachers and students can plan for the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment.

The Assessment Task for English will be undertaken following the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment. It will be completed in normal class time (two class periods should be devoted to the completion). Details on how to organise the completion of the Assessment Task across two class periods are provided in the Assessment Toolkit. The first class should be given over to engagement with stimulus material made available by the NCCA, and to student reflection on their collection of texts in preparation for completion of the answer booklet. The completion of the answer booklet will take place in the second lesson. Schools will have some flexibility in choosing the time of completion, with a period being identified during which the Assessment Task must be completed 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.



**Completion of *The Collection of Student's Texts***

Latest date for student completion of <i>The Collection of Student's Texts</i>	Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2016
Latest date for award of Descriptors by the teacher	Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
Latest date for completion of Subject Learning and Assessment Review	Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Completion of the *Assessment Task***

Assessment Task completed	Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> to Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
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**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 1 Oral Communication: Template for Student Reflection Note

<b>SCHOOL</b>		<b>STUDENT</b>	
<b>TITLE</b>			
<b>The part I played in communication and preparation, including material used/accessed</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 2 The Collection of the Student's Texts: Template for Student Reflection Note

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

## Appendix 3 Facilitator’s Report

### Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting

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>	

