



NCCA

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

Brief for monitoring and review of Junior Cycle Subjects

Appendix 1 from report of the
review of the early enactment of
Junior Cycle English

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Introduction

In line with the Framework for Junior Cycle, new specifications for all subjects are being introduced on a phased basis between 2014 and 2019. Once each subject specification has been experienced by a cohort of students across the three-year span of their Junior Cycle, the NCCA will conduct an interim review to monitor enactment of the specification in schools. This scoping exercise will analyse, evaluate and explore:

- how well the specification gets to the heart of the learning aspired to within that subject and more broadly within the Framework for Junior Cycle
- the assessment elements within each subject, as experienced by students and teachers
- the myriad ways teachers are exercising their professional judgement to mediate the new specification in their schools and classrooms.

The results of each review will be published in report form and presented to the Board for Junior Cycle for consideration. Where minor tweaks and/or amendments to the specification are recommended in the report, this work will be carried out by the relevant NCCA Education Officer and the amended specification re-published on curriculum online. If it arises that more significant amendments to the specification are deemed necessary at this early stage in enactment, the development group for the subject may be re-convened to oversee this work. The amended specification will then be presented to Council for approval before being re-published on curriculum online. Schools will be notified that changes have been made to the specification.

Similarly, amendments or changes to the Assessment Guidelines, should they arise, will be made by the relevant NCCA Education Officer and re-published on curriculum online.

Scope and nature of the review

Monitoring and review of each subject will be informed by the following documents:

- Background paper and brief for the review of the subject in question
- Specification for the subject
- Assessment Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessments and, where applicable, the Assessment Task
- NCCA sample assessment questions; the Assessment Task; SEC sample papers; SEC final exam papers and/or Practical Examination brief.

The following areas will be the focus of discussions:

- Student experiences of the subject in question, including the transition from primary to post-primary
- Linking the student experience to the ‘big picture’ ideas in the Framework for Junior Cycle
- Key skills in the Junior Cycle classroom
- Course overview and, where relevant, text lists (English, Gaeilge), exponents (MFL) etc.
- Learning outcomes
- Planning and task design for teaching, learning and on-going assessment
- NCCA published *Examples of Student Work* and their role in supporting teachers
- Classroom-Based Assessments and using Features of Quality to decide on the level of achievement
- Teacher collaboration (including subject learning and assessment review meetings)
- The final exam and, as applicable, the Assessment Task or practical examination
- Reporting on student achievement
- Perspectives on the transition from Junior to Senior cycle for this and future cohorts

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- Inclusion in teaching, learning and assessment
- Experiences of the specification in some non-mainstream / non-school based settings

Proposed methodology for gathering data

A mixed-methods approach to gathering data will be used. Data will be gathered as follows:

Note that the approach to gathering data may vary from subject to subject and/or may evolve over time

- **Focus groups of teachers in a number of schools** will participate in workshops to share their experiences of enacting the specification, including new modes of assessment
- **Student voice** will be captured during workshops with students across a range of cohorts
- **Three consultation events** will take place. Teachers and others from the education sector will be invited to share their experiences and perspectives on enacting the specification
- **Written submissions** to the evaluation will be invited from all who wish to contribute. To facilitate analysis of the data, a template will be provided.
- **JCT will compile a feedback document** highlighting common themes, concerns, queries and observations from teachers during CPD events, in-school visits, online webinars and through queries to info@jct.ie.
- **Inspectorate report**: a submission from DES inspectors will capture observations about the impact of the specification thus far on teaching and learning in schools
- **SEC report** will explore teacher responses to the sample papers and student responses to and achievement in the Assessment Task, and the final exam.

Analysing the data

Each review, broadly speaking, will:

- Briefly re-iterate what the new subject specification set out to achieve, as it was being developed
- Analyse the early impact of the specification on teaching, learning, assessment and reporting
- Explore teacher-reported and student-reported experiences of and attitudes towards their classroom experience of the specification
- Examine opportunities and challenges arising from Classroom-Based Assessments
- Identify areas where further support and/or clarity is needed
- Offer some interim recommendations as the specification continues to be enacted and experienced by various student cohorts over the coming decade and beyond. Key findings and recommendations will be shared with all of the relevant education stakeholders to inform future directions for the subject and, where relevant, for junior cycle more broadly.