



## Amendments to Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2

In response to stakeholder requests, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commissioned a review of the early enactment of Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2 in 2022.

This review was carried out by Professor Ó Duibhir and Dr Colm Mac Gearailt from Dublin City University’s SEALBHÚ. The full report is available on [Publications | NCCA](#)

### Context

The introduction of new specifications for Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2 in schools in September 2017 marked the first time that a model of differentiated curriculum provision was offered for the learning and teaching of Irish in lower secondary education in Ireland. Their introduction occurred at a time of significant change within post-primary education and followed a protracted industrial dispute. The main consequence of this dispute was delayed engagement with CPD, which impacted significantly on the introduction of the new specifications for Irish.

In addition to this, during year three of implementation, there was significant disruption to learning and teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in schools being closed for extended periods and learning and teaching moving to online platforms. As a result, students and teachers did not fully experience the three-year junior cycle as planned in the new specifications.

The early enactment review drew attention to strengths of the specifications. These included a broad welcome for the differentiated model of provision at this stage of education; the level of choice and selection of texts; an increased understanding of the use of learning outcomes and the flexibility offered by these; the use of active learning methodologies; and the use of spoken Irish as a motivator for students’ learning. In addition, the review highlighted challenges associated with the level of pitch in the T2 specification and difficulties encountered at the primary to post-primary and the junior to senior cycle transition points; an overemphasis on literature at the expense of the development of oral language skills; and an insufficient emphasis on conversational Irish with assessment components not providing sufficient support for the development of same.

Informed by the review’s context, NCCA Council have given significant and careful consideration to the findings of this early enactment report and have agreed actions and timelines as follows:

Student cohort	Actions
2022 – 2025 (current 1 <sup>st</sup> years) T1 and T2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction in minimum volume of literature to be engaged with in <b>second and third year</b></li> <li>▪ CBA1 takes place in second year</li> <li>▪ Reimagined CBA2 in revised assessment guidelines.</li> </ul>
2023 – 2026 (students entering 1 <sup>st</sup> year in September 2023) T1 and T2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction in minimum volume of literature to be engaged with in <b>first, second and third year</b></li> <li>▪ CBA1 takes place in second year</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Reimagined CBA2 in revised assessment guidelines.</li></ul>
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Council was mindful of the importance of responding early to the experiences and concerns of teachers and students. As a result, some of these actions will bring about changes for students already in junior cycle with other changes taking effect for students beginning their junior cycle in September 2023.

Amendments to the [T1 and T2 specifications](#) were made in response to this review. These amendments apply to the student cohort commencing first year in 2022 and to subsequent junior cycle cohorts.

Amendments have also been made to the [Assessment Guidelines for T1 and T2](#).

### **Prioritising a follow-up Early Enactment Review of Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2**

The NCCA Council has given considerable time and particular attention to the early enactment review's insights into teachers' and students' feedback on the oral language aspect of the specifications. Discussions have centred on the importance of these language skills being supported, developed, and assessed appropriately.

Conscious of the context for the early review together with the need to respond with evidence-informed decisions and actions that can have a positive impact on all students' oral Irish, the Council has prioritised a follow-up review which will gather more detailed feedback on schools' experience of working with the T1 and T2 Irish specifications.

This follow-up review will give particular attention to pedagogies used by teachers to enact the T1 and T2 learning outcomes as they develop students' confidence and capacity to speak and interact with others in Irish, and to creative and engaging ways of assessing this learning. In doing this, the review will focus on approaches which are inclusive of all students who are learning Irish. The follow-up review will focus on the student cohort commencing junior cycle in September 2023. This also provides an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the changes detailed above, introduced in response to the first early enactment review.

The Council is committed to prioritising time, on an annual basis, for considering the findings coming through from the follow-up review. These findings, together with wider research, such as NCCA's ongoing longitudinal study on schools' experience of introducing the Framework for Junior Cycle and relevant research by other organisations, may necessitate further actions being taken to support the teaching and learning of Junior Cycle Irish for all students. The Council will continue to give particular attention in these deliberations to oral Irish skills.

## Summary of key amendments

### Literature

There is a reduction in the minimum volume of literature to be engaged with across the three years of junior cycle. This change aims to increase the time available to focus specifically on the development of students' capacity to speak and interact with others through Irish.

- For student cohort 2022 – 2025 (current first years) a reduction will be made to the minimum volume of literature they must engage with in second and third year.  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/80151-amendments-to-junior-cycle-irish-t1-and-t2-specifications-and-assessment-arrangements-for-classroom-based-assessments-1-and-2/>
- For student cohort 2023 – 2026 (students entering first year in September 2023) and for subsequent student cohorts, a reduction will be made to the minimum volume of literature they must engage with in first, second and third year.  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/80151-amendments-to-junior-cycle-irish-t1-and-t2-specifications-and-assessment-arrangements-for-classroom-based-assessments-1-and-2/>

NCCA will conduct a full review and revision of the content of the Junior Cycle Irish text lists in the 2023/24 school year. This review work will focus on the availability of texts and their suitability for a variety of school contexts. This is with a view to supporting teachers and students in selecting texts that are engaging, relevant and of a standard suitable to students' learning needs.

### Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs):

#### **CBA 1: Language Portfolio**

CBA 1 will now take place in second year in line with all other junior cycle subjects.

This change seeks to alleviate some of the time pressures in third year identified by review participants and allow for a greater focus on the development of oral communication skills in third year.

This change applies for students currently in first year and for subsequent student cohorts.

#### **CBA 2: Communicative Task**

NCCA will undertake a review of CBA 2 across T1 and T2. CBA 2 for Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2 will be re-imagined to ensure greater emphasis on and opportunities for students to develop their ability to speak and interact with others in the Irish. These amendments will be drafted with input from teachers. These amendments seek to respond to feedback from teachers and students on the need to place greater emphasis on conversational Irish, with less focus on spoken production and more focus on spoken interaction.

The detail of the reimagined CBA 2 for T1 and T2 will be published in updated versions of the Assessment Guidelines before the end of April 2023. All information will be available at [Gaeilge \(curriculumonline.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/80151-amendments-to-junior-cycle-irish-t1-and-t2-specifications-and-assessment-arrangements-for-classroom-based-assessments-1-and-2/)

This change applies to current first year students, who commenced junior cycle in September 2022, and to all subsequent student cohorts.

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