



**NCCA**

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

# Media statement for the fourth interim research report on the implementation and impact of the Framework for Junior Cycle

9 December 2024

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## *Student voices feature strongly in latest research report on the implementation and impact of the Framework for Junior Cycle*

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) welcomes the publication of the latest research report on *Exploring the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle: A longitudinal study*. This is the fourth in a series of in-depth research reports on the implementation and impact of the Framework and presents findings from the second round of case-study visits to the 12 schools taking part in the four-year study.

The research in Interim Report 4 is based upon data collected from 31 student focus groups involving a total of 219 students, as well as surveys of 1,782 students across ten of the 12 school sites. In addition, the University of Limerick research team interviewed 63 teachers and 12 principals, observed classroom learning and teaching in practice, and gathered the views of 30 parents through interviews.

As such, the report provides valuable insights from those at the forefront of day-to-day experience of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

Student voices feature strongly in Interim Report 4, which explored their experiences of and responses to the Eight Principles of Junior Cycle education: Wellbeing; Learning to Learn; Choice and Flexibility; Quality; Creativity and Innovation; Engagement and Participation; Continuity and Development; and Inclusive Education. Teachers and principals were also asked for their views on embedding and implementing the Principles in practice.

The insights from Interim Report 4 include:

- Junior Cycle students enjoyed opportunities for creativity and active learning, with Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) providing the main outlet for creativity.
- A large proportion of students felt they had the opportunity to voice their opinion although students were less likely to agree that their opinion was acted upon.
- Of the Principles of Junior Cycle education, Wellbeing was the principle that received the most negative comments from students, with students reporting feeling overwhelmed by their workload and examination-related stress.
- The Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examination remains the 'key lens' through which teachers evaluated the Junior Cycle; the Junior Cycle terminal examination and the Leaving Certificate remain a central priority of the Junior Cycle experience.
- Principals tended to have a more positive view of the enactment of the Principles of Junior Cycle than students, teachers and parents.

Welcoming the report, Mr Seán Ó'Foghlú, NCCA Chairperson, highlighted: 'Rigorous, robust research is critical to the NCCA's work and contributes to a strong evidence base for the Council's development of curriculum and assessment advice for the Minister for Education. I want to thank

and commend the UL Research Team led by Professor Oliver McGarr, for their work in carrying out this important longitudinal study. The study's findings will make an important contribution to the Council's work as we move into 2025.'

The second round of case-study visits to schools, upon which Interim Report 4 is based, took place from September 2023 to January 2024. The first round of case study visits is reported in Interim Report 2. The research findings in Interim Report 4 point to key issues and ongoing themes that have emerged from the enactment for the Framework for Junior Cycle:

- Teachers indicated that their teaching had become more interactive since the introduction of the Framework, with greater engagement in student-centred activities and group work, largely in the fulfilment of CBAs.
- Some teachers believed the quality at Junior Cycle had 'dropped' since the introduction of the Framework, which was largely perceived to be due to the removal of certain content areas within a subject.
- The lack of weightings for CBAs in the final grade was a concern for many participants but it is unclear if allocating greater weighting would cause an increased focus on the grade, with the process of learning becoming secondary.
- The approach to Wellbeing, and the capacity of the Framework to support students' wellbeing, warrants consideration.
- Inclusion and inclusive education was not a dominant discussion point; while it was raised, it was often specifically relevant to the individual's context.

The NCCA Chief Executive, Arlene Forster commented: 'The next and final report on 'Exploring the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle: A longitudinal study', will consider the research data in its totality and consider the extent to which the key goals of the curriculum change, as set out in the 2015 Framework for Junior Cycle, have been achieved. That report is expected to be published in early 2025. The study into the Framework for Junior Cycle is of major significance to the NCCA's work and to the wider education system. The findings will assist the Council in supporting schools' ongoing work with the Framework and in revisiting the Framework and advising on updating it, if and where needed, to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment across post-primary schools.'

**Ends**

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#### **Note to editors:**

The Report and more information about the research is available online at: [Junior Cycle National Project | University of Limerick \(ul.ie\)](#) Social media: Twitter: @ncca.ie, Facebook: @nccaireland, Instagram: ncca\_irl

#### **Background Information:**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is a statutory body of the Department of Education. We review curriculum and assessment for early childhood, Primary, Junior, and Senior cycles in Ireland. We work with learners, teachers, parents and stakeholders to develop research informed curriculum and assessment. The Council is made up of 26 members representing the partners in education, industry and trade union interests, students, parents and other educational interests. The Council also includes one nominee each of the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.