



## Focus on Key Skills in Junior Cycle Business Studies

The introduction and implementation of Junior Cycle reform within Business Studies has placed a renewed focus not just on “what” we teach but also on “how” we teach. This renewed focus on “how” gives us an opportunity to further and purposefully activate and embed the key skills of Junior Cycle within our Business Studies classrooms.

“Key Skills will be brought to life through the learning experiences encountered by the student and these will be evident within the assessment approaches used within the classroom and will be embedded in the learning outcomes of every Junior Cycle subject.”

Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015, p.13/14

While each of the 8 Key Skills can be activated and embedded within Business Studies. In this newsletter we will focus on one key skill. Managing Information and Thinking in the Business Studies Classroom.

### Managing Information and Thinking in the Business Studies Classroom

This key skill assists students in developing their skills in areas such as judging and discriminating between information types and sources and helps students to develop strategies for organising information.

The key elements within Managing Information and Thinking are:

1. Being **curious**
2. Gathering, recording, **organising and evaluating** information
3. **Thinking** creatively and critically
4. **Reflecting** on and **evaluating** my learning
5. Using digital technology to access, manage and share knowledge



### Teacher Reflections and practical advice for the Business Studies Classroom

For teachers engaging with classroom based assessments (CBAs) for the first time, a reminder that there is a need to familiarise yourself with the NCCA Assessment Guidelines. Additional supports in the form of webinars and slides from previous CPD days are available on the JCT website (see CPD supports tab on drop down menu).



It would be beneficial to speak with your colleagues who have previously completed CBAs as this will help inform you and also ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to assessment in your school. Teachers who provided feedback have emphasized the need to plan for CBAs well in advance. Since decisions about the exact timing of CBAs (within the NCCA defined windows) are now school based, business teachers should consult with each other and liaise with school management in order to plan for the following academic year.

Teachers also spoke about the need to provide students with an overview of the task in advance and also to share and discuss the features of quality with them. Teachers felt that knowing what success looks like greatly enhanced students capacity to manage the process. Teachers who did not adopt this approach said they were sometimes ‘firefighting’ and had to provide ongoing direction to students in order to resolve their lack of understanding.

Research and reflection templates were frequently used in class as working documents and teachers said this enabled ongoing reflection. Students were able to record and reflect on aspects of their work as they occurred. Teachers felt they were also in a better position to provide ongoing formative feedback based on the draft templates provided by JCT and that the quality of the final versions of these student templates was improved. Once the descriptors had been finalised, most teachers said they returned the work to students and provided feedback. They generally provided written feedback for CBA1 (based on the FOQ) and in most cases oral feedback was provided for CBA2, although some teachers used written feedback here also. A small number of teachers said they hadn’t provided students with any feedback apart from a descriptor, but they could see the value in providing more detailed formative feedback and resolved to do so in the future.

Many teachers expressed the view that the CBA process was more manageable the second time around as they had a better understanding of the requirements and timing. Some said they assisted students in their choice of action plans or topics which could realistically be completed in a classroom during the designated time period. This led to a better experience for all involved and is certainly in keeping with the vision of it being a classroom based assessment. For a few aspects which were not possible to complete in class time teachers encouraged students to maximise classroom preparation time. For example, creating a questionnaire and analysing results in class, or storyboarding their presentations / support material in class before accessing some DLT resources outside the classroom. This also helped teachers to maintain the integrity of the process as they could verify that it was the students own work. Students engaged with and generally enjoyed the tasks. Some found it challenging to work with others or to present to an audience but teachers generally appreciated that the CBA process allowed students to further develop some important skills. For CBA1 teachers used a variety of approaches in selecting groups. While there is no ‘one best way’, our feedback suggests, that teacher selected mixed ability groups were most common.

**Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, we hope you have found it useful and we wish you a very restful and peaceful Winter break.**

