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An Roinn Oideachais agus  
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**To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Post-Primary Schools, Special Schools and Chief Executives of ETBs**

**Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2017/18 and 2018/19**

**Circular Letter 0015 /2017**

## ***1. INTRODUCTION***

### **1.1. Purpose of this circular**

This circular supersedes Circular 24/2016 entitled “Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2015/16 and 2016/17” and sets out the arrangements now governing the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 with particular reference to the school years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Boards of Management, Principal teachers of all second-level schools, special schools and the Chief Executives (CE) of all Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are asked to ensure that this circular is brought to the immediate attention of all teachers. Boards of Management are also requested to ensure that parents/guardians are advised of these arrangements.

### **1.2. Key changes for school years 2017/18 and 2018/19**

This section summarises the main changes in Junior Cycle for schools for the school years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The following subjects will be introduced to those students entering first year in September 2017:

| <i>Subject</i>                                      | <i>Introduced to 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students in:</i> | <i>First recorded on JCPA in:</i> |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Irish   | September 2017  | Autumn 2020                       |
| Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian) | September 2017  | Autumn 2020                       |
| Visual Art  | September 2017  | Autumn 2020                       |

The following subjects will be introduced to those students entering first year in September 2018:

| <i>Subject</i> | <i>Introduced to 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students in:</i> | <i>First recorded on JCPA in:</i> |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Mathematics    | September 2018  | Autumn 2021                       |
| Home Economics | September 2018  | Autumn 2021                       |
| Music          | September 2018  | Autumn 2021                       |
| History        | September 2018  | Autumn 2021                       |
| Geography      | September 2018  | Autumn 2021                       |

### **1.2.1. Wellbeing Programme**

In addition to the above subjects the new area of learning entitled Wellbeing will be introduced for First Years from September 2017. Key components of this area of learning will include the following subjects/specifications: Physical Education, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) (including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). Students' achievements in the area of Wellbeing will be recorded for the first time on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) in Autumn 2020.

### **1.2.2. Level 1 Learning Programmes**

Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) will be made available to schools from September 2017 on a trial basis. These programmes will address the learning needs of the very small number of students in the low moderate, and severe and profound range of general learning disabilities.

### **1.2.3. Irish subject specifications**

With effect from September 2017, Junior Cycle provision for Irish in post-primary schools and settings will comprise two specifications. Schools are required to implement the new specifications for first-year students from September 2017.<sup>1</sup>

The L1 Irish specification is targeted at those students for whom Irish is their first language and those studying subjects other than Irish through the medium of Irish. It is intended for implementation in Irish-medium post-primary schools and in English-medium schools in which one or more subject (other than Irish) are taught through the medium of Irish<sup>2</sup>. The L1 specification may also be implemented in all other schools.

The L2 Irish specification is targeted at second-language learners of Irish and should be implemented for first-year students in all post-primary schools and settings where the L1 specification is not being offered.

Schools should consider the Irish language development needs of their students when deciding on which specification to offer. Generally it is envisaged that schools will offer either the L1 or L2 specification. However, it is open to a school, having regard to the Irish language ability and proficiency of its students, to offer both specifications in exceptional circumstances.

Teachers teaching Irish in the different settings will receive support on implementing the L1 and / or L2 specification, as appropriate.

### **1.3. Related documentation**

This circular refers to the following documentation:

- The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*, available at [www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Junior-Cycle-/A-Framework-for-Junior-Cycle1.html](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Junior-Cycle-/A-Framework-for-Junior-Cycle1.html)
- The *Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation* (22 May 2015) and its appendix published 5 July 2015 available at <http://www.juniorcycle.ie/Curriculum/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle>.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, schools in the Gaeltacht are being invited in Spring 2017 to seek recognition as a Gaeltacht school in accordance with language-based criteria. To achieve Gaeltacht school recognition, schools will have the opportunity to work towards educational provision entirely through the medium of Irish (apart from the English and other language curricula) over the timeline of this five-year Policy. One of the language criteria for second-level schools includes a requirement to implement the L1 Irish specifications at junior cycle and encourage their uptake by students, particularly native speakers of Irish. The implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in schools will begin on a phased basis from September 2017.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Aonaid lán-Ghaeilge, Sruthanna lán-Ghaeilge

- Subject specifications for each of the subjects to be taught at Junior Cycle; these specifications are developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and approved by the Minister. Over time, each of the subject specifications will replace the syllabuses for each Junior Certificate subject; available at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/>
- Guidelines for Level 2 Learning Programmes. The Level 2 Learning Programmes are designed for students whose learning disabilities fall in the range of low mild to high moderate general learning disability and are available at <http://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-2-LPs>
- Guidelines for Level 1 Priority Learning Units (PLUs). These are designed for students with general learning disabilities in the range of lower functioning moderate to severe and profound categories and will be available in 2017.
- Specifications for Junior Cycle short courses designed by the NCCA for optional use by schools; available at <http://www.juniorcycle.ie/Planning/Short-Course-Development>
- Guidelines for schools on the development of short courses at Junior Cycle; available at <http://www.juniorcycle.ie/>
- Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle, developed by the NCCA; available at [http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA\\_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf](http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf)

## ***2. CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT IN JUNIOR CYCLE***

### **2.1. The curriculum and assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle**

The curriculum and assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle are as set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 and in the related specifications and syllabuses developed by the NCCA and approved by the Minister. Each school should use the Framework to plan a programme for the three years of Junior Cycle that meets the requirements set out in this circular, is informed by the particular learning needs and interests of the students, and reflects the characteristic spirit of the school. The programme planned for students entering junior cycle in 2017/18 and 2018/19 should be available for students and parents/guardians before the end of the school year prior to the student attending the school i.e. by May 2017 for those entering in 2017/2018.

### **2.2. Subjects, short courses, priority learning units and other learning activities**

The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* provides that students will study:

- A range of subjects  
OR
- A combination of subjects and short courses  
OR
- In the case of some individual students with special education needs, a combination of priority learning units, and/or short courses and/or subjects, suited to their individual needs  
AND
- With effect from September 2017, a Programme in the area of Wellbeing.

Schools will ensure that the 8 key skills and 24 statements of learning, described in the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*, feature appropriately and progressively in the programmes offered to their junior cycle students and in accordance with the timeline prescribed for phased implementation of the Framework.

### **2.3. Phasing of Junior Cycle Reform**

During the phasing-in of the curriculum and assessment arrangements prescribed in the *Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015* students will study a number of subjects described in new Junior Cycle specifications published since 2014 and subjects described in Junior Certificate syllabuses published prior to 2012. Details of the subjects available are at *Appendix 1*.

### **2.4. Number of Subjects and Short Courses studied by Students**

To help junior cycle students manage the demands of Junior Cycle and to ensure that the requirements in relation to the assessment process are not excessive, the following arrangements will apply:

#### Students who commenced Junior Cycle in 2014

For students who entered first year in all types of recognised second-level schools<sup>3</sup> in September 2014 and who will complete their Junior Cycle in June 2017, the following requirements apply:

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<sup>3</sup> All types of recognised second-level schools includes voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools, and schools operated under the auspices of Education and Training Boards

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Subjects and short courses | <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ study a range of subjects for State Certified Final Examination<sup>4</sup> and for reporting through the JCPA</li> <li style="text-align: center;"><i>OR</i></li> <li>▪ study a range of subjects for Final Examination and a maximum of 4 short courses for reporting through the JCPA</li> </ul> <p>Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The list of possible subjects will be found in Appendix 1</li> <li>▪ Generally, most students will study between 8 and 10 subjects</li> <li>▪ Each student must include Irish, English and Mathematics among the subjects that he/she studies.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>▪ Schools may include a maximum of four short courses in the Junior Cycle programme followed by any individual student but are strongly advised to limit the number of short courses they offer. It is not the aim or intention that short courses would replace existing subjects.</li> </ul> |
| AND                        |  |
| CSPE <sup>6</sup>          | <p>Students must study Civic, Social and Political Education following <i>either</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specifications for the short course in CSPE (2016)</li> <li>▪ or as a further additional subject for final examination purposes following the Junior Certificate syllabus for CSPE (1996)<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>   |
| AND                        |  |
| PE <sup>6</sup>            | <p>Students must study Physical Education following <i>either</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in Physical Education (2016)</li> <li>▪ <i>or</i> the junior cycle syllabus in Physical Education (2003)</li> </ul>   |

<sup>4</sup> State Certified Final Examination will hereafter in this Circular be referred to as Final Examination.

<sup>5</sup> Certain students may be exempted from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular M10/94.

<sup>6</sup> Schools are reminded that there is a minimum threshold of time across the three years of junior cycle which should be provided for PE, SPHE and CSPE:PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (i.e. the most common current allocation provided by schools—two class periods per week). SPHE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (the same time allocation as required by the current junior cycle framework for SPHE, including RSE). CSPE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (the same time allocation as required currently).

<sup>7</sup> 2019 is the last year that the current Junior Certificate examination in Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is available.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| AND                  |  |
| SPHE <sup>6</sup>    | Students must study Social, Personal and Health Education following <i>either</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in SPHE (2016)</li> <li>▪ <i>or</i> the junior cycle syllabus in SPHE (2000)</li> </ul>   |
| AND                  |  |
| Other learning areas | Students may engage in other learning activities set out in a school's programme for junior cycle. These can include social, cultural, pastoral, scientific, entrepreneurial and other activities that can support the 24 statements of learning and the 8 key skills.<br><br>The Junior Cycle programme must include guidance education.<br><br>Some schools will also provide students with a course in religious education reflective of their own ethos as part of a junior cycle programme. |

Students who commenced Junior Cycle in either September 2015 or September 2016:

In all types of recognised second-level schools, for students who commenced Junior Cycle in September 2015 or 2016, the following requirements apply:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Subjects and short courses | <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ study a maximum of 10 subjects (or 11 where the full CSPE syllabus is studied) for Final Examination and for reporting through the JCPA<br/><i>OR</i></li> <li>▪ study up to 9 subjects (or 10 where the full CSPE syllabus is studied) for Final Examination and up to 2 short courses for reporting through the JCPA<br/><i>OR</i></li> <li>▪ study up to 8 subjects (or 9 where the full CSPE syllabus is studied) for Final Examination and up to 4 short courses for reporting through the JCPA</li> </ul> <p>Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools may continue to offer more than 10 subjects to their first year students to facilitate subject selection for Final Examination. The list of possible subjects will be found in <i>Appendix 1</i>.</li> <li>▪ Generally, most students will study between 8 and 10 subjects.</li> <li>▪ Each student must include Irish, English and Mathematics among the subjects that he/she studies.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul> |
|----------------------------|--|

<sup>8</sup> Certain students may be exempted from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular M10/94.

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
|                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools may include a maximum of four short courses for reporting in the Junior Cycle programme followed by any individual student but are strongly advised to limit the number of short courses they offer. It is not the aim or intention that short courses would replace existing subjects</li> </ul>      |
| AND                     |   |
| CSPE <sup>9</sup>       | <p>Students must study Civic, Social and Political Education following <i>either</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specifications for the short course in CSPE (2016)</li> <li>▪ or as a further additional subject for Final Examination purposes following the Junior Certificate syllabus for CSPE (1996)<sup>10</sup></li> </ul> |
| AND                     |   |
| PE <sup>9</sup>         | <p>Students must study Physical Education following <i>either</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in Physical Education (2016)</li> <li>▪ <i>or</i> the junior cycle syllabus in Physical Education (2003)</li> </ul>  |
| AND                     |   |
| SPHE <sup>9</sup>       | <p>Students must study Social, Personal and Health Education following <i>either</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in SPHE (2016)</li> <li>▪ <i>or</i> the junior cycle syllabus in SPHE (2000)</li> </ul>   |
| AND                     |   |
| Other areas of learning | <p>Students may engage in other learning activities set out in a school's programme for junior cycle. These can include social, cultural, pastoral, scientific, entrepreneurial and other activities that can support the 24 statements of learning and the 8 key skills.</p> <p>The Junior Cycle programme must include guidance education.</p>        |

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<sup>9</sup> Schools are reminded that there is a minimum threshold of time across the three years of junior cycle which should be provided for PE, SPHE and CSPE: PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (i.e. the most common current allocation provided by schools—two class periods per week). SPHE: 70 hours spread across the three years of Junior Cycle (the same time allocation as required by the current junior cycle framework for SPHE, including RSE). CSPE: 70 hours spread across the three years of Junior Cycle (the same time allocation as required currently).

<sup>10</sup> 2019 is the last year that the current Junior Certificate examination in Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is available.



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Some schools will also provide students with a course in religious education reflective of their own ethos as part of a junior cycle programme. |
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Students studying the programme, as set out in the requirements above, will be recognised by the Department of Education and Skills for the purposes of teacher allocations and other payments to the school.

Students who will commence Junior Cycle in September 2017 and subsequent years:

In all types of recognised second-level schools, for students who commence Junior Cycle in September 2017 and subsequent years, the following requirements apply:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Subjects and short courses | <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ study a maximum of 10 subjects for Final Examination and reporting through the JCPA.<sup>11</sup><br/><i>OR</i></li> <li>▪ study up to 9 subjects for Final Examination and up to 2 short courses for reporting through the JCPA<br/><i>OR</i></li> <li>▪ study up to 8 subjects for Final Examination and up to 4 short courses for reporting through the JCPA</li> </ul> <p>Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools may continue to offer more than 10 subjects to their First Year students to facilitate subject selection for Final Examination</li> <li>▪ The list of possible subjects will be found in <i>Appendix 1</i>.</li> <li>▪ Generally, most students will study between 8 and 10 subjects.</li> <li>▪ Each student must include Irish, English and Mathematics among the subjects that he/she studies.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>▪ Schools may include a maximum of four short courses for reporting in the Junior Cycle programme followed by any individual student but are strongly advised to limit the number of short courses they offer. It is not the aim or intention that short courses would replace existing subjects</li> </ul> |
| AND                        |  |

<sup>11</sup> *Environmental and Social Studies (ESS), which is currently available as a subject option for a limited number of schools only, is not included on the list of subjects in the new junior cycle programme. After the new specifications for History and Geography are introduced in September 2018, ESS will no longer be on offer as a subject. The last ESS examination will take place in 2020.*

<sup>12</sup> *Certain students may be exempted from the study of Irish in accordance with Circular M10/94.*

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| WELLBEING            | <p>This area of learning will incorporate learning traditionally included in CSPE, PE, and SPHE<sup>13</sup>.</p> <p><u>CSPE</u><br/>Students must study CSPE.<br/>The options available are set out in the <i>Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle</i> (2017) and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Civic Social Political Education specification for the Junior Cycle short course in CSPE (2016)</li> <li>▪ the Junior Certificate syllabus for CSPE (1996). A Junior Certificate examination will not be available for this subject after 2019. The Wellbeing Guidelines outline the way in which wellbeing, including CSPE, is assessed and reported on.</li> </ul> <p><u>PE</u><br/>Students must study Physical Education.<br/>The options available are set out in the <i>Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle</i> (2017) and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Junior Cycle syllabus in Physical Education (2003)</li> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in Physical Education (2016)</li> </ul> <p><u>SPHE</u><br/>Students must study Social, Personal and Health Education.<br/>The options available are set out in the <i>Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle</i> (2017) and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Junior Cycle syllabus in SPHE (2000).</li> <li>▪ the specification for the Junior Cycle short course in SPHE (2016)</li> </ul> <p>Note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools can include other areas in their provision for wellbeing, as detailed in paragraph 2.6.</li> </ul> |
| AND                  |   |
| Other learning areas | Students may engage in other learning activities set out in a school's programme for Junior Cycle. These can include  |

<sup>13</sup> Schools are reminded that there is a minimum threshold of time across the three years of junior cycle which should be provided for PE, SPHE and CSPE: PE: 135 hours spread across first, second and third year (i.e. the most common current allocation provided by schools—two class periods per week). SPHE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (the same time allocation as required by the current junior cycle framework for SPHE, including RSE). CSPE: 70 hours spread across first, second and third year (the same time allocation as required currently).

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>social, cultural, pastoral, scientific, entrepreneurial and other activities that can support the 24 statements of learning and the 8 key skills. Paragraph 3.5 of the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 includes a comprehensive list of learning experiences that may be included.</p> <p>The Junior Cycle programme must include guidance education.</p> <p>Some schools will also provide students with a course in religious education reflective of their own ethos as part of a Junior Cycle programme.</p> |
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Students studying the programme, as set out in the requirements above, will be recognised by the Department of Education and Skills for the purposes of teacher allocations and other payments to the school.

## **2.5. Wellbeing Programme**

As set out above, all students who commence Junior Cycle in September 2017 and subsequent years will undertake an area of learning called Wellbeing. Wellbeing will cross the three years of Junior Cycle and build on substantial work already taking place in schools in support of students' wellbeing. This area of learning will make the school's commitment to wellbeing more evident to students. It will include learning opportunities to further enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students.

Up to 400 hours will be available for learning in the area of Wellbeing in Junior Cycle, beginning with a minimum of 300 hours of timetabled engagement from 2017 and moving up to 400 hours as the new junior cycle is fully implemented in schools. It is accepted that a degree of flexibility in relation to how the hours for Wellbeing are applied may be necessary in the initial years of the new Junior Cycle.

In addition to subject specifications/short courses in PE, SPHE and CSPE schools may also choose to include other areas in their provision for Wellbeing. Examples are set out in the NCCA guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle and include areas such as guidance, school-provided courses/units that address aspects of wellbeing, elements of other subjects that are clearly linked to wellbeing, school initiatives and relevant courses and units developed by outside agencies and organisations.

The NCCA Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle aim to support schools in planning and developing a coherent Wellbeing programme that builds on the understandings, practices and curricula for wellbeing already existing in schools. Sample programmes that may be helpful for schools in planning such a programme are included in the Guidelines. The guidelines are available at

[http://www.juniorecycle.ie/NCCA\\_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf](http://www.juniorecycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf)

Once a school has considered the particular needs of its students in junior cycle, the unique context of the school and the resources available, there is a wide range of curriculum options available for consideration. These options are set out in the Wellbeing Guidelines. Schools may introduce units of learning to cover part of a Wellbeing programme. However, there must be a clear rationale outlined as to why a certain area of learning is considered to be part of a school's Wellbeing programme. Staff, parents and students should be consulted when planning a school's Wellbeing programme.

## **2.6. Diversity and Accessibility**

Subject specifications and short courses developed by the NCCA are being designed to be as universal and inclusive as is feasible, providing meaningful and valuable learning opportunities for students from all cultural and social backgrounds and from a wide variety of individual circumstances. This includes ensuring that the learning opportunities are as accessible as possible to students with special educational needs and that statements about the skills to be developed are articulated in a way that reflects this.

When planning its Junior Cycle programme, each school is required to take account of the school's local context and the backgrounds, interests, and abilities of its students and to ensure that, within the school's Junior Cycle programme, there is sufficient flexibility to cater for the individual learning needs of all students, including those with special educational needs.

Notwithstanding the above, there will inevitably remain learning outcomes within subjects and short course specifications that cannot be achieved by some students by virtue of a particular special education need.

Schools should be conscious of this when planning their junior cycle programmes so as to ensure that, as far as possible, the particular range of subjects, short courses and Priority Learning Units available are appropriate to the needs and aptitudes of each student. The individual student and his/her parents/guardians should be made aware of the feasibility and appropriateness of the curricular options available in light of the student's ability.

## **2.7. Level 2 and Level 1 Learning Programmes**

### Level 2 Learning Programmes

Level 2 Learning Programmes (the term 'Level' refers to broad alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications) and their main curriculum component - Priority Learning Units (PLUs) have been approved by the Minister and are available for certain categories of students

with special needs, who commenced their Junior Cycle from September 2014. These programmes will be reported on for the first time in the JCPA 2017.

The programmes and PLUs target the learning and accreditation needs of the small number of specific students with general learning disabilities in the higher functioning moderate and low functioning mild categories where such needs prevent students from taking some or all of the subjects or short courses on offer and also require focused priority learning outcomes. Students' Learning achievements will be reported to students/parents/guardians through the JCPA.

The Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) of students may include a range of PLUs, short courses and subjects that are suited to their learning needs.

Students whose main programme of learning is a L2LP but who also have the capacity to study a small number of subjects and/or short courses at Level 3 may be accommodated to take those subjects and/or short courses.

The NCCA has developed guidelines and an optional e-planning tool to support schools in planning, developing and assessing L2LPs. The guidelines are available at <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-2-LPs>

### Level 1 Learning Programmes

NCCA has also developed Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs), to be made available to schools from September 2017 on a trial basis. These programmes will address the learning needs of the very small number of students in the low moderate, and severe and profound range of general learning disabilities. These students will, in almost all cases, be enrolled in special schools rather than mainstream schools, due to the complexity of their needs. Further information on L1LPs will be available in 2017 on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

## **2.8. Approved Subject Specifications Syllabuses and Guidelines**

The subject specifications, syllabuses and guidelines, setting out the curriculum and assessment arrangements for each Junior Cycle subject or area of learning, and approved by the Minister are as follows:

- The Junior Cycle subject specifications and assessment guidelines published after 2014 consistent with the planned, phased introduction of subjects.
- For students commencing in 2017 these comprise English, Science, Business Studies, Irish, Modern Languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish), and Visual Art.
- For students commencing in 2018, in addition, the subject specifications and assessment guidelines for Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography will apply.
- The Junior Certificate subject syllabuses published prior to 2012 for all other subjects.

- The relevant NCCA Junior Cycle short course specifications selected by the school for inclusion in their Junior Cycle programme.
- The new NCCA Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle.

## **2.9. Junior Certificate School Programme**

Schools that currently offer the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) may continue to do so. JCSP will be subject to a review when a substantial proportion of the new *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* is in place. No new applications are currently being accepted from schools for entry to the JCSP.

## **2.10. Timetabling**

The teaching and learning activities that will take place in the revised junior cycle programmes will encompass a wider range of activities, a new balance between the development of skills and competences and the development of students' knowledge. To facilitate this learning and the implementation of good formative assessment practices, a minimum class period of 40 minutes will be required. As at present, certain subjects will require double class periods (2 x 40 minutes) during the school week. With effect from September 2017 schools must ensure that class periods of less than 40 minutes are no longer timetabled. Some schools may find the use of longer class periods of up to 60 minutes (rather than 40 minutes), more suited to the learning needs of their students and the subjects they study or a combination of class periods of 40 minutes and longer class periods of up to 60 minutes.

## **2.11. Assessment arrangements for subjects**

A new dual approach to assessment has been introduced that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment. This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

All assessment for Final Examination purposes remains external.

For subjects, the new assessment arrangements include formative assessment that is ongoing. More information on assessment is available on the NCCA website at <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>

Subjects with new specifications will be assessed through two Classroom-Based Assessments (one in second year and one in third year), reported on to parents/guardians by the school, an Assessment Task (marked by the SEC) in each subject and a Final Examination set, held and

marked by the SEC. The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination, marked and awarded by the SEC, will generate a grade. Slightly modified assessment structures will apply in Visual Art, Music, Home Economics, and the Technology subjects.

## **2.12. Classroom-Based Assessments**

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They are used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses. CBAs are assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA.

There is a need to avoid 'over-assessment' and to minimise the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments across the full range of subjects. In this context, the Classroom-Based Assessments will substitute other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as in-house examinations (Christmas/end of term), as appropriate.

### **2.12.1. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) in Subjects**

Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, generally one in second year and one in third year. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level.

The assessments associated with CBAs will cover a broad range of activities, including oral tasks, written work of different types, practical or designing and making tasks, artistic performances, scientific experiments, projects or other suitable tasks, depending on the subject in question.

A small number of subjects, (Visual Art, Music, Home Economics and the Technology subjects) involve practical work, a performance, or the creation of an artefact which is currently marked by the SEC. These subjects will continue to have an external SEC assessment of the practical work, performance or artefact, together with the related accompanying written evidence, as appropriate. In these subjects the second CBA will be linked to the forthcoming practical work, performance or artefact. The formative assessment related to the production of these artefacts and performances will be reported upon to the student and parent/guardian by the school as for all other second Classroom-Based Assessments.

CBAs will be undertaken by students within class time to a national timetable. Details of the timetable along with assessment guidelines for each subject are available on [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie).

When assessing the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment against the learning outcomes, teachers will use 'on-balance' judgement in relation to the Features of Quality, which are set out in four level descriptors:

|   |
|---|
| <b>Classroom Based Assessment Descriptors</b> |
| <b>Exceptional</b>                            |
| <b>Above Expectations</b>                     |
| <b>In Line with Expectations</b>              |
| <b>Yet to Meet Expectations</b>               |

### **2.12.2. Classroom-Based Assessments in Short Courses**

Most of the assessment activities during the teaching of short courses will be formative in nature. The evidence of learning will be generated according to the short course specification and will relate directly to the aims and learning outcomes of the short course. Junior cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment Short courses are reported on by the school to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA.

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment of each NCCA-developed short course will be available later in 2017 from <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/>

### **2.12.3. Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings (SLARs) to support implementation of CBAs**

When students have completed CBAs, the CBAs will be assessed by the students' teachers, and the outcomes will be reported to the students and parents/guardians. To support teachers in assessing students' Classroom-Based Assessments, teachers will engage in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings (SLARs). At these meetings, teachers will share and discuss representative samples of students' work and build a common understanding about the quality of their students' learning. Where there is a single teacher of a subject in the school, the teacher can be facilitated to participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting in another school.

SLARs should take place, save in exceptional<sup>14</sup> circumstances, for the assessment of CBAs that are completed in short courses and the achievement of students will be described using the same descriptors as for subjects above.

The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings play a key role in developing a collegial professional culture and build up expertise about the judgements that teachers make about student achievement.

SLARS may not be required in relation to the second CBA completed in the practical subjects (Visual Art, Music, Home Economics and the Technology subjects) as the finished artefact,

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<sup>14</sup> There may be cases, for example, where just one teacher is teaching a school-developed short course, when it is not practicable to have a SLAR meeting.



practical work or performance produced by the student will be marked by the State Examinations Commission.

### **2.13. Assessment Task**

Detailed guidance in relation to the completion of the Assessment Task is issued by the State Examinations Commission as the independent body responsible for the administration of the Final Examinations that form part of the assessment procedures for Junior Cycle. SEC Circular 20/2017 is the circular in respect of the Assessment Task for English to be completed in April 2017. The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher in accordance with a timeframe and guidance from the NCCA and SEC.

The written Assessment Task for each subject will be specified by the NCCA in conjunction with the SEC and published by the NCCA. The Assessment Task will relate to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment and will be based on activities to be completed by students as part of their study of the particular subject specification.

The Assessment Task will be returned to the SEC for marking and will be marked as part of the Final Examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the calculation of the grade for that subject by the SEC. The value to be assigned to the Assessment Task is included in the assessment guidelines for each subject. Every student must have the opportunity to undertake the Assessment Task in line with the arrangements set out in the SEC guidance in order to be eligible for the full Final Examination marks.

A separate Assessment Task will not be required in practical subjects where there will be a practical examination.

### **2.14. Final Examination**

For most new subjects there will be a written examination which will be set, administered and marked by the SEC. The written examinations will be of no longer than two hours duration once the new specification has been introduced for the subject.

The final written examinations will be held in the month of June in third year. The final written examination will be at a common level, apart from English, Irish and Mathematics, where there will be two levels (higher and ordinary) available.

Student achievement in the Final Examinations will incorporate the results of the Assessment Task, also assessed by the SEC, or, in the case of the practical subjects, students' achievement in the externally assessed practical component (artefact, practical work, or performance).

Achievement will be recorded using a set of grades. These state certified grades will first be reported by the SEC in provisional form in September following the end of third year. They

will subsequently be confirmed and included in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) which is to issue from the school within the calendar year of the examination. The grades will appear as follows:

### **Grading of the Final Examination**

| <b>GRADE</b>       | <b>RANGE (%)</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Distinction        | ≥90 to 100       |
| Higher Merit       | ≥75 and <90      |
| Merit              | ≥55 and <75      |
| Achieved           | ≥40 and <55      |
| Partially Achieved | ≥20 and <40      |
| Not Graded         | ≥0 and <20       |

The existing SEC support for reasonable accommodation in the Junior Certificate examination (RACE Scheme) will continue to be provided for candidates sitting the Final Examinations in the Junior Cycle subjects.

#### **2.15. Assessment arrangement for students with special educational needs**

Assessment is an intrinsic part of any learning programme as it promotes learning and supports teaching. There is an expectation that all students should, as far as possible, have the opportunity to present evidence of their learning in Classroom-Based Assessments. To ensure this, schools are expected to remove any barriers students may encounter arising from a spectrum of social, gender, ethnic, cultural, environmental factors or from specific physical or learning challenges. Any arrangements should be in line with those the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year and are designed to ensure that students can demonstrate what they have learned rather than compensate for lack of learning/achievement.

Notwithstanding the above, there will inevitably remain learning outcomes within subjects and short course specifications that cannot be achieved by some students by virtue of a particular special education need.

Students with special educational needs that are categorised as falling in the range of higher functioning moderate and lower functioning mild general learning disabilities may be studying, as appropriate, a combination of priority learning units (PLUs) and short courses in a Level 2 Learning Programme. Apart from the requirements related to PLUs, schools and students will also include evidence of learning in two Level 2 short courses. These students may also undertake subjects and/or short courses at Level 3. Assessment arrangements for the

Level 3 subjects and short courses that may be involved for these students will be as set out in sections 2.12.1 and 2.12.2.

Student learning in the PLUs and in Level 2 short courses, included in L2LPs, will be assessed by the student's teachers, and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA using a single descriptor – Achieved .

- PLUs: the evidence of learning will be generated with reference to the NCCA specifications for the PLUs as outlined in the NCCA publication *Level 2 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers* and will be directly related to the learning outcomes of those PLUs
- Level 2 short courses: there will be one Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) for each short course. Any arrangements to ensure the accessibility of these CBAs for students should be in line with those the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year. These should be designed to ensure that students can demonstrate what they have learned, rather than to compensate for lack of learning/achievement.

Over the three years in junior cycle, students assemble evidence of their learning in a Level 2 Learning Programme in a portfolio. Students submit this portfolio to their teachers and the students' work is assessed and reported on. A toolkit to support schools and teachers in the assessment of PLUs and short courses is available on the NCCA website [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie).

The JCPA documents a student's achievements in a Level 2 Learning Programme, as reported by the school. When the student has submitted evidence of achievement in the majority of learning outcomes for each element in a particular PLU (up to the maximum of five), the title of the PLU will appear in the relevant section of the JCPA. Where a student does not submit evidence of achievement in a particular PLU that PLU will not appear on the JCPA. Apart from the requirements related to PLUs, students will also include evidence of learning in two Level 2 short courses. When the student has successfully completed a CBA for a Level 2 short course, the descriptor Achieved will be recorded in the relevant section of the JCPA with the title of the relevant short course. Where a student has not successfully completed a CBA for a Level 2 short course, the title of the short course will not appear on the JCPA.

## **2.16. Reporting on Student Achievement**

### **2.16.1. Reporting**

Formal reporting on the progress and achievements of students will be through annual reports in first year and second year, and through the composite Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement in the autumn/winter term after third year. This will complement reporting on progress to parents/guardians during parent-teacher meetings and through normal student feedback sessions, including feedback after the completion of each CBA.

Draft Guidelines on Reporting, including examples of templates for use by schools, will be available in 2017.

### **2.16.2. Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)**

Before the end of the first term following the completion of the Junior Cycle, each student will receive a composite Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement from his/her school.

The JCPA will report student achievement across a range of areas of learning in junior cycle, including in:

- SEC Final Examinations inclusive of the Assessment Tasks;
- Classroom-Based Assessments;
- Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) (where appropriate);
- the area of Wellbeing (from 2020);
- other areas of learning.

In the transitional period, the JCPA will reflect results provided by the SEC for both new and existing junior cycle subjects, with new subjects increasing in number year on year until all new subject specifications are examined in summer 2022.

### **2.16.3. Recording and reporting arrangements**

The technical arrangements for the production of JCPAs in respect of the various schools and centres where students undertake the junior cycle are currently being finalised. Final details will be communicated shortly to schools and centres in this regard. The following paragraphs provide a broad outline of these arrangements.

**Recognised post-primary schools** will record the outcome of Classroom Based Assessments (in subjects and short courses), as well as achievements in PLUs (where appropriate), for their students onto the Department's Post Primary Online Database System (PPOD). This data, along with the outcome from the SEC Final Examinations (following the appeals process and incorporating the Assessment Task) will be recorded on a JCPA for each student. The part-completed JCPA will then be made available electronically to schools who will record details of achievements in the 'Other Areas of Learning' section in respect of each student. The completed JCPAs will be supplied by schools to their students and parents/guardians.

In the case of **Special Schools** where students undertake the Junior Cycle, a part-completed JCPA template will be provided to these schools through an automated system developed by the Department. The template will include the outcomes of any SEC Final Examinations (incorporating the Assessment Task) taken by students. Schools will record locally on the

JCPA, the outcome of students' Classroom Based Assessments (in subjects and short courses as appropriate), students' achievements in PLUs, as well as achievements under 'Other Areas of Learning'. The completed JCPA will be supplied by these schools to their students and parents/guardians.

In the case of **Youthreach Centres, Detention Centres and Adult Learners in other non-standard school centres** in which students undertake the Junior Cycle, detailed arrangements for the production of the JCPA will shortly be communicated to these centres. It is proposed that a part-completed JCPA template will be provided to these centres in respect of students who complete the programme in the centre. The template will include the outcomes of any SEC Final Examinations (incorporating the assessment task) taken by students. Centres will record locally on the JCPA, the outcome of Classroom Based Assessments (in subjects and short courses as appropriate), students' achievements in PLUs as well as achievements under 'Other Areas of Learning'. The completed JCPA will be supplied by these centres to their students.

In the case of the small number of **home schooled students**, detailed reporting arrangements will shortly be communicated to these centres.

### **2.17. Adult learners in adult education settings**

Adult learners in the school years 2017/18 and 2018/19 will continue to have the flexibility to study a subject or subjects at Junior Cycle level within one academic year. These adult learners will undertake one Classroom-Based Assessment (that completed in third year by students in mainstream schools), complete the related Assessment Task along the same lines as takes place in mainstream schools and the Final Examination. Adult learners may also study short courses and Priority Learning Units as suited to their learning needs.

Adult learners are not required to undertake study in any specific subject and they are not required to study Physical Education, CSPE or SPHE or other elements in the area of learning known as Wellbeing.

## **3. RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS**

To ensure that the necessary time and resources are available to implement the new Junior Cycle, the following resources will continue to be made available to schools:

- (a) An extensive programme of CPD for school leaders and teachers (details available from the Junior Cycle for Teachers support service [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie))
- (b) Professional time for teachers (i.e. non-student contact time in which teachers will participate in a range of professional and collaborative activities to support the implementation of Junior Cycle)

- (c) Additional paid hours for the coordination of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- (d) Management resources (i.e. additional paid hours that schools will devote for the sole purpose of the management of activities associated with the implementation of Junior Cycle).

### **3.1. Extensive Programme of CPD for School Leaders and Teachers**

Key commitments continue to include:

- CPD for school leaders over the course of the phased implementation period;
- Whole school professional support that will be available over the course of the phased implementation period, facilitated through a school closure day for Whole School Planning and School Self-evaluation as set out below at 3.1.1;
- Dedicated subject specific CPD that will be offered to all subject teachers over time, using the school cluster model of provision. Additional paid substitution (not within the Supervision and Substitution scheme), where required, will be made available to ensure that teachers with a second teaching subject can be released to receive CPD;
- CPD in a range of other areas of learning (e.g. short courses, Level 2 Learning Programmes, particular areas of subject specifications) that continues to be made available, with more areas to be introduced over time;
- Elective CPD opportunities in all subjects that will be provided for teachers over time;

CPD will be delivered by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the Department's dedicated CPD service supporting the implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework.

#### **3.1.1. Whole-School Planning and School Self-Evaluation**

Requirements in respect of School Self-Evaluation are set out in Circular 40/2016. This circular requires that schools engage in self-evaluation of teaching and learning, and strongly advises that second-level schools should use their school self-evaluation process to support the implementation of Junior Cycle reform. Advice on how school self-evaluation may be used in this way, together with Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-primary Schools, School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-primary, copies of SSE Updates referring to Junior Cycle implementation and other resources are available at [www.schoolself-evaluation.ie](http://www.schoolself-evaluation.ie)

Approval continues for schools to close, with board of management or ETB approval, as appropriate, for a day of whole-school planning and self-evaluation for Junior Cycle implementation for each year of implementation up to the school year 2021/22.

The purpose of this day will change over time, but in 2017/18 and 2018/19 it may be used by schools to support the embedding and/or continued development of the underlying Junior Cycle framework on a whole-school basis. This may involve schools reviewing their current policies and practices, as well as planning and monitoring for the changes being introduced under the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015). From September 2017, CPD on planning for schools' Wellbeing programmes will be provided by JCT as part of the whole-school planning day.

JCT will continue to be available to assist schools in planning for and implementing this whole-school day and will liaise with schools directly on this matter.

### **3.1.2. CPD for school leaders and teachers**

#### **(a) Models of CPD delivery**

JCT continues to provide a comprehensive and long-term national programme of CPD for school leaders and teachers.

A variety of CPD delivery models is employed including school clustering, in-school visits, off-site workshops and on-line professional development. JCT's CPD provision takes cognisance of the needs identified by the education partners. JCT also collaborates with other Department of Education and Skills school support services in the context of its work.

To assist schools in planning for closures, JCT will notify schools of the arrangements for CPD events as soon as possible.

#### **(b) CPD for school leaders**

School leaders will be offered two Junior Cycle related workshops in each of 2017/18 and 2018/2019. JCT will liaise directly with school leaders in relation to these workshops and their content will take account of the expressed needs of school leaders.

#### **(c) CPD for teachers**

In general, teachers will be provided with subject specific CPD at a school closure event and schools may close, with board of management or ETB approval, as appropriate, to allow teachers' attendance. Where a school closes, all teachers must attend the school cluster event and engage in CPD activity, including teachers of subjects whose new specification has not yet been introduced and teachers not involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle.

JCT will liaise directly with schools regarding their cluster events, including assigning each school a cluster event date. Efforts will continue to be made to minimise disruption to teaching and learning in schools and the school cluster model of CPD delivery will, it is intended, significantly reduce disruption in classrooms.

Teachers registered with JCT with a second teaching subject will be provided with CPD in this subject off-site in their local education centre. Paid substitution will be available. These teachers will therefore, undertake a third day of Junior Cycle related CPD in each of 2017/18 and 2018/19.

(d) CPD arrangements for 2019/20 onwards

The arrangements for the delivery of the CPD programme for 2019/20 and 2020/21 will be published in 2018/ 2019 and will take account of the views of school leaders, teachers and their teacher representative associations, and the experience of implementation to that point in time.

(e) Summary of CPD school closure arrangements

In each of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years, schools may close for 2 days for the following purposes:

- Day 1: For Whole School Planning and School Self-Evaluation
- Day 2: To facilitate CPD activities, including subject specific CPD, being delivered by the JCT, using the school cluster model.

There is no provision in 2017/18 and 2018/19 for schools to close for a third day<sup>15</sup>.

Schools are advised that they should plan the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years so as to make optimal use of the closure days to embed Junior Cycle in their schools.

It is essential that all teachers have sufficient opportunity to avail of Junior Cycle CPD so that they are fully informed about the changes to teaching, learning and assessment required for the implementation of the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*. Accordingly, management in each school is required to register all teachers with JCT and facilitate their attendance at CPD events.

### **3.2. Professional Time**

The *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* recognises that teachers need professional time to engage in a range of professional collaborative activities, a proportion of which will involve collaboration with teaching colleagues, to support teaching, learning and assessment.

This time will facilitate teachers engaging, as necessary, with a range of professional and collaborative activities, namely:

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<sup>15</sup> In 2016/17 schools had the option of closing for a third day to facilitate agreed professional time related to planning for and delivering of the Junior Cycle programme. From 2017/18, professional time will be available on a pro rata basis to all teachers involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle to support the new curriculum and assessment arrangements (see Appendix 2). Accordingly a third day's closure for professional time related activities is not required from 2017/18 onwards.



1. Whole-school professional activities to support the junior cycle
2. Individual teacher and subject department professional activities, including activities related to formative assessment, feedback, reporting and inputs being compiled for the JCPA
3. Attendance at Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
4. Preparation for, and overseeing the outcomes of Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
5. Administration of the Assessment Tasks in classrooms.

### **3.2.1. 2016/17**

Schools may avail of additional school closures in 2016/17, in order to provide for some of the additional professional time agreed and to facilitate the organisation of other related professional and collaborative activities.

Fourteen hours professional time, of which a maximum of 6 hours may be delivered via school closure and the balance through paid substitution hours, is available to teachers of English.

Eight hours professional time, of which a maximum of 6 hours may be delivered via school closure and the balance through paid substitution hours, is available to teachers of Business Studies and Science.

### **3.2.2. 2017/18 and 2018/19**

The provision of individual professional time for teachers reflects the commitment under the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 to provide such support to allow teachers engage in professional collaborative activities to support teaching, learning and assessment. From September 2017, in all subject areas, full-time teachers involved in the delivery of Junior Cycle will be entitled to 22 hours of professional time, with a pro-rata entitlement for part-time teachers as set out in *Appendix 2*. As set out above, this is subject to the full co-operation of a teacher with all elements of the Framework. The provision of professional time will be supported by the allocation of an additional 550 whole-time equivalent posts to schools. This allocation is designed to avoid reducing overall class contact time for students. The allocation is shown separately on the staffing schedule as set out in the Approved Allocations of Teaching Posts Circulars for individual schools and equates to the additional allocation which would be provided by a reduction in the Pupil Teacher Ratio of 0.5.

In the case of dual union membership schools, where some teachers are not fully cooperating with the Framework, drawdown should be based on the proportion of teachers that are reported as fully implementing Junior Cycle. Detailed arrangements will be communicated to the management bodies in relation to this process. In view of the ongoing industrial action an allocation for Junior Cycle is not included in the staffing schedules for voluntary secondary schools at this time. However, teachers in such schools who are fully implementing the

Framework for Junior Cycle may avail of professional time, following appropriate declaration arrangements. Detailed arrangements will be communicated to the management bodies in relation to this process.

The provision of 22 hours maximum professional time for full-time teachers involved in the delivery of junior cycle (and pro-rata provision for part-time teachers) will mean that each full-time teacher's class contact time (including teaching time and time allocated for other assigned management and coordination duties), in a school with a timetable laid out in 40 minute periods, will be reduced from 33 teaching periods in the timetable to 32 teaching periods.

The 40 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to Junior Cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers' bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting. A SLAR meeting should take place in one two-hour session. This flexibility will be required for and will generally be restricted to the organisation of SLAR meetings.

The deployment of all professional time is a matter for the management of the school acting in accordance with the terms of this Circular Letter. All time periods provided to support implementation of the Junior Cycle must be used for this purpose under the overall direction of the school's management.

### **3.3. Resources for the coordination of Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meetings**

An additional two hours will be allocated by school management to a teacher on a rotational basis for the preparation and co-ordination of each Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting for an individual subject or short course, including providing confirmation to school management that the meeting has taken place and descriptors awarded and reported. The two hour allocation may be facilitated through the provision of additional paid substitution hours to the school – not within the Supervision and Substitution scheme. This is in addition to the 22 hours of professional time allocated within the timetable for each full-time teacher from 2017/18 onwards.

### **3.4. Management Resources**

The board of management of each school or the ETB, as appropriate, along with the in-school management team, will be accountable for the overall implementation of the Junior Cycle in the school, as it is for all other aspects of the school's work.

In recognition of the fact that the introduction of the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* has implications for school leaders, extra hours were allocated to schools with effect from 2016 on an interim basis pending the restoration of leadership posts in schools, to help with the facilitation of this additional work. It is intended to continue to provide extra hours for 2017/2018 pending any further development in restoration of permanent leadership posts. The allocation in 2017/18 takes account of the Budget 2017 measures of additional supports for school leadership.

The provision of these additional resources is contingent on schools confirming that their junior cycle students have access to teaching, learning and assessment practices in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 and the associated specifications designed by the NCCA and approved by the Minister, including all assessment arrangements set out in this circular.

The Principal will, with the approval of the Board of Management, following an invitation for expressions of interest from the teachers in the school, allocate the additional teaching hours granted to the school to support him/her in implementing the new Junior Cycle. The allocation came into effect from January 2016 in recognition of the additional coordination tasks that arose from that time. This additional time allocation is in the form of weekly coordination hours and can be drawn down over the school year. The hours can be bundled to reflect the fact that the work associated with junior cycle coordination in a school year may vary in quantity from week to week.

Some or all of the following activities may be included:

- Supporting the Principal/Deputy Principal with planning, communication and organising substitution for teachers attending in-service;
- Scheduling of in-school CPD events and liaison with JCT in planning visits;
- Overseeing the scheduling of SLAR meetings;
- Liaising with the coordinators of SLAR meetings;
- Overseeing the new Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) reporting procedures for subjects and for L2LPs and short courses to parents/guardians.
- Organising administration of the Assessment Tasks and making the necessary arrangements for returning the Assessment Task to the SEC.

The teaching hours granted to schools for the purpose of supporting school management in the delivery of the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* will be allocated on the following basis:

| <b>Enrolment</b> | <b>In-school weekly coordination hours</b> |
|------------------|--|
| 700 +            | 3 hours                                    |
| 600 – 699        | 3.3 hours                                  |
| 400 – 599        | 2.6 hours                                  |
| < 399            | 2 hours                                    |

Existing pro-rata arrangement for partial implementation will apply.

## **4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4.1. Rules and Programme**

All references to Junior Cycle and Junior Certificate examinations in Rules 20, 21, 32, 33 and 34 of the *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 2004/2005* will be superseded by the provisions within this circular.

### **4.2. Access to Information**

Further information can be accessed on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment website [www.juniorcycle.ie](http://www.juniorcycle.ie) and on the JCT website [www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie). Both host information and a range of practical materials aimed at supporting schools.

This Circular may also be accessed at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

**Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit**

**March 2017**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **List of Junior Cycle Subjects for 2017/18 and 2018/19**

Ancient Greek  
Business Studies  
Civic, Social and Political Education  
Classical Studies  
English  
Environmental and Social Studies\*  
French  
Geography  
German  
History  
Home Economics  
Irish  
Italian  
Jewish Studies  
Latin  
Materials Technology (Wood)  
Mathematics  
Metalwork  
Music  
Physical Education  
Religious Education  
Science  
Social, Personal and Health Education  
Spanish  
Technical Graphics  
Technology  
Visual Art

\*After the new specifications for History and Geography are introduced in 2018, Environmental and Social Studies will no longer be on offer as a subject.

## APPENDIX 2

### PRO-RATA ALLOCATION OF PROFESSIONAL TIME TO PART-TIME TEACHERS FROM 2017

The annual pro-rata application of the Professional Time to teachers on less than full hours is set out below.

| Hours in teacher's contract | Professional time p.a. - Class periods ( x 40 min) | Professional Time: Total p.a. |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 11 hours or less            | 17   | = 11 hours, 20 mins           |
| 11h 1 min - 11h 29 min      | 17   | = 11 hours, 20 mins           |
| 11h 30 min - 11h 59 min     | 18   | = 12 hours                    |
| 12 hours - 12h 29 min       | 18   | = 12 hours                    |
| 12h 30 min - 12h 59 min     | 19   | = 12 hours, 40 mins           |
| 13 hours - 13h 29 min       | 20   | = 13 hours, 20 mins           |
| 13h 30 min - 13h 59 min     | 21   | = 14 hours                    |
| 14 hours - 14h 29 min       | 21   | = 14 hours                    |
| 14h 30 min - 14h 59 min     | 22   | = 14 hours, 40 min            |
| 15 hours - 15h 29 min       | 23   | = 15 hours, 20 min            |
| 15h 30 min - 15h 59 min     | 24   | = 16 hours                    |
| 16 hours - 16h 29 min       | 24   | = 16 hours                    |
| 16h 30 min - 16h 59 min     | 25   | = 16 hours, 40 min            |
| 17 hours - 17h 59 min       | 26   | = 17 hours, 20 min            |
| 18 hours or more            | 33   | = 22 hours                    |

The total number of hours assigned to a teacher - which encompasses teaching time and other assigned management and co-ordination duties - is the quantum of hours upon which application of the above schedule in respect of professional time is based.