

Classroom-Based Assessments / Subject Learning Assessment Review Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I know the collection for the Composition Portfolio must be a varied one, but do I need to cover all the compositions listed in the Assessment Guidelines?

A: The choice of types, styles, genres and responses listed in the Assessment Guidelines is not intended to be exhaustive but serves to suggest that the collection should be a varied one. The options listed may overlap, and this is to be expected, so there is no restriction on the choices that students can make. The compositions can be in any recognised musical style or genre and can be written for instrument or voice and as a solo or group composition. It can be presented in written, digital, visual or audio form, or any other format that is deemed suitable by the student and appropriate for capturing the essence of their ideas.

Q: Do students have to complete a reflection note for both pieces in the Composition Portfolio?

A: A student reflection note must be included with each of the pieces submitted. This is intended to give students the opportunity to set out a brief statement on the purpose or intention for the creative idea and asks the student to indicate what they have learnt from the creative process. It also offers the student the space to consider what they might do differently on a subsequent occasion. A template for a Student Reflection Note is provided in Appendix A of the Assessment Guidelines. It is advised that students might find it easier to reflect and make notes on each piece immediately after they create it, rather than waiting until they are selecting their pieces for submission.

Q: Can the students compose in groups?

A: Students may work on the Classroom-Based Assessment in pairs or groups. However, please note that it will be the student's individual role and contribution to the work that is the focus of assessment for the JCPA.

Q: I have a student with special educational needs (SEN). What supports do I give her?

A: Schools facilitate inclusive assessment practices whether as part of ongoing assessment or Classroom-Based Assessments. Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable supports may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in Classroom-Based Assessments. These supports e.g. the support provided by a special needs assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year.

Q: Is a four-bar melody suitable for one of the two pieces for the Composition Portfolio?

A: The Assessment Guidelines tells us there is no restriction on the choices the students can make. Compositions will arise from the ebb and flow of classroom practice with the focus on the developmental nature of composing and on developing students' understanding of how to create music. Creating an answering phrase to an existing phrase is listed in the assessment guidelines as a possible option for CBA1.

Q: Can students work on their Composition Portfolio (CBA1) at home as well as in school?

A: The focus for CBA1 is on the developmental nature of creating and composing, and on developing the student's understanding of this creative and often imaginative process. This will be best supported by consistent creative endeavours in the art and craft of making music both in the classroom and at home. To this end, students will include any draft work relating to these artefacts, although this work will not be assigned a descriptor.

Q: If students are using software samples, can these be used for their composition portfolio, as they did not create the original samples, they just arranged them?

A: The assessment guidelines tell us that the focus of the composition portfolio is on the creation of a set of musical compositions which might include arranging an existing piece of music. So, yes samples and loops may be used.

Q: Should I give feedback to my students when they are doing their Classroom-Based Assessment?

A: Providing effective feedback is a crucial step in using both the composition portfolio and programme note to support the students learning. Students will be informed of the descriptor they have been awarded once the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meeting has taken place and its outcomes have been processed. However, effective feedback goes beyond the naming of the descriptor awarded. Feedback on the strengths of the student's work, and on areas for improvement can be used to support their learning preparation for their final written and practical examinations.

Q: What should conversation focus on during the SLAR meeting?

A: The review process is centred on teachers discussing student work at structured meetings. It will play an important role in helping you to develop an understanding of standards and expectations by enabling you along with your music colleagues to reflect on the evidence of students' work and to share the learning and teaching strategies supporting that work. The objectives of the review process are to achieve greater consistency of teachers' judgement, better feedback to students, a greater alignment of judgements with expected standards and to assure parents and others, that students are receiving appropriate recognition of their achievements in line with standards and expectations.

Q: Do I wait until after the SLAR meeting to assess the rest of my student's work?

A: Once the students have completed their Classroom-Based Assessment, the music teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of all of the students' work based on the Features of Quality. These provisional assessments may be modified considering the discussions that take place at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. The teacher will make a note of the descriptor allocated to each student and any other point they may wish or find useful to refer to during and after the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. These notes are for your own use. Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review, each individual teacher re-considers the judgement they had made of their student's work, based on the outcomes of the meeting, and where necessary makes the appropriate adjustments to the level of achievement awarded to the work.

Q: Can my student use pieces from his composition portfolio for their practical examination?

A: If you have a student who is the composer of any of the pieces for the practical examination, they should comment on and reflect upon the suggested questions for the Programme Note (CBA2). Check out pages 21-22 in the Assessment Guidelines for a list of these suggested questions.

Q: How many pieces of students' work do I bring to the SLAR meeting?

A: In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of student's work for each descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting.

Q: How are the Classroom-Based Assessments reported?

A: The descriptors awarded are used in reporting progress and achievement to parents and students as part of the school's ongoing reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Q: How do I know if I am awarding the correct descriptor?

A: Teacher judgements about the quality of student work, with the aim of arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations, are supported by annotated examples of student work published on <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Music> ; by the Features of Quality in these guidelines; and by collaboration and discussion with colleagues during Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings.

Q: What do I do for the Assessment Task in music?

A: There is no Assessment Task in music

Q: Can a student appeal the descriptor awarded of the Classroom-Based Assessments?

A: Queries in relation to the descriptors awarded for the Classroom-Based Assessments, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school. There are no external appeals for Classroom-Based Assessments

Q: I have determined that one of my student's pieces is in line with expectations but the second is above expectations? Which descriptor do I award?

A: You will use the Features of Quality and an 'on-balance' judgment to assess the level of student achievement in the Classroom-Based Assessments. You will have read the Features of Quality (starting with *Yet to meet expectations*) until you reach a descriptor that best describes the work being assessed. Where it is not clearly evident which quality descriptor should apply, you must come to a judgement, based on the evidence from the student's work, to select the descriptor that best matches the student's work overall. This 'best fit' approach will enable you to select the descriptor that 'on balance' describes the work being assessed.

Q: Can a PME teacher, teaching second-year students, attend a SLAR meeting?

A: If they are working with students who are being assessed, the cooperating teacher will award and revise the descriptors. Schools may wish to explore how and why they may attend a SLAR meeting in an observation and professional development capacity.

Q: How many of each descriptor should I expect across my class?

A: You should not assume that the results of a group of students being assessed will follow any distribution plan as your student's work is being judged only against the Features of Quality rather than other students' performance.

Q: Who selects the pieces to submit for the Composition Portfolio (CBA1), the student or me?

A: The learning for this assessment will be monitored and supported by you, the music teacher. The students are free to choose any two pieces that they have created, composed, adapted or imagined, but in selecting these two pieces they should consider why they have selected these two. In considering what pieces to select they could ask:

- What two pieces am I most proud of?
- Which pieces show the greatest progression from earlier concepts or ideas to realisation?
- Do the pieces chosen represent a variety of genres/styles/medium?

Q: Do the Classroom-Based Assessments take place during timetabled music class time?

A: The Classroom-Based Assessments are included within the time allocated for Music, which is a minimum of 200 hours.

Q: When is it ok to start using the language of the features of quality and descriptors with my students?

A: At an appropriate moment in their learning, students should be familiarised with the Features of Quality that will be used to judge the quality of their work.

Q: When do the Classroom-Based Assessments have to be completed? Is there an exact window?

A: There is no set window for our Composition Portfolio (CBA1). The NCCA issues the key dates for the classroom-based assessments which identifies the latest date of completion for our composition portfolio. These dates are published on curriculumonline.ie. The advice at present for our Programme Note (CBA2) is that it will need to be completed two weeks in advance of the practical examination and students will spend no more than three weeks on researching and completing the Programme Note. However, students may find it easier to complete their Programme Note as they learn their pieces as this research will also inform their practicing and refining of their pieces in preparation for the practical examination.