

Your Contributions to the Webinar

This document contains your contributions to the SSI Webinar and answers to any questions asked throughout



Checking-in 1

Where have your students been finding information for their research?





Checking-in 2 Part 2

How do you help them turn this curiosity into a research question?





Learning Activity 1

What research question do you have about multivitamins?

Does more expensive vitamins really mean they are better?

Does 1 tablet really meet our RDA?

Is it safe to take supplements without doctor advice?



Are multivitamins a waste of money?

Is it better to get nutrients from food rather than tablet form?

Your questions from the Webinar

What is the time-frame for the SSI CBA?

The NCCA decide the windows for Classroom-Based Assessments across all subjects. The SSI will take place over a three-week period within a window from Friday 7th December 2018 to Friday 25th January 2019. It is important to set the times and dates for implementation as early as possible. The key date to establish at the outset is the timing of the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting for the SSI. In setting this date, the school will be guided by its own local circumstances. Once the school has decided on this date the teachers and students can plan for the completion of the SSI. The timing of the process may vary from school to school, as the timeline offers a degree of flexibility for schools to schedule the CBA to a time within the specified time period. So, if a teacher knows that they or some of their students will be out for some time during this window, then they can plan accordingly to carry out the SSI within 3 weeks of time that they will be available.

Can students be thinking of issues/research questions before the SSI window?

Students should have developed sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding over the course of first, second, and third year to undertake an SSI in the middle of third year. As part of ongoing teaching, learning and assessment of the learning outcomes for Junior Cycle Science, students should have opportunities to develop research skills, including skills to report on and evaluate information as they realise various learning outcomes. They should also be given the opportunity to develop research questions and to recognise questions that are suitable for research within a given time frame. This is a skill that will be developed over time and students should be aware they will have an opportunity to showcase this learning at the time of the second CBA. The Assessment Guidelines (pg. 27) outlines the three activities students will be involved in during the three-week period as they carry out this SSI. They will:

1. Initiate Research – which includes generating a research question.
2. Evaluate sources to respond to the research question.
3. Communicate their findings

Can some of the work for the CBA be carried out at home?

It is up to you as the teacher to decide if it would be appropriate for some aspects of the work for the CBA to be completed outside the classroom setting. The teacher must ensure the work completed is the students' own work, and that students have had enough opportunity to provide evidence of achievement across the Features of Quality for the CBA. The work done for the CBA should replicate normal classroom practice. Throughout the three years, students will have had the opportunity to research as they engage with the learning outcomes. The action verb “research” appears in the learning outcomes E&S6, PW4, PW8 and BW5 and teachers may have chosen to engage their students with research in the context of many other learning outcomes as a pedagogical choice. The SSI is an opportunity for students to showcase the research understanding and skills they have developed during their Junior Cycle Science learning. It is also a check-in that helps to inform students, teachers and parents of where students are in relation to their ability to research, and how they can improve as researchers throughout the rest of Junior Cycle and beyond. Students may have accessed sources at home and brought them into school to work on in class. Some class time may have been spent in the computer room. It is important to remember however, that searching for sources is only one small part of the research process, so access to computers throughout the three-week process is not an essential requirement.

What is meant by reasonable support? Are we expected to correct drafts of the reports?

The Assessment Guidelines give the following information about reasonable support.

“Reasonable support may include:

- Clarifying the requirements of the task,
- Using annotated examples of student work provided by NCCA to clarify the meaning and interpretation of the Features of Quality to students,
- Providing instructions at strategic intervals to facilitate the timely completion of the investigation and report,
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs.

It is not envisaged that this level of support involved requires teachers to edit draft reports, or to provide model text or answers to be used in the student’s evidence of learning.”

Can students work in groups for the SSI?

The SSI is an **individual** research project comprising of three activities: initiating research, evaluating evidence and communicating findings. Students are encouraged to discuss their research with others and may collaborate in finding sources of information or data or in discussing their ideas and thoughts. Students may have a shared interest in a topic or issue. However, each student must develop their own research question and present their individual research, providing evidence pertaining to the Features of Quality.

Do students have to submit a written report?

Students can communicate their research in a format of their choice. It does not have to be a written report and may be presented in alternate formats, e.g. Podcasts, posters etc. It is important to make the students aware that the report can be done as an on-going process in the three weeks, at the end of each main stage or at the end of the investigation itself. If the report is a written report, it is advised in the Assessment Guidelines that the length of the report “would typically be in the 650-800 words range (excluding reference list and research notes), but this should not be regarded as a rigid requirement” (pg 28). It is the final report that will be assessed by the teacher using the Features of Quality. If the students decide on an alternate format to a written or typed report it may be necessary for them to submit a short written report (approx. 400 words) which would showcase their deeper understanding of the research they have completed. Again this word count is not rigid and is only a guideline. Depending on the format chosen by the students, some may need to be shorter or longer to show their understanding. “When planning the content of their report, students should be familiar with the Features of Quality used to judge the level of achievement which will be awarded to their work” (Assessment Guidelines, pg 29). They also will submit their research records. As is the case with all research, it is good practice to keep research records, and while these are not in themselves used to decide on a descriptor for the CBA, they give the teacher and student some insight into the progress of the research. They will also support the teacher in giving feedback to the student on how they progressed their research.

What if a student cannot come up with a question?

Students should develop the skills of initiating research as they engage with learning outcomes throughout first, second and third year. If a student cannot develop a question and you the teacher has to give support beyond that outlined in the Assessment Guidelines as “reasonable” (pg 8), then this should be noted in your records and shared at the SLAR meeting. Once shared, you and your colleagues will use the Features of Quality to assess the work using the “best fit” approach.

When will exemplars be available?

The NCCA are currently working with teachers to gather authentic samples of student work which will be available on www.curriculumonline.ie prior to the SSI window.

Where do we store the SSIs after the SLAR meeting?

After the SLAR meeting teachers review the provisional descriptors they awarded to ensure their judgements align with what was discussed at the meeting. A final descriptor is then awarded to the work. This is notified to school management, the student and their parents and the work, with appropriate feedback, is returned to the student.

How long should the report be?

If the report is written then the Assessment Guidelines suggest the report should be between 650-800 words, though this is not a rigid requirement. The most important factor is that students can provide evidence to show achievement across the Features of Quality. Remember, the report will reflect research that can realistically be achieved in a three-week period. As noted above, the format the student chooses is up to them and does not have to be a written report.

How can we support students with special educational needs?

The Assessment Guidelines (pg. 9) states that “Special provisions may be put in place for a student with a specific physical or learning difficulty to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the student’s performance in both Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement. The accommodations – for example, the use of Irish Sign Language, 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 school year and are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.”

When will the Assessment Task take place?

The Assessment Task will be completed in the week following the final completion date for the SSI. In 2019 the Assessment Task will be completed between Monday January 28th and Friday February 1st. More information on the Assessment task will be available in Winter 2018.

When will we see a sample paper for the Final Assessment?

The normal practice is that the State Examinations Commission makes sample papers available at some point late in the first term of an examination year when a new examination paper is scheduled for use in the following June's examinations.

The timeframe for release of sample papers to schools can be taken as around mid-term, i.e. the end of October or start of November 2018. Copies will be circulated to schools and placed on the SEC website at that time.