



**Short Course**  
**Artistic**  
**Performance**  
**Engaging with the Arts**

**Specification for Junior Cycle**



# Contents

Page 3

**Introduction to junior cycle**

Page 4

**Rationale**

Page 5

**Aim**

Page 6

**Overview: Links**

Statements of Learning  
Key Skills

Page 10

**Overview: Course**

Page 11

**Expectations for students**

Learning Outcomes

Page 17

**Assessment and reporting**

Page 18

**Appendix 1:**

Level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

---

# Introduction to junior cycle

Junior cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

Junior cycle allows students to make a strong connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity and enterprise. The student's junior cycle programme builds on their learning in primary school. It supports their further progress in learning. It helps students to develop the learning skills that can assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

# Rationale

Learning about and through the arts is fundamental to an education that aspires to support the development of the whole person. Awareness of, involvement in and appreciation of the arts, enables students to encounter a rich world of creativity, imagination and innovation (Arts in Education Charter, 2012). The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27) affirms the right of everyone to 'participate in the cultural life of the country, and to enjoy the arts'.

Learning in the area of artistic performance is enjoyable for students, because it is hands-on, fully engaging the participants in practical group activities. It fosters both the development of the specific skills of the art form and a range of transferable skills that may apply to other collaborative endeavours. Through movement, sound, symbol and image, the arts can transform people's creative ideas into expressive works that communicate feelings, meanings and interpretations to an audience. While it may draw on the students' previous experiences, it also provides opportunities for students to develop new skills; the performance being both a challenge and a source of satisfaction in bringing an idea from conception to realisation.

---

# Aim

This short course in artistic performance aims to engage students in artistic practices with others, by offering a structure that can be used to facilitate collaborative and individual imaginative and creative initiatives, leading to a group performance<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Where 'performance' is used in the document, read 'presentation', 'event', 'exhibition' or 'production'.

# Overview: Links

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages show how artistic performance is linked to central features of learning and teaching in junior cycle.

## Artistic performance and statements of learning

**Table 1: Links between junior cycle artistic performance and the statements of learning**

Statement	Examples of related learning in the course
SOL 4: The student creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the processes and skills involved.	The students consider all the processes and skills that contribute to creating a presentation. They learn how to critique their own work and the work of others. They are encouraged to innovate and show creativity through the process of producing an artistic performance.
SOL 23: The student brings an idea from conception to realisation.	Students work out a creative concept and decide how to bring it to fruition.  This entails engagement with a structured problem-solving process, such as how to paint a picture and incorporate it in an exhibition; how to make a film; how to mount a stage production or a musical presentation, moving through research, brain-storming, prioritising, practising, improving, presenting, recording, evaluating and reflecting.  Organising the final presentation teaches managerial (logistical/financial), promotional (targeting and catering to an audience) and organisational skills.
SOL 1: The student communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1.	Students develop communication skills in a variety of ways: through the oral communication which characterises much of the on-going collaborative work; through the personal recording of a learning journey; through their on-going critical reflection on the art form encountered and/or by using various media to communicate key messages to target audiences.
SOL 20: The student uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge.	Students are encouraged to use digital technologies and a variety of media to support their work.

## Artistic performance and key skills

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The junior cycle curriculum focuses on eight key skills.

Figure 1: Key skills of junior cycle



This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some of the elements that are related to learning activities in artistic performance. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Table 2: Links between junior cycle artistic performance and key skills

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Imagining	Students learn to respond imaginatively to stimuli drawn from arts sources. They express feelings, thoughts and ideas through the chosen arts medium, taking risks and learning from mistakes.
	Implementing ideas and taking action	Students engage in debate, discussion and brainstorming. They consider options and alternatives, trying out and evaluating different approaches. They see the process through to completion.
Being literate	Developing my spoken language	Students develop their oral literacy skills as they are given frequent opportunities to discuss and explain what they are doing. This short course may also provide opportunities for the teacher to actively coach students in the skills of public speaking, such as use of intonation, voice projection and diction.
	Writing for different purposes	Students develop their writing skills through the many opportunities for creative self-expression as well as through the preparation of functional documents associated with the project (such as writing promotional materials, catalogues, posters and captions).
Being numerate	Estimating, predicting and calculating	When involved in the design process, students develop the skills of measurement, scale and squaring up for a stage set, exhibition space, wall hanging, mural, sculpture or model-making. They need to calculate the amount of material—fabric, wood, metal, clay—required or quantities for catering, programme production, paper and printing.
Communicating	Listening and expressing myself	Students communicate using different styles appropriate to the occasion. They learn to use suitable body language and expression.
	Performing and presenting	Students express emotions and key messages through their role in the presentation. They make decisions about how best to communicate with their audience using a variety of styles and media.
Managing information and thinking	Thinking creatively and critically	Students learn to question their own and others' ideas and assumptions and to adjust thinking in light of new information.
	Using technology to access, manage and share knowledge	Students use technology and digital media as research tools to gather information, communicate and/or as a means of creative expression.

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Managing myself	Being able to reflect on my own learning	Students learn to identify and reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses, to seek help and to be open to feedback and criticism in a way that facilitates revision and improvement.
	Making considered decisions	Students learn the importance of thinking through their decisions and how their actions might affect others and the collective process
Staying well	Being positive about learning	In this short course, students find enjoyment and fun in learning. They learn how to stick with a project, celebrating their achievement at the end.
	Being confident	Students develop confidence as they contribute to decision-making within the group, standing apart from the crowd when needed. They use teacher, peer and self-evaluation to improve. They develop resilience in the face of difficulties and a sense of satisfaction in the achievement of goals.
Working with others	Developing good working relationships and resolving conflict	Students spend time actively listening to each other and sharing ideas honestly and sensitively. They learn to respect the views of others and thus prevent and manage conflict.
	Co-operating	Students set collective goals, work hard and compromise to achieve them, showing appreciation for the contribution of others to the development of group performances.

# Overview: Course

The artistic performance specification is positioned as a framework document that allows for flexibility of implementation and interpretation to match the array of artistic disciplines that may form the focus of this short course. This focus might be

- the staging of a school play or a musical
- an art or photography exhibition centred on a particular theme
- the scripting, editing and filming of a screenplay
- the organisation and production of a musical concert
- other arts-based activities that lead to a performance.

The specification is structured around three strands: **Experiencing the arts, Planning and preparing** and **Participation and performance**.

## Strand 1: Experiencing the arts.

This strand is designed to give the students actual experiences of the arts, so that they can begin to talk about and evaluate artistic performances. Through this experience, students can gain an insight into what the art form is communicating, how it is communicated, and to consider their potential role in the final group performance.

## Strand 2: Planning and preparing.

In this strand, students will move on to plan and prepare for the performance that they are going to be involved in. To do this, they will first need to consider their own strengths and those of others in order to make decisions on the performing/non-performing roles that they will undertake. Students will then engage in activities on an individual and collaborative basis, to develop the skills that are necessary to be successful in their particular role. This can be done through research, further observations and experiences as outlined in strand 1, use of outside or in-school expertise, and regular attending and practising at rehearsals.

## Strand 3: Participation and performance.

This strand brings the experiences of the arts as an observer and a participant together in the final group performance. The performance should demonstrate the skills learnt in the chosen discipline and communicate this with the audience.

Within any artistic discipline, there are specific arts literacies (verbal and non-verbal), conventions and skills to be developed: this framework is designed so that students can engage with and participate in arts activities that are of a high quality and lead to the development and improvement of their own artistic skills and then communicate these newly-acquired skills to an audience. While fostering the development of these art-specific skills, a range of transferable skills are also developed that may apply to other collective endeavours.

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined below reflects the learning students undertake in this NCCA short course. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA short course to suit their particular needs and school context. If adapting the course, schools may also need to adapt the Classroom-Based Assessment, so that it reflects the learning their students undertook. Schools may also develop their own short course(s) and related Classroom-Based Assessment. Guidelines for schools who wish to develop their own short course(s) are available.

The learning outcomes in this short course are aligned with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1).

The course has been designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement.

# Expectations for students

*Expectations for students* is an umbrella term that links learning outcomes with annotated examples of student work. For NCCA-developed short courses, in some cases examples of work associated with a specific learning outcome or with a group of learning outcomes will be available. Schools who design their own short courses may wish to create a bank of examples of student work for discussion and for future reference.

## Learning outcomes

*Learning outcomes* are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate having completed this junior cycle short course in artistic performance. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students and represent outcomes for students at the end of their period of study (approximately 100 hours).

The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply any hierarchy of importance across the outcomes themselves.

# Strand 1: Experiencing the arts

## Learning outcomes

---

**Students learn about****Students should be able to**

---

Experiencing the arts

- 1.1 observe high-quality artistic presentations by others, including the work of professional artists, in order to experience excellence
  - 1.2 analyse the context in which artistic presentations are constructed through observation and participation
  - 1.3 critique what the art form is communicating
  - 1.4 analyse the relevance and appropriateness of the method of communicating
  - 1.5 reflect on their experiences to inform the choice of individual or collaborative creative project they will participate in
-

# Strand 2: Planning and preparing

## Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Identifying the collaborative creative activity	2.1 listen and contribute to the ideas of others
	2.2 weigh up options and their implications
	2.3 provide practical evidence of strengths and talents they bring to the activity
	2.4 contribute to an evaluation of those strengths as well as identifying others they would like to develop
	2.5 demonstrate a capacity to reflect on the process to date, drawing conclusions and indicating their relevance to the overall project
Practising and developing specific skills	2.6 assume responsibilities for a role appropriate to their abilities
	2.7 use research and appropriate resources that enable them to develop in the role they choose/are assigned
	2.8 work both independently of and collaboratively with peers
	2.9 demonstrate a commitment to meeting deadlines and/or attending rehearsals
	2.10 demonstrate growth in their artistic skill set over time

# Strand 3: Participation and performance

## Learning outcomes

<b>Students learn about</b>	<b>Students should be able to</b>
Sharing our work	3.1 contribute individually and collaboratively to the artistic performance to achieve a solution to the artistic challenges posed in strand 2
	3.2 communicate appropriately with peers, teachers, leaders and with those who are attending the event
	3.3 demonstrate skills acquired in the chosen artistic discipline to perform effectively in their chosen role
Evaluating and critiquing	3.4 reflect on the final presentation they have participated in considering their role and that of others
	3.5 identify the skills and knowledge they have acquired, articulating the transferability of these to other areas of their learning and lives
	3.6 contribute to a constructive appraisal of the work of peers

## What the course might look like in schools

This section outlines what *Artistic performance: Engaging with the arts* might look like in a school. The three strands of the course are closely related and their learning outcomes are worked on throughout the course. In this sense, the course is not linear or sequential. The activities engaged with across the strands are designed so that they lead to the development of skills in the chosen discipline and inform and support each other. In this way, the artistic activities of observing, creating and performing are interrelated and contribute to the generation of high-quality arts experiences.

**Stage 1:** The process starts with choosing the artistic discipline that will form the focus of the short course. This could be, for example, in the area of drama, music/music theatre, dance or the visual arts. Once the class group and the teacher have reached consensus on the artistic discipline, a suitable theme or focus will need to be agreed. This negotiated understanding might come about through student suggestions or teacher suggestions and could involve the viewing of other performances to determine suitability and potential adaptability of the theme to the school setting.

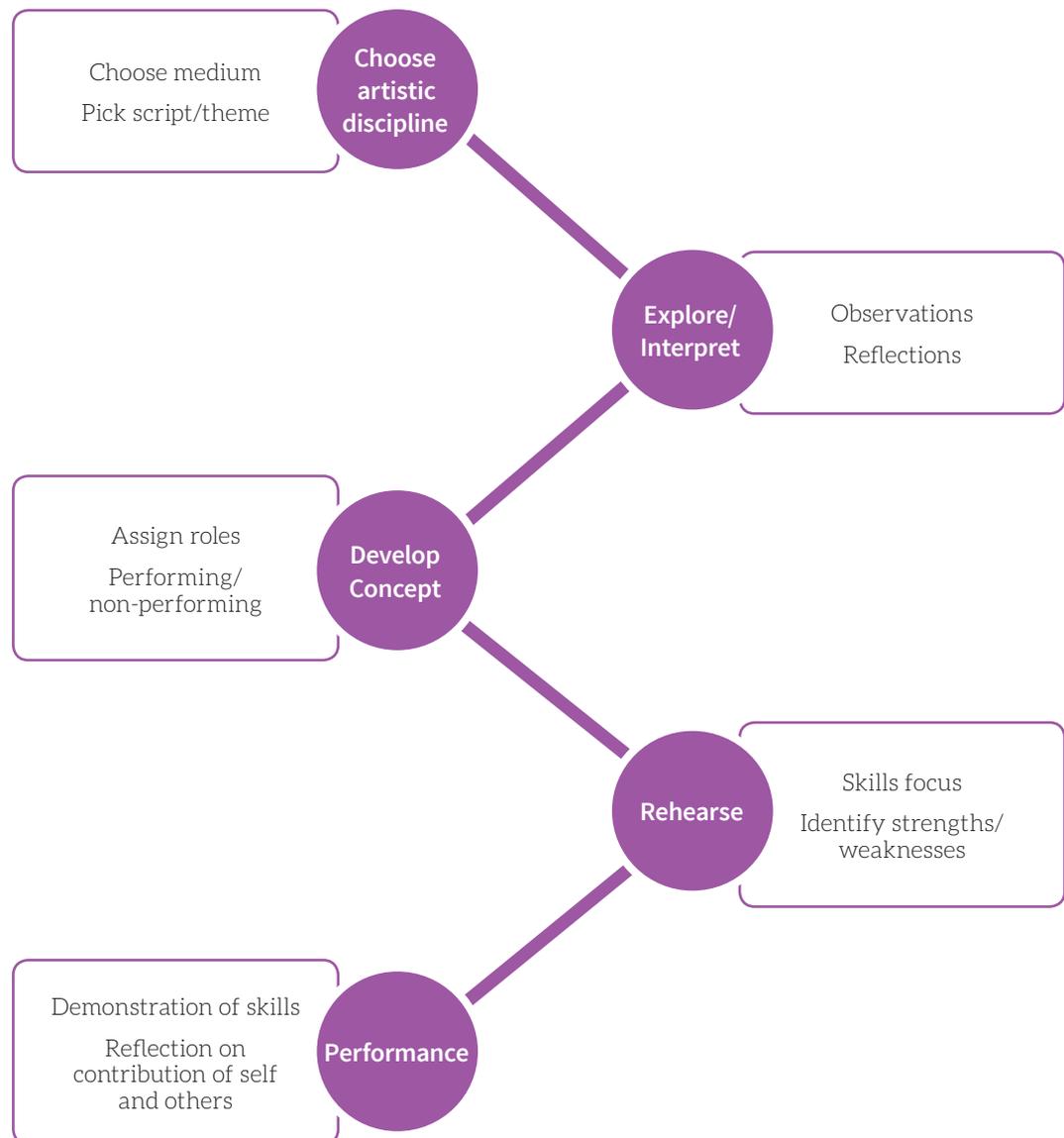
**Stage 2:** Students will need to experience and observe high-quality events in the chosen discipline, reflecting on what they observe while being cognisant of their own potential involvement in the performance. Through exploring, interpreting and critically reviewing what was observed, students will start to gain an understanding of the composite and inter-related elements that combine to make a performance of high quality. When evaluating an artistic performance, the following are elements that might be critiqued: staging and set design, plot development, themes and characters explored, genre, historical context, costume design, make-up, lighting design, sound design and the communication skills demonstrated by the performers. The student should also reflect on what the key messages of the performance were, how they were communicated and how the audience/viewers reacted. This critical observation could include a personal response outlining specific reasons why the student liked or did not like the performance observed.

**Stage 3:** Following on from a discussion on the observations made during the previous stages, the allocation of the performing and non-performing/technical roles will be considered. This could be done through an audition process and/or through an identification of an area of interest to the student subsequent to their experiences of arts activities in the previous stages. At this stage the concept agreed on needs to be expanded so that there is consensus on when and where it should be staged, an awareness of intended audience, how the performance will be marketed, the technical support required, and agreement on the nature and details of the different roles required. Throughout this planning phase, the students should always be cognisant of the potential legal issues such as applying for the rights to the performance, if appropriate, and other health and safety measures that need to be considered.

**Stage 4:** Next, the rehearsal stage, where students engage in the development of skills specific to their chosen roles. At this stage, the group diverges, and the students actively engage in activities and experiences that will enhance their skill development in their specialist area. The group could research and use resources that will aid the development of these skills to help ensure the learning is of the highest quality. These resources could be outside experts that are available to the school, various online and digital interpretations of similar performances, or other in-school expertise that could be utilised. This stage also links back to the earlier exploration and interpretation phase, (stage two), as detailed observation of and engagement with the arts can lead to the further improvement of specific, identified skills. This part of the process is full of uncertainty, risk-taking and tension as students endeavour to fit their individual skills and individual acts of creation and learning into the group experience. Through the rehearsal process, students can transform many conflicting ideas, actions and constraints into one unified form: the performance.

**Stage 5:** The final stage is the group performance itself: the culmination of the process of bringing the idea from conception to realisation. This event should draw on the skills, knowledge and understanding gained through engaging with the arts and developed through the rehearsal process. It allows the students to transform their creative ideas into an expressive work that communicates feelings, meanings and interpretations to an audience.

**Figure 2: Visual representation of the artistic performance process:**



# Assessment and reporting

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. This short course supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. Some learning outcomes lend themselves to once-off assessment, others to assessment on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as discussing, explaining, researching, presenting, planning and taking action. In these contexts, students with their teachers and peers reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work. They plan the next steps in their learning, based on feedback they give and receive. Ongoing assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this short course.

It is envisaged that students will provide evidence of their learning in a variety of ways, including digital media, audio recordings and written pieces.

Assessment is most effective when it moves beyond marks and grades and reporting focuses not only on how the student has done in the past but on the next steps for further learning. Student progress and achievement in short courses, both in ongoing assessments and in the specific Classroom-Based Assessment relating to this short course will be communicated to parents in interim reporting and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). To support teachers and schools, an Assessment Toolkit is available online. Along with the guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process, the Assessment Toolkit will include learning, teaching, assessment and reporting support material.

## Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessments are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Junior cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment. Where feasible, teachers of short courses will participate in learning and assessment review meetings.

### **Classroom-Based Assessment: Performance**

The culminating group performance should bring all the relevant skills together with evidence of improvement and commitment. Assessment of the performance is based on the features of quality as they apply to the student's role in the performance. The assessment can take place in real time or in a combination of real time and viewing of the recorded performance. The performance allows the students to communicate these skills through their chosen discipline and the assessment should consider technical control, creativity, interpretation and teamwork.

## Features of quality

The features of quality support student and teacher judgement of the Classroom-Based Assessments and are the criteria that will be used by teachers to assess the students' final project.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this junior cycle artistic performance short course, including features of quality and details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of this Classroom-Based Assessment, will be available in separate assessment guidelines for artistic performance. The guidelines will include, for example, suggestions on the scale and format of the performances, and support in using 'on balance' judgement in relation to the features of quality.

## Inclusive assessment

Inclusive assessment practices, whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessment, are a key feature of teaching and learning in schools. Accommodations, 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.

Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Accommodations which enable all students to access curriculum and assessment are based on specific needs. For example, a student who cannot physically type may use free dictation software to complete ongoing assessments and the Classroom-Based Assessment. Equally, a student who cannot speak may sign/draw/write/type/create visuals and subtitles to present and communicate ideas. A student with a specific learning difficulty may benefit from having learning tasks and activities presented in a different way. Comprehensive guidelines on inclusion in post-primary schools are available [here](#) and guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities are available [here](#).

# Appendix 1:

## Level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, for Level 3 certification and awards, the knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.

<b>NFQ Level</b>	3
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Breadth</i>	Knowledge moderately broad in range
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Kind</i>	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
<b>Know-how and skill</b> <i>Range</i>	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
<b>Know-how and skill</b> <i>Selectivity</i>	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
<b>Competence</b> <i>Context</i>	Act within a limited range of contexts
<b>Competence</b> <i>Role</i>	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
<b>Competence</b> <i>Learning to learn</i>	Learn to learn within a managed environment
<b>Competence</b> <i>Insight</i>	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour



AN ROINN  
**OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION AND SKILLS**