An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna

Junior Cycle Irish

English-medium schools (L2)

Contents

Who is this specification for?

This specification is aimed at students who use the Irish language as a second language mainly in schools which operate through the medium of English.

In English-medium schools, the English language is the working language of the school and Irish (L2[1]) is taught as a subject. The different language backgrounds of students who attend English-medium schools are recognised, including those whose primary language at home is English and those who speak English and/or another language at home.

What is the significance of the language community to the Irish student in this specification?

Students in English-medium schools are to a large extent dependent on the Irish language classroom as the Irish language community is not always on the doorstep of the classroom. Because of its immediate language environment, it is important to foster valuable links with the language community to support students

- to find other opportunities to use the language

- to discover accurate and genuine language samples/input

- to participate in the Irish language community.

This emphasis on the language community is inherent in this specification and this is in line with the vision set out in the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (2010)* in particular the need to

> 'give life to the Irish language outside the classroom for the young people who study it in the formal education system.'[2]

The students' attitudes to the use of Irish as a living language develops through their appreciation and exposure to the language community and also how they consider, view and reflect on themselves as language learners. These connections and understandings help in fostering more positive attitudes towards learning and using the Irish language.

Which language skills can be expected?

The learning outcomes within the three strands in this specification are broadly aligned with the descriptors in bands A2-B1, (from basic users to independent language users) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) . All language skills need not be acquired at the same level, for example spoken competency could be more advanced than written for example. The student relies on the teacher's feedback and guidance, their own self-awareness as a language learner and opportunities to use language to further develop their language skills.

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1   L1 is the language medium of the school (English in English-medium schools; Irish in Irish-medium schools). L2 is the second language (Irish in English-medium schools; English in Irish-medium schools).

2   Government of Ireland. (2010). *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010-2030*, p. 12.

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.

The junior cycle allows students to make a greater 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 are relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute directly 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, innovation and enterprise. The learner's junior cycle programme builds on their learning to date and actively supports their progress in learning and, in addition, supports them in developing the learning skills that will assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

Rationale

Studying Irish helps students to build on their learning to date and to enhance their skills so they can enjoy using the Irish language. Through learning languages, students are provided with the opportunity to gain the understanding, knowledge and skills to develop their personal, cognitive and social development, as well as their effective participation in the global society. Students' knowledge of transferable skills and mastery of a language such as Irish will be critical both for learning and in their life in general. This fosters students' ability and confidence to develop as considerate citizens in the language community. By learning, acquiring and using Irish, students discover information, develop thinking skills, and express opinions and emotions. Therefore, students are able to manage various demands associated with school, the community, employment, further education and life as a whole. The language learning journey, from learner to a bilingual user, is a continuum. The many benefits of bilingualism are widely recognised in international research. Bilingualism and plurilingualism contribute to a person's imaginative and creative ability and they create a multifaceted approach to life.

A particular level of competence in the Irish language is required in different employment areas in Ireland and overseas. Government departments and agencies have a statutory obligation to provide services through the medium of Irish. The official and working status of the Irish language in the European Union creates further opportunities for employment. Irish is an advantage for students who wish to work in these various fields or who want to conduct their business through the medium of Irish.

The language is a window whereby students can look both at their historical and contemporary culture and identity, and therefore gain an appreciation of the importance of assuming personal ownership of the language. By studying Irish, students are given the opportunity to identify with the language community[4] and participate in it to best take advantage of communication opportunities. By thinking about and studying Irish and elements of the Irish culture, students' awareness of the culture of the language grows. Often this appreciation encourages students to consider their own place in the world and to think about cultural identity on a wider basis. The deeper connection and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of their community can be empowering for students. Where students gain a better understanding of the language culture, they are given the opportunity to appreciate other cultures and languages.

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4   Language community: a community where the target language is spoken as the language of communication in the home and in domains outside of it.

Students learn about the structure of the language and how it works. Students enhance their appreciation of the language itself (language awareness) by exploring texts, including multi-modal texts. Through appropriate language tasks based on such texts, students gain an understanding of the differences between spoken and written language. They observe different aspects of the language from the way it is used on a daily basis to how it is expressed in writing. Students are encouraged to observe the aspects of the language which are not comparable to English (vocabulary, grammar, syntax and pronunciation). Students are able to address difficulties in understanding and learning and they are able to understand the reasons for their own mistakes through a systematic comparison between Irish and English or between Irish and another language. Students become involved and engaged in all of the language skills: listening, reading, spoken production, spoken interaction and writing. They discuss, compare and investigate a variety of texts, including literary texts, developing their communication, thinking and critical skills. Students read literature with an insight and imagination not only in the classroom but for their own benefit as well. As they read relevant texts, the students' critical ability is developed.

As learning is a social activity as well as a personal activity, students engage with the skills and opportunities associated with both personal and collaborative learning to achieve appropriate language goals. By interacting with the teacher and with classmates and through reflection, students' appreciation of themselves as language learners grows. They gradually become familiar with their own learning strategies and personal style of learning. By completing various language tasks, students understand the areas where they have seen an improvement in language use, the aspects which require further improvement and how to undertake those improvements. As a result, students' confidence and their ability to self-manage both their learning and the language are enhanced. Students build on their language and digital skills while creating texts, communicating online or seeking information, considerably expanding their general digital literacy. As students' respect for and mastery of Irish is developed, they will have more opportunities to enjoy life and to do their best for society, both now and in the future.

Aim

In the junior cycle specifications for Irish, students consolidate and deepen their understanding of Irish. Students are enabled to communicate in an effective, interactive, confident manner in formal and informal settings in the language community. The fostering and development of awareness is emphasised; language and cultural awareness as well as students' self-awareness as language learners. Junior Cycle Irish seeks to consolidate and develop the skills students bring to post-primary school. Students are empowered to assume ownership of Irish; an important life skill.

Students are encouraged to

- use language effectively and confidently, both personally and in communicating with other users in the language community

- enjoy creative and innovative communication in Irish

- appreciate Irish and have a desire both to speak it and use it

- express themselves through consolidation of their literacy skills

- attempt to use newly-learned language aspects

- engage with a wide range of texts in various ways, for learning, research, and recreation

- have an appreciation and respect for literature in Irish so that they may enjoy literature and benefit from it

- gain a better understanding of Irish culture and have respect and understanding for other cultures and languages.

Overview: Links

Table 1 below shows how this specification for Junior Cycle Irish (L2) can link to some of the statements of learning contained in the *Framework for Junior Cycle.*

Table 1: Junior Cycle Irish (L2) and the statements of learning

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING

The statement	Examples of relevant learning
SOL 2: The student listens, speaks, reads and writes in L2 and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to her or his ability	Students will participate in a wide range of language activities to develop their spoken and written communication in a wide variety of contexts according to their own ability.
SOL 3: The student creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts	Students will engage with a wide range of texts to enjoy, understand and assess their content.
SOL 6: The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives	Through learning and using the language, students understand Irish language culture and, as a result, they will appreciate other cultures and cultural diversity.
SOL 16: The student describes, illustrates, interprets, predicts and explains patterns and relationships	Students will learn the significance of structures and the natural flow of Irish, both spoken and written.
SOL 24: The student uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner	Students will use digital technologies appropriately to support learning and for language use.

Key Skills

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of the junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The eight key skills are set out in detail in Key Skills of Junior Cycle.

Figure 1: The key skills of junior cycle

- Developing my understanding and enjoyment of words and language
- Reading for enjoyment and with critical understanding
- Writing for different purposes
- Expressing ideas clearly and accurately
- Developing my spoken language
- Exploring and creating a variety of texts, including multi-modal texts

- Knowing myself
- Making considered decisions
- Setting and achieving personal goals
- Being able to reflect on my own learning
- Using digital technology to manage myself and my learning

- Using language
- Using numbers
- Listening and expressing myself
- Performing and presenting
- Discussing and debating
- Using digital technology to communicate

- Being healthy and physically active
- Being social
- Being safe
- Being spiritual
- Being confident
- Being positive about learning
- Being responsible, safe and ethical in using digital technology

- Developing good relationships and dealing with conflict
- Co-operating
- Respecting difference
- Contributing to making the world a better place
- Learning with others
- Working with others through digital technology

BEING LITERATE

COMMUNICATING

MANAGING MYSELF

KEY SKILLS

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STAYING WELL

BEING CREATIVE

MANAGING INFORMATION & THINKING

BEING NUMERATE

- Being curious
- Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating information and data
- Thinking creatively and critically
- Reflecting on and evaluating my learning
- Using digital technology to access, manage and share content

- Imagining
- Exploring options and alternatives
- Implementing ideas and taking action
- Learning creatively
- Stimulating creativity using digital technology

- Expressing ideas mathematically
- Estimating, predicting and calculating
- Developing a positive disposition towards investigating, reasoning and problem-solving
- Seeing patterns, trends and relationships
- Gathering, interpreting and representing data
- Using digital technology to develop numeracy skills and understanding

The examples below identify some of the elements that are related to learning activities in Irish.

Table 2 Junior Cycle Irish (L2) and key skills

| Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Learning creatively	As language users, students will have opportunities to explore a range of aspects relating to language and culture. They will use various means, including digital technology, to explore opinions and to express ideas creatively.
Being literate	Expressing ideas clearly and accurately Exploring and creating a variety of texts, including multi-modal texts	As students engage with a wide range of texts (including multi-modal texts) they will develop a more critical awareness of how language works. This will enable them to make informed language choices to express themselves, and to find, use and share ideas. By participating in interactive communication tasks, students will develop the foundations of spoken interaction: listening and speaking skills. Students will plan, draft and write in a range of genres demonstrating an increased understanding of a target group and style.
Being numerate	Seeing patterns, trends and relationships	Students will undertake language learning activities such as gathering information from surveys and questionnaires in class. Students will use innovative digital technology to find, gather and interpret information, and communicate that information through description or presentation. They will engage with quantifying concepts and elements of numeracy or functional measuring. They will recognise language patterns in texts, including literary texts.
Communicating	Using language	Students will improve their communication skills by using language that relates to their own lives and to life in general. They will gain experience in presenting information and opinions for themselves or on behalf of a group through Irish.
Managing information and thinking	Reflecting on and evaluating my learning	Students will consider and evaluate feedback received through self-assessment or through peer assessment (from other students) and feedback from teachers to find ways of being more accurate in their own language production (written and spoken) and being more aware of themselves as language learners.
Managing myself	Setting and achieving personal goals	Students will understand the importance of reflection, organisation and clarity to achieve goals effectively and on time when dealing with and creating Irish texts.
Staying well	Being positive about learning	Students will develop a positive attitude towards language learning when engaging with various language tasks and activities and when reflecting on themselves as language learners.
Working with others	Learning with others	Students will consult and co-operate with their peers and with others for the benefit of both their own and others' learning. Students will understand how important and beneficial it is to listen and respect others while completing a wide range of activities and tasks.

Overview: Course

This specification focuses on enhancing language and literacy skills through **integrated** strands: **Communicative competence, Language and cultural awareness**, and **Learner's self-awareness**. It was designed based on a minimum of 240 hours of student participation timetabled over the three years of the junior cycle.

Figure 2: Course overview
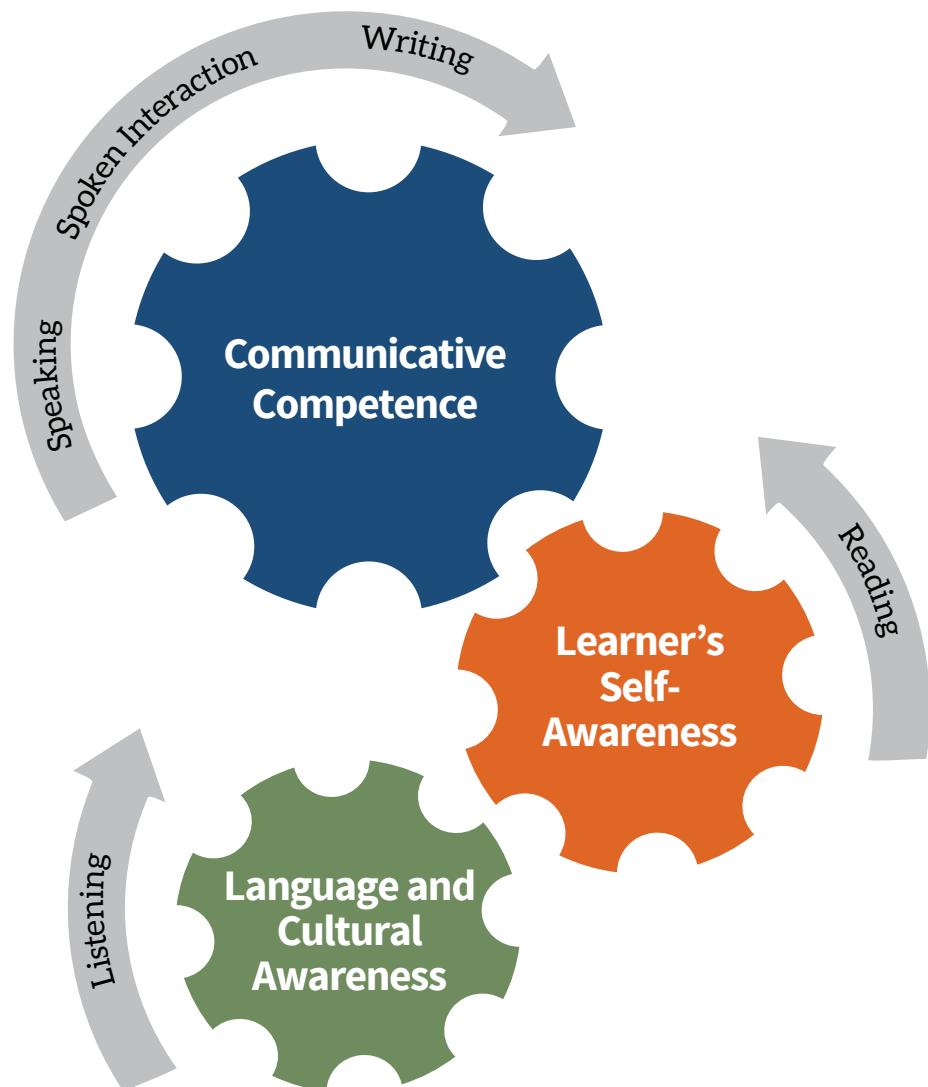
Strand 1: Communicative competence

The **Communicative competence** strand is the main strand of the specification and the two other strands, **Language and cultural awareness** and **Learner's self-awareness** actively support it. In order to acquire the language to communicate in the language community, the language and cultural awareness and the self-awareness of language learning need to be sufficiently developed by students. Great emphasis is placed on enabling students to use Irish to effectively including in communicating with other users in the language community.

In the main strand, students deepen and enrich their communicative competence and language skills. As their language and cultural awareness grows and as they develop self-awareness in relation to this as learners, their effectiveness as communicators and language users is greatly enhanced. Communicative competence consists of students' ability in the following five skills: listening, reading, spoken production, spoken interaction, and writing. These are skills required to communicate with other users of the language. While the learning outcomes associated with each strand are set out separately in this specification, this should not be taken to imply that the strands are to be studied in isolation. This intention is to foster, develop and maintain the various skills and competencies by using an integrated approach.

Strand 2: Language and cultural awareness

Language awareness involves students' understanding and reflection of how Irish works as a language of communication. This awareness inspires students' curiosity in relation to the system and style of the language and encourages accurate and precise acquisition of the language. Students work from their existing knowledge of the language and focus on accuracy and richness. They also direct their attention to normal language usage and to the living culture associated with the Irish language, with Gaeltacht communities and with Irish language speaking communities internationally.

Strand 3: Learner's self-awareness

Learner's self-awareness refers to students' self-awareness as language learners. Each language learner is different and by emphasising self-awareness in learning a language, students concentrate on individual style and their own individual attributes as language learners. This helps them greatly in making the necessary progress. When confronted with difficulties and challenges, students overcome them by reflecting on the reasons for those difficulties and challenges. They understand that they have language learning strategies available to them that will help them overcome difficulties and challenges and help them facilitate learning. They use suitable learning strategies that enable them to overcome challenges relating, for example, to the accurate and vibrant use of language. They know how to deal effectively with feedback as learners. They reflect on their progress and on the progress they still have to make in becoming language users. They understand their own personal motivation for using the language with other users. They understand how to make decisions as learners independently of the teacher and how to carry out a self-assessment on their progress in each skill.

Teaching and learning

This specification gives teachers and students the flexibility to use a range of teaching and learning strategies which are appropriate and relevant to the various contexts in which they use the language. This section outlines the teaching and learning approaches embedded in the integrated strands of the specification.

Students' language journey

The learning and acquisition of Irish can be viewed as a journey. Students start out as learners and generally remain learners throughout the journey. The students' objective or destination on this language journey is to be capable, independent and self-governing language users. An important part of the language journey is language learning and acquisition in the junior cycle which progresses from the development of the language in primary school and continues into the senior cycle.

Teachers, in partnership with students, guide students on this journey. It is the teacher's role to direct and facilitate teaching and learning. This means that they create a rich language input as part of the teaching. Teachers have expertise or special knowledge of the language and have particular knowledge and special skills relating to the teaching of the language (pedagogics), which facilitate learning. When students encounter challenges and difficulties teachers provide guidance, encouragement, help, feedback and support so that they may progress. Output[5] is of particular importance for students on their journey, as are effective teaching, opportunities for use and interaction, classmates, the community and learning facilities and sources.

The importance of progress and awareness

Self-awareness as language learners is the most effective tool students have to make progress. With teachers' help and feedback and by reflecting on what they have to do on a personal level on the language journey, students take the necessary steps to acquire the language as a second language. Effective language learners have certain distinct attributes. Students learn about these attributes. As they progress, students assume ownership of the language learning process. To this end, they are encouraged (by self-motivation, by teachers, by their peers and by the language community) to use the language.

Observation is another tool used by students to make progress. A sense of curiosity and a desire to learn are created and students become self-aware. Through this awareness, students acknowledge the disparity between their language level as they learn the language (this is referred to as inter-language) and richer, more accurate and more natural versions and examples of the language. They understand why they make mistakes and take responsibility for correcting those mistakes producing a richer and more accurate language. They keep a blog or a portfolio in which they regularly describe and reflect on their progress and what they observe about the language and about the culture of the language. They also describe the steps they must take to make progress as a learner and a user. They will not make progress without these elements.

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5   The language composed or generated by students themselves.

The importance of classmates

Classmates play an important role in learners' progress. Through interacting with classmates and through refection, students' understanding of themselves as language learners and users is developed. By taking advantage of opportunities to communicate with classmates in group work and in pairs in class and in everyday contexts outside of school, the students interact through the language.

The importance of the language community

The language community has a central role to play in students' progress. Language and cultural awareness help students to develop their understanding of the importance of the language community. They wish to be part of the language community, and identify with the community. The language community provides students with examples of the living language and students observe and imitate elements of this language, which in turn acts as a stimulus for them. They understand the disparity between their own language and the language provided by the language community. Without a language community, there would be no need to learn a language.
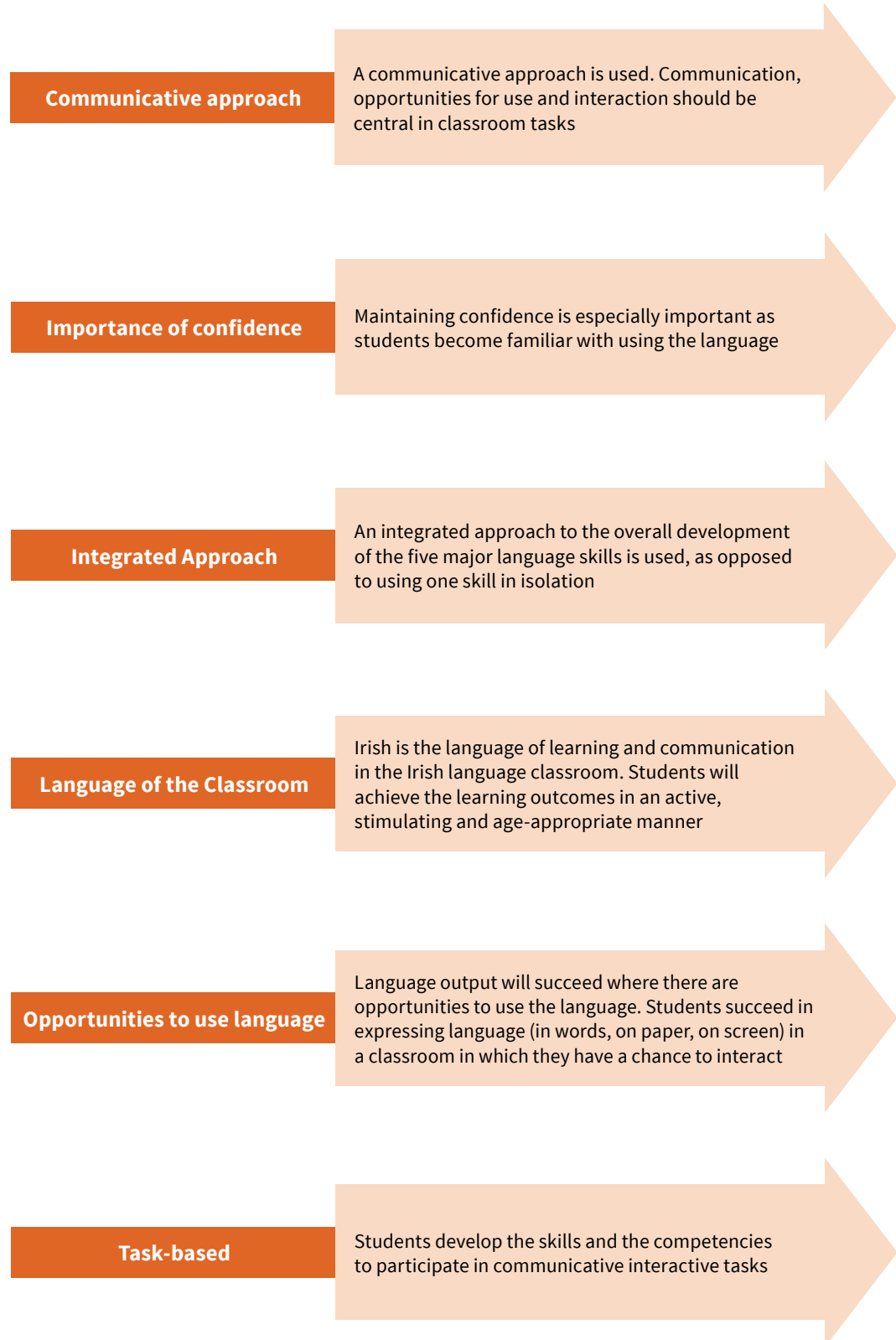
Literacy

There is a significant link between this specification and *The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Learning and Life (2011)*[6]. Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. Literacy acquisition is a central component of language acquisition. As students become familiar with various texts (including multi-modal texts), they develop literacy skills. As students create texts, communicate online, or seek information in the Irish class, their language and digital skills are developed and this significantly enhances their overall digital literacy. The use of modern technology contributes significantly to fostering creativity, the acquisition of literacy and the satisfaction students get from using language. Language awareness is an important element of literacy development. This awareness will help students to make informed choices while manipulating subjects, ideas and concepts. Quantitative and numerical concepts also form part of language learning, deepening students' numeracy skills.

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6   Department of Education and Skills. (2011). *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life. The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People, 2011-2020.* Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Figure 3: Significant elements of teaching and learning in this specification

Communicative approach

A communicative approach is used. Communication, opportunities for use and interaction should be central in classroom tasks

Importance of confidence

Maintaining confidence is especially important as students become familiar with using the language

Integrated Approach

An integrated approach to the overall development of the five major language skills is used, as opposed to using one skill in isolation

Language of the Classroom

Irish is the language of learning and communication in the Irish language classroom. Students will achieve the learning outcomes in an active, stimulating and age-appropriate manner

Opportunities to use language

Language output will succeed where there are opportunities to use the language. Students succeed in expressing language (in words, on paper, on screen) in a classroom in which they have a chance to interact

Task-based

Students develop the skills and the competencies to participate in communicative interactive tasks

Literature

Approach

Integration of literature a central facet of teaching and learning

Students will be given opportunities to sample a selection of literature to support their learning over the three years of junior cycle. The development of language skills and the exploration of literary texts should be integrated in the classroom to aid language development.

Literature supports the development of:

- language and literacy

- critical and creative skills

- cultural understandings

- personal development.

A literary text is one which demonstrates the state or circumstances of an individual: a story which derives from emotions, life experience, memories, and the predicament of the human condition. It often demonstrates fantasy, legends, emotions, horror and revelations. Poetry, creative prose and the creative film are associated with the heart and mind, with emotions and imagination.

Language and literacy

Literature is a source of both formal language and normal, everyday language. Literature is created for the language community and as such is an example of authentic material in a wide range of styles and language registers that can aid students in their language development. Literature is therefore an important resource/aid for learning, for literacy and for the development of language competencies[7].

Critical and creative skills

Literary texts foster opportunities for interaction, communication and meaningful discussion stimulating students' imagination and thereby supporting the development of communicative, critical and creative skills. While we often imagine writing and literature hand-in-hand, in many cases response to literature is spoken. If one reads a book or watches a film or hears a song it is more likely that one will speak about it before one writes about it. People often have different understandings of and views on literary texts, not everyone finds the same meaning in a text. Through encountering literary texts students have opportunities to enhance both their creative and critical thinking skills.

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7 Lazar, D. (1993). *Literature and Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cultural understandings

Literature provides cultural insights for students. Literary texts contain many explicit and implicit insights on native culture.

Personal development

Literature is an important resource for emotional development. Literary texts create opportunities for students to identify with characters and emotions revealed in the texts. This helps students learn about the nature of humanity and about their own lives. It aligns with the emphasis placed on wellbeing in the junior cycle as a whole. Each subject has a role to play in that area, including Irish. Literary texts (films, short stories, songs, plays, poems, novels, etc.) influence students' ideas and emotions.

Selection of texts[8]

The selection of literary texts is very important; texts must be selected which students can relate to and with which they can be involved both emotionally and personally. **The students' role in the selection of texts is crucially important.** Teachers will help students explore the possibilities so that they may select the most appropriate option.

The following will be provided to assist with this approach:

- a recommended list of appropriate texts for to support learning in first year

- a list of compulsory genres with an internal choice of texts for second and third year.

Students will select the texts in consultation with the teacher.
Lists will be available on www.curriculumonline.ie

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8   These texts constitute suitable reading material for second language learners.

First year

First year will set the foundation for learning literature in second and third year. Students will sample from the following genres:

- short films

- short stories

- poetry

- songs.

Students must study a minimum of **two short films** and **four texts** from the three genres.

Second and third year

Second and third year students will choose texts[9] to study in the following genres: short stories, drama or novel, poetry/song.

Over the two years, the following must be chosen at a minimum:

- two short stories

- one play (complete)

- five poems/songs

- one novel (complete) higher level only*

* Students intending to take the final examination at higher level should study the complete text of a novel along with the other texts mentioned above, during second and/or third year.

9   Texts not studied in first year

Progression

Primary curriculum

Continuity is fostered between students' experience of learning Irish in primary school and their experience of Irish in the junior cycle. The Primary Language Curriculum (2015) is an integrated curriculum. The same structure (strands and elements) is used for Irish and English. The integrated curriculum meets various language needs and school contexts, including English-medium schools, Gaeltacht schools, Irish-medium schools and special schools. There are two versions of the curriculum: one which is focused specifically on Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium schools and another which is focused specifically on English-medium schools.

The Primary Language Curriculum recognises that skills and certain concepts are transferable from the first language to the second and to the third language in some cases. This creates opportunities for skill enhancement and for the transfer of literacy skills and learning strategies to other languages.

The Primary Language Curriculum emphasises the development and fostering of

- communicative competence

- positive attitudes to learning languages

- language awareness (exploring and using language)

- self-awareness and autonomous learning.

All these features of the Primary Language Curriculum align with the rationale and aims of this *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish*. This helps to provide a continuous learning experience for students as they add to their language and learning skills in junior cycle.

Senior cycle

This specification through its strands and elements provides a learning experience that creates opportunities to enhance and deepen learning at senior cycle. The learning outcomes that emphasise students spoken competence, the role of literature in language learning, writing in a range of genres for a variety of audiences and language and self-awareness will be very important for students learning in senior cycle.

Expectations for Students

Expectations for students is an umbrella term which links learning outcomes with annotated examples of students' work in the subject specification. When teachers, students or parents looking at the online specification scroll over the learning outcomes, a link will sometimes be available to examples of work associated with a specific learning outcome or with a group of learning outcomes. The examples of student work will have been selected to illustrate expectations and will have been annotated by teachers. These examples will include work which is:

- exceptional

- above expectations

- in line with expectations.

The purpose of the examples of student work is to show the extent to which the learning outcomes are being achieved in actual cases.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements which describe what knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate having studied Irish in junior cycle. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students. As set out here they represent outcomes for students at the end of their three years of study. **The specification stresses that the learning outcomes are for three years and therefore the learning outcomes focused on at a point in time will not yet have been 'completed', but will continue to support students' learning in Irish up to the end of junior cycle.**

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.

The examples of student work linked to learning outcomes will offer commentary and insights that support different standards of student work.

Definition of text

All products of language use oral, written, visual, or multi-modal can be described as texts. Multi-modal texts combine language with other systems for communication, such as print text, visual images, sound and the spoken word. In using the definition of the word 'text', the specification seeks to consolidate the richness and diversity needed to stimulate the students interest and foster their respect for language. Readers need to fully understand the meaning of the word 'text' to understand the learning outcomes in every element and strand.

Strand one: Communicative competence

Communicative competence consists of students' ability in the following five skills: listening, reading, spoken production, spoken interaction and writing. These are skills required to communicate with other users of the language. Students can function in interpersonal communication situations. They can both understand and use the principal messages of communication. They enjoy participating in communication with other users and interacting with them. They read a wide range of texts, including multi-modal texts which are used in the language community[10,] and understand the primary messages of these texts. They compose their own relevant texts to communicate with other users.

ELEMENT: Listening

Students should be able to:

1.1 understand the main messages of Irish language communications relating to everyday life as long as it is spoken at a normal pace and it is clear

1.2 identify particular details relating to common everyday things

1.3 demonstrate an enjoyment of listening to Irish

1.4 select and share listening material and sources, using digital technologies

1.5 recognise dialects

ELEMENT: Reading

Students should be able to:

1.6 use a range of appropriate decoding strategies

1.7 identify the main details which relate to common everyday things in Irish texts*

1.8 understand the main messages in a wide range of Irish texts* relating to everyday life

1.9 enjoy a range of relevant authentic texts to develop reading ability

1.10 find and use authentic texts* to conduct research

ELEMENT: Spoken production

Students should be able to:

1.11 express personal communication messages relating to everyday life

1.12 create and present oral texts by themselves and/or as part of a group demonstrating an understanding of audience

1.13 pronounce Irish words clearly and accurately

1.14 enjoy communicating in Irish

1.15 expand their own personal vocabulary for everyday things and subjects of personal interest

1.16 communicate orally on what they have heard

1.17 communicate orally based on relevant Irish texts*

1.18 develop and defend personal opinions on relevant issues of personal interest

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10 Language community: a community where the target language is spoken as language of communication in the home and in domains outside of it.

ELEMENT: Spoken interaction

Students should be able to:

1.19   interact with other students/with other users of Irish (within and outside the school community)

1.20   respond to spontaneous messages during conversation

1.21   maintain communication and deal with difficulties in understanding

1.22   seek clarification or repetition

1.23   check, confirm and exchange information

1.24   carry out oral communication using digital technologies

ELEMENT: Writing

Students should be able to:

1.25   create relevant texts (emails, blogs, accounts, creative texts and multi-modal texts) with an understanding of the audience

1.26   draft, review and redraft

1.27   share written material using digital technologies

1.28   express and explain personal opinions

1.29   respond personally to texts*

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*   All products of language use oral, written, visual, or multi-modal can be described as texts. See definition on p. 20.

Strand 2: Language and cultural awareness

Students notice both the accuracy and the richness of the style of the language. They understand the significant differences between Irish and English to avoid inaccuracies in speaking and writing. They think about the way in which the language works to achieve mastery of the language in speech and writing. They gain knowledge of the living culture of the Irish language and develop a respect for that culture and the Irish-speaking community and are motivated to use the language.

ELEMENT: Focusing on how Irish works as a language

Students should be able to:

2.1   recognise significant grammatical and syntactical differences between Irish and English to avoid inaccuracies

2.2   recognise personal mistakes in speaking and writing Irish and understand the reasons for these mistakes

2.3   recognise and use language patterns such as syntax, verbs and nouns

2.4   recognise and use correct spelling and punctuation

2.5   create a personal learning blog and record personal challenges relating to accurate use of language

ELEMENT: Fostering awareness of the culture of the language

Students should be able to:

2.6   choose aspects of the culture of the Irish language to study and present in a modern and creative way

2.7   complete a project/oral presentation on aspects of the living culture of the Irish language

ELEMENT: Fostering awareness of bilingualism

Students should be able to:

2.8   explore similarities and differences between plurilingual communities

2.9   demonstrate their personal journey towards plurilingualism

Strand 3: Learner's self-awareness

Students concentrate on their own individual attributes as language learners. They understand how to use learning strategies that are appropriate to themselves. They understand their own personal motivation in learning the language and take personal ownership of the language and of the process of acquiring fluency.

ELEMENT: Developing self-understanding as a language learner

Students should be able to:

3.1 recognise their personal learning style, and develop learning strategies in each of the skills to advance effective learning

3.2 use feedback to set out personal learning aims

ELEMENT: Developing self-directed learning

Students should be able to:

3.3 make independent decisions as learners

3.4 carry out self-assessment on progress

3.5 share feedback on personal learning with other students on personal learning in language and learning skills

3.6 use language resources (dictionaries and online dictionaries, grammar books, spelling and grammar checkers, etc.)

ELEMENT: Developing an understanding of personal motivation to learn the language

Students should be able to:

3.7 demonstrate an understanding of their personal motivation to learn the language

3.8 use personal learning aims

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment in education involves gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways, such as to record and report achievement, to determine appropriate routes for learners to take through a differentiated curriculum, or to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given learner. While different techniques may be employed for formative, diagnostic and summative purposes, the focus of the assessment and reporting is on the improvement of student learning. To do this it must fully reflect the aim of the curriculum.

The junior cycle places a strong emphasis on assessment as part of the learning process. This approach requires a more varied approach to assessment in ensuring that the assessment method or methods chosen are fit for purpose, timely and relevant to the students. Assessment in Junior Cycle Irish will optimise the opportunity for students to become reflective and active participants in their learning and for teachers to support this. This rests upon the provision for learners of opportunities to negotiate success criteria against which the quality of their work can be judged by peer, self, and teacher assessment; and upon the quality of the focused feedback they get in support of their learning.

Providing focused feedback to students on their learning is a critical component of high-quality assessment and a key factor in building students' capacity to manage their own learning and their motivation to stick with a complex task or problem. Assessment is most effective when it moves beyond marks and grades, and reporting focuses not just on how the student has done in the past but on the next steps for further learning. This approach will ensure that assessment takes place as close as possible to the point of learning. Final assessment still has a role to play, but is only one element of a broader approach to assessment.

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. Parents/guardians should receive a comprehensive picture of student learning. Linking classroom assessment and other assessment with a new system of reporting that culminates in the awarding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will offer parents/guardians a clear and broad picture of their child's learning journey over the three years of junior cycle. To support this, teachers and schools will have access to an Assessment Toolkit. The contents of the Assessment Toolkit will include a range of assessment supports, advice and guidelines that will enable schools and teachers to engage with the new assessment system and reporting arrangements in an informed way, with confidence and clarity. Along with a guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process, the Assessment Toolkit will include learning, teaching and assessment support material related to

- formative assessment

- planning for and designing assessment

- ongoing assessment for classroom use

- judging student work – looking at expectations for students and features of quality

- reporting for parents and students

- thinking about assessment: ideas, research and reflections

- a glossary.

The Assessment Toolkit will enable schools and teachers to engage with the new assessment system and with the reporting arrangements in an informed way, with confidence and clarity.

Assessment for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

The assessment of Irish for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise of two Classroom-Based Assessments; Language portfolio and Communication Task; an Assessment Task and a final examination. The Classroom-Based Assessments will allow students to demonstrate their language, communicative, and interactive abilities in ways not possible in a formal examination. The assessments will be closely related to the day-to-day work in the classroom. There will be an Assessment Task to complete after the second Classroom-Based Assessment. The Assessment Task will be related to the learning outcomes on which the second Classroom-Based Assessment is based. This Assessment Task will be sent to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for marking along with the final examination.

Rationale for Classroom-Based Assessments in Irish

During the three years, students will have opportunities to enjoy and acquire the language across the three strands.

Figure 4: Strand and elements of the specification

	S1: Communicative competence	S2: Language and cultural awareness	S3: learners' self-awareness
Elements	Listening	Focusing on how Irish works as a language	Developing understanding as a language learner
	Reading	Fostering awareness about the culture of the language	Developing self-directed learning
	Spoken production	Fostering awareness of bilingualism	Developing an understanding of personal motivation to learn the language
	Spoken interaction		
	Writing		

Students will engage in various language activities and tasks:

• communicating and interacting with the language community

• listening, reading and writing for a range of purposes

• enhancing awareness of the culture of the language

• developing awareness of plurilingualism

• focusing on how the language works

• developing self-awareness as a language learner.

Through these activities, they will develop knowledge, understanding and skills in language and literacy, thereby achieving the learning outcomes across the strands. The Classroom-Based Assessments offer students opportunities to apply the language skills and knowledge gained to various settings, audiences and meaningful communicative purposes.

Junior Cycle Irish comprises two Classroom-Based Assessments. Classroom-Based Assessments will relate to the students' learning during second and third year of junior cycle education. Classroom-Based Assessments are similar to the formative assessment that occurs every day in every class. However, in the case of the Classroom-Based Assessments, the teacher's judgement is recorded for the purpose of subject learning and assessment review, and for the school's reporting to parents and students.

Classroom-Based Assessment 1: Language portfolio

Students will create a Language portfolio with samples of their work. The language portfolio focuses on the language learning process and places the student and their learning journey at the centre of teaching, learning, and assessment. This gives students an opportunity to set personal learning goals, showcase their work, reflect on the work, and observe progress.

The portfolio may include a range of student-created texts, e.g. projects, learning logs, creative pieces (poems/songs etc. created by the student) reflective pieces, recorded material (audio-visual and visual), texts, presentations completed etc.[11]

Evidence of learning

As evidence of their learning, students choose **three portfolio items** to submit for assessment. One **sound/video piece** must be included.

Students should make use of a literary text or texts from second and/or third year as a stimulus for at least one of the chosen portfolio items to be submitted.

Students are supported in outlining reasons for personally selecting the three pieces of work.

Classroom-Based Assessment 2: Communicative task

The Communicative task gives students the opportunity to choose a subject, topic or issue in which they are interested or is important to them, and explore it over a period of time. In this task, strong emphasis is placed on the student's oral and interactive skills and on their connection to other language users. In completing the task, students may use any one of the following formats: presentation, interview, role play, drama or conversation in response to stimulus material. Students may work individually, in pairs or in groups. However, where students have collaborated to complete the activity, the teacher should ensure that each student makes a meaningful individual contribution.

The students are given an opportunity to

- communicate and cooperate through Irish by interacting with their classmates, with the teacher and the language community

- enhance language skills

- develop general skills (researching, time management, self-management, working with others, etc.)

- assume ownership of learning

- enjoy the language.

Students may use literary texts from the literature list for second/third year as a stimulus for the topic/subject for this task.

Evidence of learning

As evidence of their learning, the students research, prepare, give a short classroom presentation and respond to questions.

_____

11 This is not an exhaustive list.

Features of quality

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 pieces of student work. Features of quality will be provided in the assessment guidelines for Junior Cycle Irish. All students will complete both CBA's.

Table 3: Completion of Classroom Based-Assessments

	Completed	**SLAR**
CBA 1	First term in third year	One review meeting
CBA 2	Middle of second term in third year	One review meeting

Assessing the Classroom-Based Assessments

More detailed material on assessment for reporting in Junior Cycle Irish, setting out details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of the Classroom-Based Assessments, will be available in separate assessment guidelines. This will include, for example, the suggested content and formats for student work and support in using 'on-balance' judgement in relation to the features of quality. The NCCA's Assessment Toolkit will also include substantial resource material for use in ongoing classroom assessment of Junior Cycle Irish as well as providing a detailed account of the Subject Learning and Assessment Review process.

Assessment Task

On completion of the Classroom-Based Assessments, students will undertake an Assessment Task. This Assessment Task will be completed after the second Classroom-Based Assessment and is marked by the State Examinations Commission.

The Assessment Task will encompass some or all of the following elements:

• students' ability to evaluate new knowledge or understanding that has emerged through their experience of the Classroom-Based Assessment

• students' capacity to reflect on the skills they have developed, and to apply them to unfamiliar situations

• students' ability to reflect on how their value system has been influenced through the experience of the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Inclusive assessment practices

This specification facilitates inclusive assessment practices whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessments. Where a school judges that students have a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations can be put in place to reduce, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the students' performance in Classroom-Based Assessments. The accommodations, for example 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 students' learning throughout the school year.

The final examination

The final examination will be set by the State Examinations Commission at two levels: Ordinary and Higher. This exam will be held at the end of third year.

Students will sit a two-hour examination in which they will be asked to demonstrate their linguistic abilities in various language and literary tasks demanding personal interactive communication. Table 5 below shows the weighting of marks for receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (creative composition, language awareness, literature for higher level).

Table 4: Assessed in Final Examination

Evaluating ability/skill	Higher level	Ordinary level
Listening in context	✓	✓
Reading in context	✓	✓
Communicative composition tasks	✓	✓
Personal/communicative responses to literary texts	✓	

Table 5: Weightings of marks

Skills	Higher level	Ordinary level
Receptive skills	35%	55%
Productive skills	55%	35%

Appendix A:
The CEFR Common Reference Levels – global scale

Proficient user

C2   Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

C1   Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Independent user

B2   Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

B1   Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic user

A2   Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

A1   Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Appendix B:
The Common Reference Levels–self-assessment grid

Understanding

Listening

A1	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
A2	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
B1	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
C1	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
C2	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.

Reading

A1	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.
A2	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.
B1	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
B2	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.
C1	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.
C2	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.

Speaking

Spoken interaction

A1	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.
A2	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
B1	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
B2	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.
C1	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.
C2	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.

Spoken production

A1	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.
A2	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.
B1	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
B2	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
C2	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.

Writing

A1	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.
A2	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.
B1	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.
B2	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.
C1	I can express myself in clear, well- structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.
C2	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.