



Junior Cycle Coding short course

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

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Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Coding short course: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment*, provides:

- General information on Classroom-Based Assessments
- Detail of the nature and scope of the Classroom-Based Assessment described in the specification for the Junior Cycle Coding short course.
- The Features of Quality used to describe the level of achievement in the Classroom-Based Assessment
- Guidelines for schools, teachers and students on completing the Classroom-Based Assessment.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the specification for the Junior Cycle Coding short course and the NCCA's online assessment support material for junior cycle. A detailed outline of assessment in Junior Cycle can be found in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, which can be accessed at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf>.

In Junior Cycle short courses there will be a range of assessment approaches to complement learning. These will include ongoing assessments, including routine teacher-designed tasks and tests; ongoing assessment for students undertaking priority learning units at Level 2; and one classroom-based assessment.

Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific task(s) set out in the NCCA short course specification or in the school developed short course specification. The tasks are described and the Features of Quality, which support teacher judgement, are set out in these guidelines.

Although the assessment is similar to the ongoing assessment that occurs every day in class, in the case of Classroom-Based Assessment the teacher's judgement is used in the school's reporting to parents and students and may also be recorded for learning and assessment review meetings. Students prepare for the Classroom-Based Assessment over a suggested period of time in second or

third year. The results of other projects, homework or tests undertaken by the students in the course of their normal classwork do not add up to the award of a descriptor for the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Deciding on the level of achievement in Classroom-Based Assessments

There are four level descriptors of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment: *Exceptional*, *Above expectations*, *in line with expectations*, and *Yet to meet expectations*.

Teachers use the Features of Quality, set out in these guidelines (p12), to decide the level of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the following Descriptors:

When using the Features of Quality to assess the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. The teacher should read the Features of Quality (starting with *Yet to meet expectation*) until they reach a descriptor that best describes the work being assessed. While it should be noted that none of the descriptors imply faultless achievement, evidence of work for the award of Exceptional should closely match the criteria for that level within the Features of Quality. Where it is not clearly evident which quality descriptor should apply, teachers must come to judgment, based on the evidence from the student's work, to select the descriptor that best matches the student's work overall. This 'best fit' approach allows teachers to select the descriptor that 'on balance' describes the work being assessed.

Teachers should not assume that the results of a group of students being assessed will follow any particular distribution pattern, as the students work is being judged only against the Features of Quality rather than other students' performances.

Time for Classroom-Based Assessments

Classroom-Based Assessment is included within the time allocated for short courses, which is approximately 100 hours. This Classroom-Based Assessment is the culmination of the work undertaken in the three strands of the coding short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after work in the three strands has been completed. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment takes place over approximately 8-10 hours of class time. Whilst the timing of Classroom-Based Assessment in short courses may vary from school to school, Classroom-Based assessments for reporting purposes in the JCPA cannot be conducted in first year.

School autonomy in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment

These guidelines set out a range of options for the Classroom-Based Assessment so that it can suit the particular needs and circumstances of students and the school. A variety of possibilities are presented as to how the final software project can be conducted, the nature of the project itself and the role the teacher plays in facilitating the students' group project. Within the parameters set by the guidelines, the range of themes and topics for the assessment can be determined independently by the school, teachers and students.

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 at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/subjects-and-short-courses/develop-your-own-short-course>.

How the school supports the completion of the assessments

The school supports the completion of the assessments by:

- Ensuring that the *NCCA Specification* and *Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment* are provided to teachers
- Supporting teachers in recording the level Descriptors awarded to each student
- Retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Learning and Assessment Review
- Applying the guidelines for Learning and Assessment Review
- Applying inclusive assessment practices and ensuring accessibility of assessment for all students
- Reporting the outcomes of Classroom-Based Assessments to students and their parents/guardians as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

In gathering evidence for assessment purposes within the Junior Cycle Short Courses, it is important that teachers use approaches which are sustainable and proportionate. As assessment is about empowering teachers to improve outcomes for students, it is important to ensure that too much paperwork and overly complex processes do not get in the way of learning and teaching. Any paperwork needs to support learning rather than becoming an end in itself.

While assessment judgements should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day learning and teaching there is no need to collect large folios of evidence to support this. In sharing learning intentions and success criteria or the features of quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers should highlight the role students can play in identifying quality evidence from their own work to be used for assessment purposes.

An efficient planning process which identifies when and how key aspects of learning will be captured as evidence for assessment is one way to ensure that assessment in short courses remains manageable and sustainable. This approach avoids excessive and inappropriate evidence being collected about student performance and allows for review meeting discussions to be taken forward in a structured way. It also avoids the pressure at the end of the course to search for and identify evidence to support judgements about overall performance.

To facilitate providing feedback to students during their engagement with assessment, the process of completing the Classroom-Based Assessment should be viewed as part of teaching and learning, and not solely for assessment purposes. It is envisaged that teachers will guide, support and supervise throughout the process.

Support may include:

- Clarifying the requirements of the Classroom-Based Assessment
- Using annotated examples of student work to clarify the meaning and interpretation of the Features of Quality to students
- Providing instructions at strategic intervals to facilitate the timely completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN).

Note that only work which is the student's own can be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

Classroom-Based Assessment in Coding (short course)

Assessment in coding will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which is the culmination of work undertaken in the three strands of the Coding short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after the work in the three strands has been completed. It is important to note that work completed in year one of Junior Cycle cannot be included for reporting in the JCPA.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Putting the Pieces Together

Students will develop a final software project of their choice. They will research and establish requirements; design, implement and test the software. They will document their work and their code and present the project to their peers for review. They will reflect on feedback and also provide feedback on other students' projects.

Students will work on this project in teams of 2 or 3. Whilst they undertake the Classroom-Based Assessment as part of a team, the student's individual role and contribution to the work will be the focus of the assessment. While expected to work on their own on agreed separate areas of the Classroom-Based Assessment, they will need to maintain the cohesion required as a team in order to complete the work. Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

The main learning outcomes to be assessed in this final project are:

Classroom-Based Assessment: Putting the pieces together
1.6, 1.7, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6

Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment:

As a group, the students will decide which piece of software they wish to develop within the timeframe available to them. This may be based on earlier research undertaken as part of their work in the Coding short course, or from an issue with which the student has a personal connection. Using their learning experiences from the other strands of the Coding short course, students will establish the requirements and the design, as well as implement and test their software. During these processes, each student will maintain documentation around their own contribution to the group's work and pieces of code. Upon presenting the final piece of software to their class, students will be required to assess the feedback their work has generated.

The five aspects to the project are:

- Initial research and planning
- Design, implementation and testing
- Documentation of work and code
- Presentation of final project
- Assessment of feedback

Preparation:

Schools may decide an appropriate amount of time to allocate to the Classroom-Based Assessment from the 100 hours allocated to the Coding short course, in order to enable students to complete the work on their software, with a suggested timeframe of 8-10 hours. Students have a wide range of research options they can use in order to decide on their software project and its design. Where sources are used, they should be referenced. In their use of internet-based sources, students should be encouraged to search effectively, evaluate and synthesise material prior to the creation of their own work, or prior to forming their own opinions.

Although this phase of the Classroom-Based Assessment is monitored by the teacher, the preparation is the students' own work, carried out both individually and in active, meaningful collaboration as part of a group.

Creating and presenting the software design:

Following agreement by the students on the topic chosen for their group, each group will create a piece of software within the timeframe allowed. Part of this time must also be devoted to work on design, the user experience, implementation and testing. The final phase of the Classroom-Based Assessment involves students presenting their piece of software to their class and then reflecting on the feedback this generates. This is an important part of the process when testing the final piece of software.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Advice for students

You will identify, research and implement a piece of software as part of a group. This piece of software may be based on, or reflect an aspect of, work that was previously researched or is of interest to you or your group. Your teacher will inform you as to the amount of time that has been allocated to the Classroom-Based Assessment, which also includes presenting your final design to your class and evaluating their feedback.

The *preparation* part of the Classroom-Based Assessment will be monitored by your teacher. Work which cannot be authenticated by your teacher will not be accepted for assessment purposes.

You will have the freedom to choose the software your group will design and implement bearing in mind the following suggestions:

- The software should be of interest to your whole group.
- You need to complete your piece of software within the timeframe allowed.
- You should ask key questions about the software your group will design to help organise your work and later presentation.
- You will need to maintain documentation around your own contribution to the group's work and pieces of code during the process.
- In presenting a proposal to their fellow students, your group should think about how they will communicate it to this audience.
- After your group have presented their piece of software you will all need to individually record and reflect on any feedback received.

You must work on the Classroom-Based Assessment in groups of two or three at most, however, please note that it will be your individual role and contribution to the work that is the focus of assessment for the JCPA.

Deciding on the level of achievement

Features of Quality

Key Features of Quality in support of student and teacher judgement for the Classroom-Based Assessment: Putting the Pieces Together are described here. The Features of Quality are the criteria used to assess the student work as best fitting the Descriptors:

Exceptional describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

Above expectations describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback from the teacher might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention or polishing, but, on the whole the work is of a high standard.

In line with expectations describes a piece of work that reflects most of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand and is free from significant error. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention or correction, but the work is generally competent and accurate.

Yet to meet expectations describes a piece of work that falls somewhat short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated Features of Quality. Perhaps the student has made a good attempt, but the task has not been grasped clearly or is marred by significant lapses. Feedback will draw attention to fundamental errors that need to be addressed.

Features of Quality: Coding - Putting the pieces together**Exceptional**

The student shows they were fully involved in the project as a highly committed member of the team.

The documentation of both the student's learning and their code is comprehensive.

The student shows they have consolidated previous learning in their project.

The benefits of the project are presented in a very convincing way.

The student has accurately recorded feedback and convincingly responded to it.

Above expectations

The student shows they were involved in the project as a committed member of the team.

The documentation of both the student's learning and their code is very good.

The student shows they have built on most of their previous learning in the project.

The benefits of the project are presented in a convincing way.

The student has correctly recorded feedback and competently responded to it.

In line with expectations

The student shows they were involved in the project as an enthusiastic member of the team.

The documentation of both the student's learning and their code is good.

The student shows they have built on some of their previous learning in the project.

The benefits of the project are presented in an adequate way.

The student has recorded feedback and adequately responded to it.

Yet to meet expectations

The student shows some involvement in the project as a member of the team.

The documentation of both the student's learning and their code is limited.

The student shows little of their previous learning in the project.

The benefits of the project are presented in a less than adequate way.

The student has recorded some feedback but their response to it is limited.

Learning and Assessment Review meetings

Shared understanding of standards within junior cycle short courses will arise through professional discussion in Learning and Assessment Review meetings. Teachers gather examples of student work and compare their judgements with other colleagues. Over time, this process will help develop a greater understanding of standards and ensure consistency of judgement about student performance.

Where there is a single teacher of a short course in a school, where feasible, the teacher will participate in a Learning and Assessment Review meeting with another school. The potential of ICT to support such meetings will be explored.

Following the Learning and Assessment Review each individual teacher re-considers the judgement they had made of their student's work, based on the outcomes of the meeting, and where necessary makes the appropriate adjustments to the level of achievement awarded to the work. The Descriptors awarded are used in reporting progress and achievement to parents and students as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Further details on managing and participating in Learning and Assessment Review meetings can be accessed at <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle> and <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings>.

Using feedback

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step to support learning. Students will be informed of the Descriptor they have been awarded once the review meeting has taken place and its outcomes have been processed. However, effective feedback goes beyond the naming of the Descriptor awarded. Feedback on the strengths of the student's work, and on areas for improvement can be used to support their future learning. Further information on the use of feedback can be found at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/focus-on-learning>.

Querying a result

Queries in relation to the Descriptors awarded for the Classroom-Based Assessment, where they arise, will be dealt with by the school.