



**Junior Cycle Level 2 short course**

**CSI: Exploring Forensic Science**

**Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment**

**First Edition**



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# Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Level 2 short course, CSI: Exploring Forensic Science<sup>1</sup>. 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 CSI 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 CSI short course short course and the Assessment Toolkit 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. 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

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<sup>1</sup> In the remainder of the document the course will be referred to simply as the CSI short course

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

Classroom-Based Assessments are Common Level assessments. The teacher bases the level achieved by the student in the Classroom-Based Assessment on the Features of Quality set out in these guidelines. At Level 2 there is one descriptor – *Achieved*. The evidence of work for the award of *Achieved* should closely match all or nearly all the criteria for that level within the Features of Quality and the teacher’s ‘on-balance’ judgement should be that the student’s work is deserving of the Descriptor.

## 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 four strands of the CSI short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after work in the four strands has been completed. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment take place over approximately 15-20 hours of class time. However, this is a guideline only. Teachers draw upon their own professional judgement to decide how much time is needed to complete the assessment, depending on the individual needs of the student(s). 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 Classroom-Based Assessment can be conducted and the role the teacher plays in facilitating students’ needs. 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.

## 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 Descriptor awarded to each student
- Ensuring accessibility of assessment for all students
- Reporting the outcomes of the Classroom-Based Assessment 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, where feasible, 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. 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 task
- 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 final project

## **Classroom-Based Assessment in CSI: Exploring Forensic Science**

Assessment in CSI will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which is the culmination of work undertaken in the four strands of the CSI short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after the work in the four 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: Solving a mock crime scene**

Although the preparation for the Classroom-Based Assessment will have taken place closely in time to the Classroom-Based Assessment itself, the student is asked to recall in a format of their choice (Storyboard, using pictures to sequence, in interview with the teacher, as a newsreader, oral storytelling, writing....) what has happened so far in the new investigation in the period immediately prior to the Classroom-Based Assessment.

The student is asked to identify appropriate scientific or investigative practices which could be used to examine one significant source of evidence likely to solve the crime. The student discusses or produces a basic plan, or uses pictures to represent the steps that need to be taken, to examine this source of evidence. They are then asked to carry out that experiment/investigative action to ‘close the case’.

The learning outcomes assessed through the Classroom-based Assessment will, to an extent, depend on the nature of the crime and medium of the Classroom-Based Assessment. In particular, those related to development of basic scientific inquiry skills (keen observation, sequencing of tasks, identifying patterns and drawing conclusions based on logic and evidence) are desirable. Students may need support in developing the more challenging of these skills.

Some learning outcomes that may be particularly relevant are:

Classroom-Based Assessment: Exploring a mock crime scene
1.1-1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.1- 2.4, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 3.1-3.4, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.7

There are 5 aspects to the assessment:

- Recall of the crime scene and the clues that were worth investigating
- One or more theories the student has as to what might have happened
- Identifying the piece of evidence to be the subject of further investigation or testing
- Conducting the test/science experiment or investigative action
- Solving the crime

## Completing the Classroom-Based Assessment in CSI: Exploring Forensic Science

### **Preparation**

The Classroom-Based Assessment can be undertaken following completion of strand 4. In the time leading up to it, the student is presented with a mock crime scene (physically/orally/using sign language/visually/in written format) which is different to one they have explored during their course. The period identified for the preparation leading to the Classroom-Based Assessment should not be the student's first experience of the process of exploring a mock crime scene.

While the mock crime is new it can share some features in common with one the student has investigated during the short course. While a physical mock crime scene should be used where possible as it is more engaging, it may be necessary to present it orally/using sign language/visually/in written format. The student observes closely/explores/listens/reads about the crime and identifies one or more pieces of physical evidence which could be tested to help solve the crime. There should be several 'clues' provided to arouse curiosity and prompt the student to identify sources of evidence. The scene, along with a report of the crime, is shared with the student, setting the context for the Classroom-Based Assessment. Where the scene is not physically set up a few physical artefacts will need to be provided as

the student will choose one of these and describe how it might be tested for evidence. The test for evidence using this artefact can be one the student is familiar with from earlier in the short course if s/he has difficulty in generalising and transferring knowledge and/or skills.

The student explores the scene (in the appropriate format) repeating processes familiar to them from their learning experiences during the course. They go as far as identifying evidence that could be tested/investigated to solve the crime. However, that last investigative action is reserved for the Classroom-Based Assessment.

All differentiated material to be used is prepared in advance. For instance, if picture cards are to be used when the student is describing the process of examining one source of evidence then a set outlining the steps to be taken for each of the several examinable clues should be prepared. The student can then choose one set from those prepared, for the Classroom-Based Assessment. The features of quality act as a useful support for teachers in developing appropriate content for the picture cards.

Students may be assessed on their task in the presence of peers or on their own, depending on the confidence level of the student, and on whether presenting alone or as part of a group. If assessed as part of a group it should be clear that each student has made a meaningful contribution during the Classroom-Based Assessment. Each student's work is assessed separately. It is helpful to record the student's Classroom-Based Assessment if possible as this not only allows the student, teacher, parents or other others to view it and review it but it also exists as evidence of the student having completed the task.

### Advice for students:

- You will tell the story of the crime scene so far
- Your teacher can give hints or use pictures, photos etc to help you remember important details
- You can prepare with your classmates but your work will be assessed separately from theirs
- The more of this work you can do on your own the better
- You can ask your teacher how much time you have to do this assessment
- Choose the way that's best for you to present what you have learnt. You can present your work by speaking, recording your voice and/or by using video or photographs.
- Ask questions if there is anything you don't understand or aren't sure about

## Deciding on the level of achievement

### Features of quality

Classroom-Based Assessments are Common Level assessments. There is one Descriptor at Level 2:

#### Achieved.

The teacher's judgement on whether the student's work in the Classroom-Based Assessment is awarded the Achieved Descriptor is based on the Features of Quality for **Solving a mock crime scene** set out in these Guidelines.

The features of quality are the criteria used to assess the student work.

#### Features of Quality: Classroom-Based Assessment

##### Achieved

- Recollection of the crime scene in a chosen format is clear and sequenced
- At least one source of evidence is identified for further investigation or testing
- A theory about what is likely to have happened is presented
- A test/science experiment or investigative action is carried out
- The crime is solved

The decision about whether the student's work is allocated the 'Achieved' Descriptor is based on the teacher coming to a judgement that the student's work *on balance* matches the Features of Quality as set out above.

## **Using feedback**

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step to support learning. Students will be informed about whether or not they have been awarded the ‘Achieved’ Descriptor once the teacher’s judgement has been reached. 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 <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>.

## **Querying a result**

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