



# Junior Cycle Artistic Performance short course

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment

First Edition





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# Introduction

This document, Junior Cycle Artistic Performance 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 Artistic Performance 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 Artistic Performance 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 and may also be recorded for Subject 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

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 (p14), 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:

**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 shortcomings that need to be addressed.

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. 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 artistic performance 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 take place over approximately 8 – 10 hours of class time, though this may depend on the type of performance chosen. 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 on the format of the final performance, the nature of the performance itself and the role the teacher plays in facilitating the students' group endeavours. 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 Descriptors awarded to each student
- Retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Subject Learning and Assessment Review
- Applying the guidelines for Subject Learning and Assessment Review
- 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 Assessments 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
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN).

## Classroom-Based Assessment in Artistic Performance (short course)

Assessment in artistic performance will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, the final performance, which is the culmination of work undertaken in the three strands of the Artistic Performance 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: Performance

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

The learning outcomes assessed through the final project will, to an extent, depend on the topic chosen and the medium of the presentation. Some that may be particularly relevant are:

Classroom-Based Assessment: Performance
1.2, 1.5, 2.5, 2.7, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

As part of the Classroom-Based Assessment, students will need to include a reflection on their experience of engaging with the arts as they progress through the three strands. This can be presented in written, digital, visual or audio form, or any other format that is deemed suitable by the student and appropriate for capturing the essence of the reflection.

Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

## Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment:

The group performance should take place on the school premises towards the end of this short course. Some time needs to be allocated after the performance to allow students time to consider their own reflection on their performance and receive feedback from their peers and teacher. With this in mind, it is advised that the performance could take place about two weeks prior to the completion of the timetabled course. While they undertake the Classroom-Based Assessment as part of a team, the student's individual role and contribution to the performance will be the focus of the assessment. While expected to work on their own on agreed separate areas, they will need to maintain the cohesion required as a team in order to complete their performance successfully. The assessment of the performance is based on the features of quality as they apply to the student's role in the performance.

This Classroom-Based Assessment involves students including a reflection on their experiences of engaging with the arts as they progress through the three strands. This can be maintained in any format favoured by the student and could include:

- a critical reflection on the chosen art form(s) observed throughout the course
- research undertaken to support classroom teaching and learning
- reflection on skills acquired and developed in the artistic discipline
- techniques and strategies that have been explored during planning and rehearsing
- evaluation of participation in the final group performance; including comments on how the skills learnt in this experience could transfer to other learning experiences
- reflection on working as part of a team
- sketches for costume, lighting and set design

- storyboards used to outline structure
- annotated photographs of rehearsals
- examples of resources and other expertise used to support skill development.

As this short course is intended to act as a framework to facilitate engagement with the arts in a multitude of ways, further support is provided here for the assessment of the performance at the end of the short course. For example, whether the student was a lead singer, lead dancer, chorus member, stage manager, advertising and publicity manager, or lighting and sound producer, the features of quality outlined below can be interpreted to encompass all possible roles a student may have played.

Within any artistic discipline, there are specific arts literacies (verbal and non-verbal), conventions and skills to be explored and developed. In the context of this short course, these skills need to be assessed if being presented as part of the Classroom-Based Assessment. As an aid to the assessment of this short course, some ideas are outlined below as to how the framework and the features of quality can be interpreted in various artistic disciplines. The details below are based on the artistic disciplines that will most likely be considered in schools.

**Dance:**

Through the medium of dance students can experience how movement is used to communicate ideas and concepts in a variety of styles and settings. Through engaging with dance as an art form, they can investigate the features, history, cultures, characters, styles and purpose of dance and learn the vocabularies, practices and technical skills that are celebrated in dance. To develop skills in dance, students could explore techniques such as: posture, body awareness, mental discipline, space, time and relationships and explore interactions between their body and other bodies and environments. They could also learn how expressive skills such as style, mood, empathy and intent can enhance a performance. When applying the features of quality to a dance performance, the following elements could be considered: posture, co-ordination, balance, interpretation, control, spatial awareness, appropriateness of the style chosen, sympathy to fellow performers and audience engagement.

**Drama:**

Through engaging with drama as the medium of artistic performance, students can appreciate the role of drama in the cultures of the past and the present and their impact on the future. Students could investigate different drama styles, purposes, contexts, themes and opinions and question how drama has been used to express cultural identity, tell stories and challenge an audience to consider social or political ideas.

Through experiencing excellence in drama, students will gain an understanding of the important elements including role, action, time, place, focus, mood, character and story. They could learn to develop their skills of voice projection, body language, improvisation, movement and space in order to communicate ideas such as character, situations and relationships. They could experiment with structural conventions such as tableaux and time manipulation and learn about the technologies that support performances, such as set design, costume design, lighting and sound.

When applying the features of quality to a drama performance the following elements could be considered: communication of character, sensitivity to situation, awareness of style and context, awareness of audience, sympathy to the style and context of the production and commitment to the group endeavour.

### **Music/Musical Theatre**

Through engaging with music as an art form, students will develop an understanding of music as a communicative medium that provides an insight into cultures of the past and present. Engaging with music/music theatre allows for the development of aural skills, an understanding of structural devices, learning to express emotion, develop rhythmic, body and spatial awareness and develop an understanding of the technologies and elements of music and theatre. Students could develop their ideas through improvising and composing, and investigate various styles, genres and cultural forms in music and music theatre.

When applying the features of quality to a music/music theatre performance the following elements could be considered: audibility, clarity of projection, ability to portray and remain in character, interaction with other performers, awareness of audience, effective use of stage, tuning and movement.

### **Visual Arts:**

Through engaging with the visual arts, students will learn how images and objects convey ideas and feelings. They can learn how these images and objects can challenge ideas, promote and inspire debate, provoke people into action and reflect societies both past and present. There are an array of disciplines that could be considered under the heading of 'Visual Arts' that might include fine art, graphic communication, textile design, film/media studies, photography and industrial design. If this branch of the arts was considered for the short course, the culmination of the course could result in the curating of an art/photography exhibition, the redesigning of the school playground to include visual arts structures, the creation of a tapestry detailing a local historical event or the shooting of a commercial for a clothing/footwear product.

When applying the features of quality to a visual arts performance, the following elements could be considered: tone, colour, texture, pattern, mood, spatial understanding, scale, the various ways that images and ideas can be represented, appropriate use of materials and technology and audience awareness.

## Classroom-Based Assessment: Advice for students

- Developing new arts literacies and arts based skills takes time to develop and to master. As you explore the specific techniques and skills that are unique to your artistic performance, take the time to ask your teacher and other students for feedback on how you are progressing. Use this feedback to reflect on your progress and to help you find ways to improve.

This short course is designed as a collaborative endeavour that results in a final performance. Working in groups or teams necessitates that you consider the following suggestions:

- The decision on the format and style of presentation is of interest to the whole group
- Documentation such as set designs, costume designs, lighting designs, should be kept in a safe place for future reference
- Group discussions and decisions should be recorded and stored safely
- In considering the proposed performance, your group should be always thinking about how this will be presented and communicated to an audience
- You will need to complete a reflection at the end of the performance which will include your thoughts on how you developed through engagement with the arts and taking part in this performance, and will also include any peer and teacher feedback.

Remember that while this Classroom-Based Assessment is completed as a group activity, please note 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 are described here. The Features of Quality are the criteria used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the following 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: Artistic Performance: Final Performance

### Exceptional

An excellent interpretation is demonstrated of the style/theme on which the collaborative performance is based.

Excellent creativity and technical control appropriate to the chosen art form<sup>1</sup> is evident.

Excellent skills in working with others are demonstrated and engagement with the audience (where applicable) is first-rate.

Student reflections on their experiences of engaging with the arts are of an excellent quality.

### Above expectations

An in-depth interpretation is demonstrated of the style/theme on which the collaborative performance is based.

A high level of creativity and technical control appropriate to the chosen art form is evident.

Very effective skills in working with others are demonstrated and engagement with the audience (where applicable) is at a very high level.

Student reflections on their experiences of engaging with the arts are of a very high quality.

### In line with expectations

A good level of interpretation is demonstrated of the style/theme on which the collaborative performance is based.

A good level of creativity and technical control appropriate to the chosen art form is evident.

Effective skills in working with others are demonstrated and engagement with the audience (where appropriate) is reasonably well sustained.

Student reflections on their experiences of engaging with the arts are of a good quality.

### Yet to meet expectations

There is very little interpretation of the style/theme on which the collaborative performance is based.

Very limited creativity and a lack of technical control appropriate to the chosen art form is displayed.

Connections and communication with group members and audience is minimal and at a basic level.

Student reflections on their experiences of engaging with the arts are superficial and lacking in insight.

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<sup>1</sup> Features such as props, light, space, form, composition, sound and costume

## **Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings**

Shared understanding of standards within junior cycle short courses will arise through professional discussion in Subject 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 Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting with another school. The potential of ICT to support such meetings will be explored.

**Further details on managing and participating in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting can be accessed at <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment> .**

Following the Subject 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).

### **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 <http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>.

### **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.