



Stratford College
Co-educational Secondary School

Junior Cycle Student Award (JCSA) Programme

“Junior cycle 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.”

Framework for Junior Cycle

The Framework for Junior Cycle will enable schools to offer their students a 3 year junior cycle experience that is both a progression from primary education and a preparation for senior cycle and life-long learning. By placing students at the centre of the educational experience, the Department of Education and Skills want to ensure that junior cycle education will improve learning experiences and outcomes (p1 “[A Framework for Junior Cycle](#)”). See <http://www.stratfordcollege.ie/news/post/junior-cycle-information-for-parents-and-guardians> and <http://www.jct.ie/publications/publications> for more details.

Schools will have greater autonomy in developing their own programmes for junior cycle. This will allow schools to cater to the specific needs of their students and the school’s context. It will support new forms of assessment which are designed to encourage better teaching and learning.

The curriculum will, as at present, be comprised of subjects, but there will also be short courses. Short courses offer schools the opportunity, through curriculum and assessment development, to connect to their communities, consolidate and strengthen aspects of student learning and to include new and different learning experiences and digital technology in junior cycle programmes. Nine short courses have been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 7 at level 3 and 2 at level 2 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and these are available for schools to use in their new junior cycle programme. Schools will also be able to innovate and create their own short courses by way of an approved NCCA template.

In addition, subjects and short courses provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. Key skills help learners develop knowledge, capabilities and attitudes that support them in learning how to learn and in taking responsibility for learning. Students will rarely develop these skills in isolation; the richer the learning experience the more coherent and integrated the development of the skills will be. Literacy and numeracy, because of their foundational nature and central importance across the curriculum, are the most significant of these skills, but they are not distinguished from the other skills.

The junior cycle curriculum focuses on 8 key skills:

Being creative

Communicating

Being literate

Being numerate

Managing information and thinking

Managing myself

Staying well

Framework for Junior Cycle (Department of Education and Skills (DES) 2015)

The learning at the core of Junior Cycle is described in the twenty-four statements of learning.

The twenty-four statements, underpinned by the eight principles, are central to planning for, the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme. Schools will ensure that all statements of learning and the eight key skills feature in the programmes offered to their junior cycle students. The detailed learning outcomes will be clearly set out in subject and short course specifications.

Well Being

In addition to the new subject specifications all junior cycle students from September 2017 on will undertake an area of learning called **Wellbeing**. Wellbeing will cross the three years of Junior Cycle and build on substantial work already taking place in schools in support of students' wellbeing. This area of learning will make the school's commitment to wellbeing more evident to students. It will include learning opportunities to further enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students.

http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/NCCA-Wellbeing-Leaflet.pdf

http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Guidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf

Assessment

What are the implications of the revised junior cycle for assessment in the different subject areas?

The junior certificate examination will be replaced by a new model of assessment that includes a final State Examinations Commission (SEC) examination in each subject, together with Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) components. Short courses will be assessed through similar CBA's in second and/or third year of the junior cycle.

Subject Specifications, Assessment Guidelines and an Assessment Toolkit will support learning, teaching and assessment in the revised junior cycle. These can be found on www.curriculumonline.ie

Subject specifications will have a number of features in common. They will:

- be outcomes based
- reflect a continuum of learning with a focus on learner progression
- set out clear expectations for learners

As the new subjects are phased in, the following arrangements for assessment will be put in place.

Students will engage with a State certified external examination in June of third year. This will continue to be set administered and corrected by the SEC and will include an Assessment Task worth 10% of the final mark, completed by the student in class time during third year. There will be particular arrangements around the Assessment Task within the Technology subjects.

Students will engage with two Classroom-Based Assessments, one in second year and one in third year. CBA's will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a way that would not be possible in a formal exam. CBA's will facilitate formative feedback to students during their engagement with the CBA and at the end of the process. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is responsible for the Assessment Guidelines, features of quality and annotated examples of student work in relation to the CBA's.

Immediately after students complete each of the CBA's (to a national timetable determined by the NCCA), a Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meeting is held. Teachers will share and discuss samples of their assessment of student work and build common understanding about the quality of student learning. Teachers will be supported in this process with annotated national exemplars of student work. This process over time will help

develop greater understanding of standards and ensure consistency of judgement about student performance.

These new assessment arrangements will be quality assured through the work of practicing teachers, the Inspectorate, the NCCA, SEC and ongoing Continuing Professional Development provided by Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT).

More detailed information is available in the appendix to this document, in the Framework document and on our website at <http://www.stratfordcollege.ie/news/category/junior-cycle/>

JCSA in Stratford College

Our **Mission Statement** aims to provide a teaching and learning community committed to quality and excellence in education. We are dedicated to:

- Providing a nurturing environment where each individual can develop self-esteem and a sense of their place in, and responsibility to, society.
- Instructing Jewish students in their religion while fostering mutual respect for all traditions.
 - Promoting personal achievement and academic success.
- Respecting the unique potential of every student and encouraging each to maximise it.

The founding values continue to inspire the school today; those of educating our students in an inclusive academic environment which seeks to foster in young people a sense of personal and academic achievement, of respect for diversity and of service to the community.

Our JCSA guiding principles for 1st Years are

Quality; *the junior cycle in the school will offer all learners a high quality education, characterised by high expectations of the learner and the pursuit of excellence. It will aim to generate engagement and enthusiasm and encourage participation.*

Inclusive education; *the experience of junior cycle will be inclusive of all learners and contribute to the achievement of equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all*

Continuity; *the curriculum will build on students' learning to date, actively support their progress in learning, and facilitate them in preparing and planning for future learning*

Lifelong learning; *Students will develop the skills of managing and directing their own learning that will assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school, in further and continuing education, and in working life.*

As a DES recognised school we are bound by the terms of the Framework and supporting circulars from the DES in implementing the new programme.

We have been anticipating these changes through the school planning process for several years and staff have engaged in continuous professional development in many aspects of the new teaching methodologies.

We communicate our progress and national developments on our website, in our annual School Improvement Plans, at our annual curriculum evening and information evenings and regularly at our Board meetings. We will continue to do this as the new programme is rolled out.

More specifically and as required this year we have been considering the type of programme that best meets the needs of our students.

In response to the Framework and with reference to our school's mission statement, we began by considering how best we can incorporate the 8 Key Skills and 24 Statements of Learning, teaching methodologies and student engagement with learning.

These principles will continue to guide our thinking as new subject specifications become available and short courses are considered.

School Self Evaluation (SSE) and **School Improvement Planning (SIP)** will continue to prioritise areas of development in teaching and learning and by so doing improve students' learning experiences and outcomes in this and all our programmes.

Our JCSA Programme for 1st Years is

	Subject	Year 1 No. of Periods	Year 2 No. of Periods	Year 3 No. of Periods
Core Subjects	Irish	3	3	3
	English	3	3	3
	Maths	3	3	3
	French	2	2	2
	History	2	2	2
	Geography	2	2	2
	Art	2	2	2
	Business	2	2	2
	Science	2	2	2
	Classical or Jewish Studies	2	2	2
Wellbeing	PE	1	1	1
	SPHE/Guidance	1	2	1
	CSPE	1	1	1
	Music	1	0	0
Other Areas of Learning	ICT	1	1	1
Total		28	28	28

Appendix

An Introduction to JCSA

FAQs (abridged) from Junior Cycle.ie <http://www.juniorcycle.ie/Info/FAQs>

Why are we changing the junior cycle, when the current system is working well?

There is significant evidence of the need to change junior cycle provision. For example, a significant number of first year students do not make progress in English and Mathematics. A number of second year students disengage from their learning and in many instances, do not reconnect ([click here](#)). The experience of many third year students is dominated by preparation for the Junior Certificate examination where the emphasis is on rote learning and on rehearsing questions and answers for the examination ([click here](#)).

Research has also shown that the quality of students' engagement with the school, with teachers and with learning is central to developing the skills and competences that are necessary for students in today's world.

Furthermore, there is strong evidence that ongoing assessment of students' progress and achievement over time, rather than the use of a once-off measure in the form of a final examination, can improve the quality of learning outcomes across the 3 years of lower secondary education. (Black and William 1998 [click here](#)). For all of these reasons, new approaches to curriculum and most particularly to assessment are necessary.

What are the 24 Statements of Learning?

Statements of Learning

The student

- 1 communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1*
- 2 listens, speaks, reads and writes in L2* and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to her or his ability
- 3 creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts
- 4 creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved
- 5 has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making
- 6 appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives
- 7 values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts
- 8 values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change
- 9 understands the origins and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him
- 10 has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably
- 11 takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others
- 12 is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active
- 13 understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices
- 14 makes informed financial decisions and develops good consumer skills
- 15 recognises the potential uses of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning
- 16 describes, illustrates, interprets, predicts and explains patterns and relationships
- 17 devises and evaluates strategies for investigating and solving problems using mathematical knowledge, reasoning and skills
- 18 observes and evaluates empirical events and processes and draws valid deductions and conclusions
- 19 values the role and contribution of science and technology to society, and their personal, social and global importance
- 20 uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge
- 21 applies practical skills as she/he develop models and products using a variety of materials and technologies
- 22 takes initiative, is innovative and develops entrepreneurial skills
- 23 brings an idea from conception to realisation
- 24 uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner

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

What are the implications of the revised junior cycle for subject areas?

Subjects continue to play an important role in the Framework for Junior Cycle. New curriculum specifications will be developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The new curriculum specifications for 21 subjects will be outcomes based and in most cases, there will be common level specifications. The exceptions to this will be the subjects: English, Irish and Mathematics, where the specifications will be examined at 2 levels, Higher level and Ordinary level.

Irish and Mathematics will be designed for a minimum of 240 hours of engagement across the 3 years. Key skills, including literacy and numeracy (where appropriate) will, in the future, be embedded in the learning outcomes of every junior cycle subject and short course. Thus, teachers will be clear on where the key skills fit into a subject, short course or priority learning unit and how to build the skills into class planning, learning and assessment.

The specifications for subjects, Priority Learning Units and 9 short courses have been developed by the NCCA and are published on the NCCA's Curriculum Online website ([click here](#)). These online curriculum specifications will include the learning outcomes, expectations for learners and examples of student work in each subject and short course along with a bank of assessment items for school and classroom use. The online facility will also include customised links that will give parents and students the opportunity to access these new specifications. Specifications are not only an important source of information for parents and students but, in addition, are a vital planning tool for teachers.

Schools will have flexibility when including other subjects in their programme. Students will study a maximum of 10 subjects. The specifications for these subjects will be designed for 200 hours of learner engagement during the 3 years of junior cycle. The 200 hours should be viewed as a minimum and does not preclude a school devoting more time where it is needed or desired. The amount of time devoted to a subject can vary from school to school according to school priorities. Schools will have the autonomy to determine which subjects, short courses and other learning opportunities will be offered in their schools

When are subject specifications being introduced?

The new curriculum specifications for subjects are being introduced on a phased basis. This process began with the implementation of English in 2014. The specification for each subject will be available in schools a year prior to its implementation with first year students. The phased introduction is as follows:

Subject	Year of introduction	Year of Certification
English	2014	2017
Science and Business Studies	2016	2019
Irish, Modern Languages and Art Craft & Design,	2017	2020
Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music and Geography	2018	2021
Technology, Technical Graphics, Metalwork, Materials Technology (Wood) Religious Education, Jewish Studies Classical Studies, History	2019	2022

Is it necessary to engage with the key skills in subjects where the specification is not yet published?

Yes. As teachers, we are responsible for the development of the key skills of all the students we teach, whether or not our subject specification is published.

As subject specifications are phased in, there will be support for the key skills particularly relevant to that subject, but in the meantime, all teachers should be exploring how they will embed key skills in their practice.

Does the DES Inspectorate expect to see evidence of key skills development?

Yes. The Inspectorate will expect to see evidence of key skills development in planning and practice. This is already happening in relation to the implementation in schools of the national literacy and numeracy strategy. The development of students' oracy, for example, is already well established, not just in English, but across all subject areas. This is also true of teachers who practice an investigative approach with their students, whether in maths, the sciences, history, geography etc.

Remember, key skills are very much about how the students participate and engage with learning. The emphasis is on the process of learning. The Inspectorate has cautioned against key skills moments, encouraging ongoing integration of the key skills into the classroom, short courses and other learning experiences.
