

# **Scoil Mhuire Community School**



## **Junior Cycle Classroom Based Assessment Policy**


*The Staff, the Parents' Association, the Student Council and the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Community School, amongst others, were consulted during the formation of this policy.*

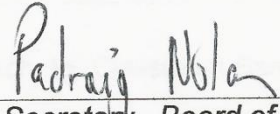
*This policy operates within the broader framework of the School Plan and other policies associated therein.*

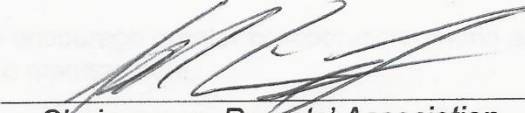
**Ratified by Board of Management on: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019**


**Proposed Policy Review date:**

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 (or sooner)**

  
Chairperson, Board of Management  
Sr. Colette McCloskey

  
Secretary, Board of Management  
Mr. Padraig Nolan

  
Chairperson, Parents' Association  
Mr John Kevin Flynn

  
Students' Council Representative  
James Byrne

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> JAN 2019

## **Scope**

*All assessment in junior cycle, formative or summative, moment-in-time or ongoing, SEC, NCCA or teacher-designed, **should have as its primary purpose, the support of student learning.***

*A dual approach to assessment, involving classroom-based assessment across the three years and a final externally-assessed, state-certified examination can enable the appropriate balance between preparing students for examinations and also facilitating creative thinking, engaged learning and better outcomes for students. **This approach will recognise and value the different types of learning that take place in schools and will allow for a more rounded assessment of the educational achievements of each young person.***

*The assessment practices will build on existing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. **Successful implementation will depend to a very significant degree on the professional skills and abilities of teachers and their collaborative engagement with their subject department colleagues.** It will also require effective school leadership to create a supportive professional context for teachers.*

***Classroom-Based Assessments will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a way which would not be possible in a formal examination. A particular purpose of the Classroom-Based Assessments will be to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the assessment task and at the end of the process.*** (Extracts from the Junior Cycle Framework 2015)

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement.

This Classroom-Based Assessment Policy outlines the importance of the key role students, parents, teachers and management play in supporting the aspirations identified in the Junior Cycle Framework document.

## **Rationale**

To develop a consistent and standardised approach to Classroom-Based Assessment throughout our school.

To enhance learning across our school.

To encourage greater collaboration among all our stakeholders – students, parents, teachers and management.

To promote the link between formative assessment, feedback and learning.

To stimulate the Student Voice, Inclusion, Differentiation and Wellbeing during Classroom-Based Assessments and beyond.

To realise the aims of our Mission in Scoil Mhuire Community School.

## **Relationship to the School's Mission Statement**

This Policy has been developed in line with our **Mission Statement** which says;

*Scoil Mhuire is a Community School consisting of Staff, Students, Parents and Management. As a centre for the formation of youth its aim is to strive for a more Christian and just society. To provide a warm and caring environment where students are taught to respect the dignity of each person and to develop their own sense of worth and self-esteem.*

*It seeks to provide a disciplined atmosphere in which students can work and develop their talents to the best of their abilities. All are expected to strive for excellence in all their pursuits whether academic or non- academic. Scoil Mhuire works within the curriculum of the Department of Education and Skills and provides extra-curricular activities aiming at the growth of the whole person.*

*Students are encouraged to develop their academic, intuitive and creative gifts to enable them to live their lives to the full and contribute in a positive way to the society of which they are a part. The school continually re-examines its goals and objectives and responds in a creative way to the demands of changing times.*

### **Scoil Mhuire Community School seeks to;**

- enable each person to develop their full potential.
- provide a safe, caring and secure environment for learning.
- respect the dignity of each person.
- advocate a sense of self-worth and self-esteem.
- promote an expectation that all strive for excellence in all that they do.
- foster inclusion and respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.
- encourage reflection and learning across our community.
- inspire lifelong learning.

Our Mission Statement guides and influences all our actions, methodologies and attitudes throughout our school.

## **Assessment supports learning**

Students know that **assessment is supporting their learning when;**

- it links directly with their ongoing work in the subject,
- they know and understand the criteria being used to assess their work,
- they get clear feedback from their teachers and others about how well they are doing and how they can improve.

These features of assessment also help students prepare for assessment at future stages of education or training – lifelong learning.

## **Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information**

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the **occasions when the teacher assesses their students** using the specific tasks set out in the subject specification. The tasks are clearly described, as are the **criteria for assessment**, the success criteria to guide each student and to support teacher judgement. The criteria are found in the Features of Quality linked to each Classroom-Based Assessment. Although **the assessment is similar to the formative assessment** (assessment for learning) **that occurs every day in class**, in the case of classroom-based assessment the teacher's judgement is recorded for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR), and is used in the school's reporting to parents and students. The descriptor achieved by the student will be recorded on the student's JCPA (Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement). Classroom-Based Assessment is not continuous assessment. Students prepare for the tasks over a specified period of time in second and third year. The results of 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.

## **Time for Classroom-Based Assessments**

The Classroom-Based Assessments are included within the time allocated for each subject. This is a minimum of 240 hours in English, Gaeilge and Maths and 200 hours in all other subjects. The area of Wellbeing includes PE, CSPE, SPHE and Learning to Learn alongside other learning experiences throughout the school adding up to a total of 400 hours. **Classroom-Based Assessments should and must be seen as part and parcel of normal classroom assessment.** The specific assessment tasks emerge from the various topics and areas of study that the students engage with as part of their everyday work. They are designed to allow students to demonstrate the many skills they continue to develop across the subject strands. All work submitted by the student for their Classroom-Based Assessment must be completed under the guidance of the teacher. The **onus lies with the each student** to produce and provide a path of evidence of their engagement with and **evidence of learning** experienced during the Classroom-Based Assessment task(s).

## **Reasonable support for all students**

To facilitate providing formative 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**. If a student requires more than what could be deemed as a reasonable level of support, having discussed it with the student, the teacher should make a note of the level of assistance provided. This will assist the teacher when using the Features of Quality to make judgements about the level of achievement of the student's work. This will also empower a teacher to afford further support for their conclusion(s) at SLAR meetings.

### Reasonable support may include:

Clarifying the requirements of the task by;

- Using annotated examples of student work provided by NCCA and/or anonymised exemplars from our/other schools to clarify the meaning and interpretation of the **Features of Quality** to students. All the **Success Criteria** guiding the student must be derived from the Features of Quality.
- Providing instructions at strategic intervals to facilitate the timely completion of the research, evaluation and report. This is genuine **Differentiation – Inclusion – and Wellbeing**.
- Providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN) as outlined throughout this policy, e.g. affording an alternative channel of delivering a presentation where an individual teacher considers it as fair/necessary and/or there is prior intervention by the principal or deputy principal.

It **is not envisaged** that the level of support involved requires teachers to edit draft reports, or to provide model text or answers to be used in the student's evidence of learning. Classroom-Based Assessment **is A f L** (Assessment for Learning) **not A of L** (Assessment of Learning).

### Inclusive assessment practices

Special provisions may be put in place by our school for a student with a specific physical or learning difficulty to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the student's performance in both Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement.

The accommodations — for example, the use of Irish Sign Language, support provided by a Special Needs Assistant, or the **support of assistive technologies** should be in line the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year and are **not** designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.

### Levels of achievement for the Classroom-Based Assessments

The Classroom-Based Assessments are **Common Level** assessments, therefore students are not required to indicate their intention to take the state-certified examination in a subject (if applicable) at Higher or Ordinary Level at this point in their junior cycle.

The teacher bases the level achieved by the student in each of the assessments on the relevant Features of Quality set out in the subject guidelines.

## **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 the subject guidelines to decide the level of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality are the criteria (success 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.

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.

**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 activity and the work is praised for its consistency.** 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.

**No Award/Not Reported:** There is the possibility of making a '**No Award**' if the evidence of the student's work does not meet the features of quality set out for Yet to meet expectations, or if there is no evidence of learning submitted.

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 a 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**. The **"benefit of the doubt"** should be offered to the student. An individual student's work **should not** be judged against other students' work, only the Features of Quality should be employed to make a judgement.

While it is anticipated that **most student work** would be judged to be **"In line with expectations" or "Above expectations"** and that **much less would be judged as Exceptional or Yet to reach expectations**, it is **not envisaged** that schools would limit the allocation of students to the four level descriptors based on a fixed quota system. The decisions about which descriptors are appropriate would be based on the teacher coming to a judgement about the student's work matched against the Features of Quality.

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

Teachers reach a decision on the appropriate descriptor through assessment of the evidence of learning presented, ongoing discussions with the students themselves and with other colleagues through the Subject Learning and Assessment Review.

The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will assist teachers in developing their own knowledge and skills through professional discussion with the purpose of arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations. This understanding is most likely to be developed when teachers come together to reflect on the quality of their own students' work informed by the curriculum specification, guidelines and other support material including annotated examples of students' work provided by the NCCA. Please see our school's SLAR Policy.

### **School autonomy in preparing for Classroom-Based Assessments**

The guidelines set out a range of options for the Classroom-Based Assessments so that they can suit the particular needs and circumstances of students and the school. Students and teachers usually have a choice of topics for the Classroom-Based Assessment. A variety of possibilities are available as to how the Classroom-Based Assessments can be conducted, presented the nature of the communication itself and the role the teacher plays in facilitating the student's communication. This permits the student to tap into their own interests and motivations.

**Unless otherwise stipulated** by the NCCA – only one **mode of presentation** should be employed by a student. Please discuss the various modes of presentation with your students and colleagues within your subject department. We must remember that each student may have up to 10 CBA's in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. Students **must** be consulted (Student Voice) to establish which mode of presentation best reflects their style of learning and which they are most comfortable using to present their **evidence of learning** for each assessment. This may result in a variety of presentation styles being employed in any class group. This is an excellent example of how the **Student Voice, Differentiation, Inclusion and Wellbeing** can be further promoted and enhanced throughout our school.

Similarly, students are actively encouraged to use a **variety** of support materials when completing the Classroom-Based Assessment, such as digital technology, posters, and infographics.

### **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 Assessments are provided to teachers. The JCT Co-Ordinator (Management Hrs) will direct teachers to the relevant location on the internet and school website. Links will also be distributed through the subject groups in Microsoft 365.
- Supporting teachers in recording the level Descriptors awarded to each student. This will be facilitated through Eportal.
- Student Tracking will guide expectations.
- Retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Subject Learning and Assessment Review etc. Individual Teachers should employ One Note, scan documents or store hard copies in a safe and secure manner. This includes recordings of oral presentations by individual students (legal obligation Education act 1998 section 9). Parental consent is not required for these recordings since it is part of the assessment process.
- Applying the guidelines for Subject Learning and Assessment Review set out in our SLAR policy.
- Supporting teachers and students in the completion of the Assessment Task through the provision of practical resources.
- Following set arrangements for the transfer of the completed Assessment Tasks to the State Examinations Commission for marking.
  - It is the **responsibility** of an individual teacher to have the results of their group(s) coordinated and ready for the SLAR teacher to collect **at least one week prior** to any deadline. This is essential to be fair to all involved. These results will then be shared with the school management.
  - A template will be provided for this purpose.
  - The SLAR teacher will then organise the return of the Assessment Tasks to the SEC (State Examinations Commission) prior to the deadline.
  - It is the **responsibility** of each individual teacher to inform the parents/guardians of a student that does not complete an Assessment Task.
  - It is also the responsibility of the individual teacher to collect any **medical certificate** and to accommodate the student as per the NCCA/SEC guidelines.
  - *Responsibility for ensuring that the AT Booklet has been completed by each individual student in accordance with the instructions and that the completed booklet is submitted to the SEC for marking rests with the school. The class-teacher(s) and the Principal are required to confirm that the work presented was completed under the supervision of the class teacher in class-time and is the candidate's own individual work. The Approval Form should be completed by the class teacher(s) and Principal as soon as practicable following the completion of the Assessment Task by students. The **SEC will not** routinely follow up the absence of an AT Booklet with a school. Final examination grades which do not include the marks from the AT Booklet will be flagged*



*by the SEC on the statements of provisional results in September. The presence of such an indicator will allow schools to engage with the SEC on any missing ATs at that time. The records provided to the SEC by the school when submitting the AT Booklets will be of particular importance in seeking to resolve issues later.*  
(Extract from SEC guidelines Dec 2017)

- It will be the responsibility of an individual teacher to follow up on any discrepancies associated with their students with the SEC.
- Applying inclusive assessment practices as set out in this policy.
- Encouraging students to assume responsibility for their own learning. Our Learning to Learn and Study Skills programmes will support 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). **School management will monitor all results prior to them being shared with the students or their parents/guardians.**

### **Key Dates**

The key dates for the window of time for, and the completion dates of the various Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Tasks are issued by the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) and SEC (State Examinations Commission). These dates are in the school journals.

The school has very little flexibility associated with these dates. It may be able to alter the start and completion dates depending on its calendar locally. However, it **cannot** alter the window of time assigned for the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessments or the window for the Assessment Task. Our school is obliged to maintain the integrity of the process.

Where the Classroom-Based Assessment involves a presentation, **all students must** be prepared to deliver their presentation anytime from the **Monday of the week assigned** for the presentations. This is regardless of any provisional schedule which is subject to change for a variety of reasons, such as illness, bereavement, extra-curricular activities etc.

Apart for exceptional circumstances (see next section) there is **no facility to reschedule** a Classroom-Based Assessment outside the window of time allocated to it.

There is **absolutely no facility to redo** a Classroom-Based Assessment.

Students **must** complete their Assessment Task during the time designated for it by the NCCA/SEC and our school. A student **must opt out of an extra-curricular/curricular** activity to complete their Assessment Task(s).

### **Being excused from a Classroom-Based Assessment /Assessment Task**

There are only two grounds that a student may be excused from completing a Classroom-Based Assessment or an Assessment Task;

1. A bereavement.
2. Serious Illness accompanied by a medical certificate.

In these two situations a student will be accommodated to complete/work towards completing their Classroom-Based Assessment where the Student Learning and Assessment Review meeting has not yet been convened in our school. However, the window of time for the Classroom-Based Assessment cannot be extended beyond that specified by the NCCA. An Assessment Task will only be rescheduled in accordance with the NCCA/SEC guidelines.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

Extra-curricular activities should continue as normal throughout the school year with the following considerations.

Teachers responsible for an extra-curricular/curricular activity **must post** an up to date list of all the students attending that activity **at least three full school days prior** to the date of the activity – **on Eportal**. A template will be provided. The duration of each activity must be kept to a minimum.

The **onus lies with the student** to inform their class teacher that they will be involved in an extra-curricular/curricular activity during a Classroom-Based Assessment window. They should discuss with their teacher the effect of attending the extra-curricular activity on any particular day. It is good practice and courtesy to do so at any time of the year.

If a student is behind on their work associated with their Classroom-Based Assessment they **should opt out of the activity** to ensure they keep their work on schedule.

Where a **class teacher** organises a one-off activity directly associated with a Classroom-Based Assessment such as a guest speaker, visit to an event etc. This **must be** communicated to all teachers **via Eportal** at the earliest opportunity and no later than **one school week** prior to the activity. This will help to prevent activities being planned simultaneously and promotes collaboration.

Teachers involved in extra-curricular activities and other teachers should then avoid planning/scheduling activities at this time involving the same students.

Outside of the reasons outlined above, there is **no facility to reschedule** an Assessment Task or a Classroom-Based Assessment outside the window of time allocated to it.

Students **must** complete their Assessment Task during the time designated for it by the NCCA/SEC and our school. A student **must opt out of an extra-curricular/curricular** activity to complete their Assessment Task(s).

### **Communication with parents/guardians**

Where a student is not applying themselves to their Classroom-Based Assessment their teacher **must call** their parents/guardians with **at least 60% of the time remaining** before the completion date.

If the student does not engage thereafter the teacher should communicate with the student's parents/guardians **once more** through a note in the student's journal or in exceptional circumstances with a brief phone call. Parents/Guardians must acknowledge this communication.

Where a **student does not complete** their Classroom-Based Assessment or Assessment Task their teacher **must inform** their parents/guardians either by phone, email or letter. The student journal may not be suitable for this communication. The **parent/guardian must** acknowledge this communication in writing.