Reporting in Junior Cycle

For consultation

Contents

1. Introduction

The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) underlines the importance of the process of reporting across junior cycle, culminating in the awarding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

> *During the three years of junior cycle, oral and written feedback to parents/guardians and students will be essential in supporting the student to build on strengths and address areas where learning can improve…*
>
> *Linking classroom assessment and other assessment with a new system of reporting that culminates in the awarding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will offer parents/guardians a clear and broad picture of their child's learning journey over the three years of junior cycle.*

The Framework sets out an approach to reporting at junior cycle that will contribute to the personal and educational development of students, will support and underpin ongoing learning and assessment, and will be manageable, accessible and effective for the school, teacher, student and parent/guardian.

This document outlines the main features of new reporting arrangements at junior cycle and plans for the guidelines on reporting to be published later in 2016. The document is presented for consultation with a view to NCCA gathering feedback on the main features of the new reporting system at junior cycle before proceeding to fully develop that system and publish guidelines on its practical features and operation. This short introduction is followed by material on:

- A rationale for reporting

- Principles for reporting

- Communicating student achievement

- Reporting in Junior Cycle

This last section includes some sample reporting tools and includes an embedded presentation to demonstrate some of the potential practical features of an online reporting system. You can link directly to that presentation from the document (see page 25).

Guidelines

It is envisaged that the material presented in this document, subject to feedback gathered through the consultation, will be included in the guidelines on reporting under development by the NCCA. The guidelines are due for completion in June and publication in September.

The guidelines are being developed for use in the implementation of reporting arrangements, initially for the subject areas of English, Business Studies and Science, for short courses, and for Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs). They will also encompass ideas and arrangements for how schools might report on other junior cycle subjects while students continue to follow Junior Certificate courses in the coming years, when the new junior cycle is being introduced in schools.

There will be ongoing evaluation of the use of the guidelines, based on work with a number of schools, and the guidelines will be subject to development and improvement on the basis of the experience of working with them in these and all schools. In particular, the need for clear reporting guidelines and templates for use in Junior Cycle English in 2016 will be a priority, but these may need to be viewed as 'interim' guidelines or templates and should be subject to evaluation with a view to developing the guidelines and templates further on the basis of the 2016 experience.

The guidelines will, in the first instance, use the *Framework for Junior Cycle* as a key reference point and will include sections on the following aspects of reporting:

- The approach being taken to reporting in junior cycle and the rationale for taking this approach

- Key principles underpinning reporting in junior cycle

- How assessment in junior cycle is closely linked to reporting and how both can contribute to assuring national standards within and across schools

- The process, form and content of reporting/reports, including templates and technology related to reporting

- The practice of ongoing reporting in first, second and third year

- The practice of reporting related to the JCPA in third year

- The practice of reporting related to L2LPs

- Advice on the introduction of new reporting arrangements in the school

- Learning from the features and experience of reporting here in Ireland and in other countries.

The introduction of new reporting arrangements in schools will recognise that schools have a wide variety of approaches to and experience of reporting. They will have different starting points on reporting and will progress the development of any new reporting approaches and systems at different rates.

The process, form and content of reporting, particularly where it relates to the technology and templates for reporting will assume that reporting in the initial years will be on the basis of both hard-copy and/or online material, rather than being designed only with the latter in mind.

2. Rationale

Many aspects of the existing system for reporting student progress in Ireland have been in place for a long time and continue to be a significant part of our education culture. While most would recognise that there are significant areas for improvement within the present grading and reporting system, it is important that we also acknowledge the historical context that underpins much of this practice and the powerful role that such tradition plays in how we report student progress. In order to take forward change in this area it will be necessary to challenge deeply held views about the ways we report student progress and the purpose that underpins reporting practice.

A key aspect of the change process associated with the introduction of the new process of reporting will be the importance of communicating the rationale for change with a broad range of stakeholders. If the new reporting process is to be accepted and successfully implemented, it is recognised that significant and sustained communication and engagement with parents, teachers and students on the purpose of reporting will be an important aspect of the communication process

In the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*, formal reporting arrangements are seen to complement other reporting opportunities including parent-teacher meetings, teacher-student dialogue and other home-school, written communications. At the heart of this broad process, all reporting is seen to be about informed discussions, either orally or in writing, between teachers, parents and students about how to improve learning.

In building a process of effective reporting we are aiming to ensure that student learning and achievement are clear to all and that parents are actively engaged in the student's learning. This can be achieved by providing clear feedback on a student's learning and achievements and how well he/she is doing against expectations. When this occurs, it creates an opportunity for discussion and engagement between the student, parents and teacher on the next steps required to support and improve learning.

The key role of feedback in the reporting process

The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) emphasises how the greatest benefits for students' learning occur when teachers provide effective feedback to students. This view is supported by the research of John Hattie, Professor of Education, University of Melbourne who in his definitive work *Visible Learning highlighted* (London; Routledge, 2009), analysed thousands of different pieces of research and concluded that there are a number of teaching strategies that can lead to an improvement of more than one grade to students' learning but that the most powerful single factor that enhances achievement is feedback.

This means providing information about how and why the student understands and misunderstands, and what directions the student must take to improve.

John Hattie (2009)

In taking forward work on reporting, it is critical that reporting is seen as an important part of the feedback loop for students and parents and that everyone comes to value the role that reporting can play in improving learning and students' motivation to learn.

Clarity as to the purpose of the new reporting process

In developing reporting processes that are fit for the 21st century, it is important that clarity and consensus are achieved as to the purpose of reporting at junior cycle.

The new reporting process for the Junior Cycle is primarily about:

- Providing information to parents about their son or daughter's achievement and learning progress in school

- Supporting students in their learning by suggesting next steps or providing feedback to help students' self-evaluation.

The purpose of the report can be clearly stated on the front of each reporting template.

> *The purpose of this report is to communicate to parents and students about learning achievement and learning progress in the Junior Cycle. It identifies the student's achievement, areas of strength and where additional learning is needed.*

3. The Principles for Reporting at Junior Cycle

Reporting should:

1. Encourage genuine engagement with parents

The new arrangements for reporting place a significant focus on the relationship between students, teachers and parents as a means of improving learning. In this context, parents as the first teachers of students are valued as key partners in the learning process.

The importance of the role of parents in student learning is also reflected in research evidence. Researchers has shown the positive effects of parent involvement when schools and parents work together to continuously support and encourage the student's learning. According to Absolum et al (2009) there is a need to emphasise the role parents can play as active partners in the learning process. The authors advocate a mutual exchange of information between home and school and a move away from the view of parents as passive recipients of information towards a relationship based on genuine partnership aimed at improving student learning. Harris and Goodall (2008) emphasise how parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement, while Byrne, D and Smyth, E. (2010) in their study of parental involvement in post-primary education in Ireland conclude that the bulk of international research on parental involvement has delivered a broad consensus that involving parents in the learning process enhances educational outcomes among children and young people.

It is important, however, to stress that simply involving parents in schooling is not the same as engaging parents in learning. In their conclusions, Harris and Goodall note

> *…that while involving parents in school activities has an important social and community function, it is only the engagement of parents in learning in the home that is most likely to result in a positive difference to learning outcomes*

The reporting arrangements outlined in the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)* provide this opportunity to support parents' engagement with student learning. The Framework outlines how *formal oral and written feedback to parents/guardians and students will be essential in supporting the student to build on strengths and address areas where learning can improve*.

In relation to the development of formal reporting processes within the Junior Cycle, schools will decide when it is most appropriate to include the option for a comment box to parents within the reporting template. Schools may find it helpful to use this option as part of a phased approach to the developing

of their reporting procedures and as one of a range of approaches that they are using to engage parents in students' learning.

Engaging with 'hard to reach' parents

A recognised challenge for schools will be engaging with 'hard to reach' parents. Research (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2000; Putnam, 2000) indicates that low parental engagement is very often to do with a lack of confidence rather than a lack of interest. Research also shows that where schools make determined attempts to engage parents viewed as 'hard to reach', there is evidence that the effect on student learning can be very positive (Feiler, 2010).

2. Provide opportunities for students through feedback to reflect on their learning and contribute to the reporting process

The Junior Cycle Framework (2015) emphasises the role that students themselves will play in the reporting process through a process of reflection and discussion of the progress they are making in their learning. This reflects the message at the heart of Article 12 of the United Nations Rights of the Child where the case for every child having the right 'to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them' is clearly made.

Research has also shown that providing greater student ownership and involvement in the learning process is fundamental to improved learning outcomes. Substantial research evidence provided by Hattie (2009 and 2012) shows that one of the most effective ways of closing the achievement gap is to teach all students how to self-assess and give them plenty of feedback as they are doing so.

In line with this research, the new reporting arrangements are aimed at encouraging students to play a central role as active and motivated participants in their own learning. In this context, rich reporting on student progress is most likely to occur when it has been developed within the context of regular feedback in class and where students are provided with frequent opportunities to reflect on their own learning. In practical terms, the vast majority of feedback between students and teachers should be in the form of oral communication. While students' reflection on their learning can be usefully captured and incorporated as part of the reporting process, it is recognised that the inclusion of such an option on the reporting template is best made as part of a phased approach once student self-evaluation is embedded as a strong feature of ongoing classroom assessment practice. Where schools decide to include written comments by students on reports, it is important that students understand that the comments should only focus on the steps they plan to take to improve their own learning, based on the process of ongoing reflection and feedback that has taken place throughout the session.

3. Value the professional judgements of teachers

The third part of the reporting triangle involves a focus on the professional judgements of teachers in coming to decisions about student achievement and progress. This will require teachers to provide a comprehensive picture of student achievement and will necessitate a shift from an emphasis on summative judgements towards decisions about student achievement and progress based on a broad range of evidence. Over many years, as a result of pressures in the system, summative assessment has dominated the process of assessment in Irish classrooms. This has been especially true in post-primary schools, where the bulk of teacher time in relation to assessment has been taken up with creating, marking and grading tests. As a result, reporting to students and parents has generally come in the form of marks or grades with this information often providing little direction or advice for improvement beyond general advice around more effort, or concentration or harder work. In addition, the test content is generally too limited to represent the full range of skills and knowledge that have been covered in class. Under the new arrangements set out in the Framework, teachers will increasingly move away from a reliance on marks and test results towards a consideration of how well a student is performing based on a range of evidence from day-to-day learning judged against a set of success criteria or Features of Quality.

In coming to judgements about overall achievement and progress for reporting purposes, it will be important that the decisions are based on how well students' work meets the relevant success criteria and the expectations for that particular stage in Junior Cycle. The learning achievement reported to parents and students should capture judgements of individual student's work against criteria and should not be based on the expectation that a fixed percentage of students will be allocated to particular descriptors irrespective of their performance on the assessment.

This approach is more likely to support learning and teaching practice where 'it is the goal of every teacher to have all students achieve the standard' (Gray 1993). If allocation of students to particular descriptors were restricted to a traditional 'bell-shaped' curve pattern then it could mean that some students who had met the success criteria would not have their level of performance recognised because of the limits set by quotas.

4. Use the language of learning

Student progress will be captured using qualitative judgements about student performance based on success criteria. The report will also indicate an overall summative judgement based on a broad range of evidence from a variety of sources together with an indication of particular strengths and areas for

development. Reporting student progress in this way clearly aligns with advice on the assessment process set out in the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015*.

A significant challenge for teachers, parents and students will be to move away from the present system of reporting based on percentages, towards reporting student achievement using broad descriptors of performance. The present system of allocating percentage scores based on a single test does not sit well with the advice in the Junior Cycle Framework that schools will 'need to use a variety of assessment approaches that will allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that would not be possible in a written examination'.

In making the shift away from a reliance on percentage marking for reporting purposes, it will be important to highlight the range of research evidence (Carey and Carifio, 2012; Hunter Brimi, 2011) supporting such a move. Findings from this research confirm that reporting on student performance based on percentage scores gives rise to a greater scope for subjectivity with a reduction in the reliability of reporting student performance compared to broad bands of achievement.

Subject Learning and Assessment Review

Reporting of student progress will be supported through collegiate discussion in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings and through other planned professional learning opportunities. Review meetings will play a key role in the development of teachers' confidence in making professional judgements about student performance. These professional learning opportunities will also help to ensure that the learner's achievements are in line with national standards and expectations. Teachers will be able to draw on guidance, exemplification and support from the NCCA Assessment Toolkit to inform their decisions about the quality of student work. The opportunity to engage in discussion in review meetings will increase parental confidence that the teachers' judgements in reports are fair, robust and in line with national standards.

5. Be manageable and not take time away from learning and teaching

The Framework emphasises that reporting should be *efficient, manageable and appropriate*. A key aspect of effective feedback will be the dialogue between teacher and student, ensuring that the focus is on learning and teaching and not unnecessary bureaucracy. Teachers will not be expected to write lengthy comments as part of the formal reporting process. It will not be necessary or possible to summarise every aspect of student progress in every written report. For example, staff and schools will not be expected to provide comments against every learning outcome. Similarly, it is not expected that

all feedback should be provided in written form; the vast majority of feedback between students and teachers should be in the form of oral communication.

In terms of the management of the reporting process, it will be important that teachers and schools see good planning as critical, as it enables teachers to focus their attention on the usefulness of the evidence of learning to be collected and recorded and avoids unnecessary bureaucracy. While teachers are adapting their approach to gathering evidence of student achievement based on their professional judgement, schools may wish to consider the benefits of reducing the frequency of in-school exam events – particularly in first and second year of junior cycle. For example, the removal of in-house examinations at the end of second year would considerably reduce the overall amount of student assessment and enable teachers and students to focus on Classroom-Based Assessment in their subjects and short courses.

6. Clearly communicate students' learning

Providing reports which are easy for parents to understand is an important principle which should be at the heart of the reporting process, together with the need to communicate meaningful and useful information. The benefits of reporting in plain language include being able to help parents feel more informed about their child's education, more confident in communicating with schools, and more able to play a proactive role in their children's learning. Clear jargon-free reports are also likely to lessen the amount of time spent explaining unfamiliar terms and the meaning of reports to parents. Reports written by teachers in this way will also help students to understand where they are and where they need to be, and to talk confidently about their achievement and progress in learning.

It is recognised that teachers will require time to develop their skills in providing effective feedback. It is recommended that schools should move to including short statements on students' learning within reports as feedback becomes established as part of ongoing assessment practice. Advice and support materials on how schools and teachers can take forward effective feedback and embed it in practice are included within the Formative Feedback booklet to be found in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit, available at http://www.juniorcycle.ie/Assessment/On-going-assessment

7. Provide information on a broad range of achievement

The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) emphasises the importance of valuing all students' learning opportunities and experiences during the three years of junior cycle and providing parents and students with a broader picture of students' learning. This approach to reporting will, therefore, be based on assessment of students' knowledge, skills and competences. The evidence for reporting progress in this way will come from ongoing formative assessment, Classroom-Based Assessments, the Assessment Task

and the results of the Final Assessment. Taken together, this represents a significant shift away from a reliance on a one –off final examination.

Reporting student effort, work habits and attitude to learning

While a focus on student achievement will be a key feature of the reporting process, the template will also allow teachers to report the effort that a student has made and/or where the key skills have been developed. This would address the issue of the very able student who achieves a very high level of achievement but could make further progress if there was greater application. Similarly, it allows for the less able student who works very hard but makes limited progress to have their effort recognised. This area within the template would also be the area where there would be an option to include teachers' commentary on aspects of key skills development within their subject.

8. Be sensitive to the self-esteem and general wellbeing of students and take an inclusive approach

Effective reporting practice is also sensitive to the self-esteem and general wellbeing of students while providing honest and constructive feedback. Reports need to focus on learning and progress, rather than make subjective judgements of the student. In this way final reports build on and reflect the ongoing feedback students receive in class about their learning throughout the school year.

Schools have responsibility for ensuring that all students, including students with special educational needs, can make progress with their learning and that progress is reported appropriately. In the main this is achieved through differentiated learning and teaching approaches and, in the case of reporting, should feature progress made towards learning targets that have been identified and planned for by students, their parents, teachers and other professionals in the area of special needs involved.

Schools may wish to consider how they identify the progress of students who have special needs and are achieving at their own level of ability. In developing their reporting practice, schools may wish to find ways to show how **all** young people can learn and improve. In reporting the progress of students with special educational needs, particular care should be given to the impact that reporting progress using a set of descriptors will have on their self-esteem and motivation. For these students, schools may wish to adapt their reporting formats so that the emphasis is only on the qualitative comments about the progress made. As with all students, the reporting process should provide a focus on 'next steps' for learning with an opportunity, where appropriate, for the student and the parent to comment on the progress that has been made.

4. Communicating student achievement

The approach to communicating about student achievement at junior cycle reflects the importance, outlined in the Framework for Junior Cycle, of giving prominence and importance to ongoing assessment used by teachers as part of their day-to-day practice, while at the same time maintaining a dual approach to assessment at junior cycle that includes the use of related Classroom-Based Assessments as well as continued use of state-certified examinations at the end of the third year of junior cycle. The focus on ongoing assessment and Classroom-Based Assessments as part of a dual approach is aimed at providing both parents and students with a broader picture of students' learning throughout the whole of junior cycle.

Reporting in junior cycle will be focussed on how well the student is learning and how he/she might improve. This is based on the premise that all students can and should learn well (Bloom 1976; Guskey 2006). The new report templates for junior cycle will clearly indicate what students were expected to do, how well they succeeded and whether or not their learning achievement is yet to meet, in line with, above or exceptional in terms of the expectations set out for that stage in the junior cycle. The templates will also facilitate the dual approach to assessment referred to in the Framework for Junior Cycle and allow schools, where they view it as appropriate, to include the results of summative, end-of-term tests in the report. In this way, reporting in junior cycle can mirror the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) that students will receive at the end of junior cycle, as the JCPA will include both descriptors of achievement in Classroom-Based Assessments and grades associated with state-certified examinations.

Having said this, the advice in the Framework for Junior Cycle is that throughout the three years of the junior cycle increased prominence should be given to ongoing assessment based on the professional judgements of teachers. In line with this greater focus on ongoing assessment, schools may wish to consider the benefits of reducing the frequency of in-school end-of-term tests and use the time freed up to focus on reporting student progress using the broad range of evidence collected from ongoing classroom assessment. In particular, this may be the case in second year, where the Classroom-Based Assessment for the JCPA may come to substitute other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as end-of-term Christmas and summer tests.

Where a school decides to continue using end-of-term tests as part of the junior cycle, it should report the results of the test using the grading system adopted by the State Examinations Commission when reporting achievement in the state-certified examinations at the end of third year, namely:

Grading of the State-Certified Examinations

- Distinction (90-100%)

- Higher Merit (75-89%)

- Merit (55-74%)

- Achieved (40-54%)

- Partially Achieved (20-39%)

Reporting on student progress using the language of learning

In the new junior cycle, a significant challenge for teachers, parents and students will be the move away from the present system of reporting based on marks and percentages, towards reporting on student achievement using broader descriptors of performance. A singular focus on the use of tests to report student progress and judge student achievement is incompatible with the advice in the *Framework for Junior Cycle* that schools will *need to use a variety of assessment approaches that will allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that would not be possible in a written examination*. Reporting in the junior cycle will involve a greater focus on the professional judgements of teachers in coming to decisions about student achievement and progress. Over time, this will involve teachers providing a more comprehensive picture of student achievement and will entail moving from a judgement based on one piece of work, such as a terminal test, to decisions about achievement and progress based on a range of evidence. Some of this evidence may come from end-of-topic class tests, but importantly will also come from a broader range of evidence including what students say, make or do. This is explored in more detail in Section 5.

Reporting using descriptors of achievement

A system of reporting student progress that establishes a central role for descriptors complemented by supplementary narrative comments will provide information that is reliable and meaningful to students and parents and useful in supporting next steps in learning. Reporting student progress using the new descriptors of achievement will maintain a focus on the language of learning used daily in junior cycle classrooms as the basis of feedback.

Descriptors of Achievement

- Exceptional

- Above expectations

- In line with expectations

- Yet to meet expectations

The use of the descriptors in assessment will be related to success criteria/Features of Quality, which are the criteria that will be used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the Descriptors above. In this way, the process of reporting will contribute to enhancing the educational experience of students on an ongoing basis throughout the three years of junior cycle.

The descriptors also have the advantage of providing consistency in the use of assessment language across all three years of junior cycle as they feature in the Classroom-Based Assessments for the JCPA and the related Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings, where they provide the language and basis for the professional discussions of student work taking place among teachers. Once this process of reporting under these descriptors becomes embedded in teachers' practice and understood and accepted by parents and students, it is likely that such an approach will become an expected and valued part of the process of reporting and provide a coherent pathway to the awarding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

Examples of student reports can be found in the next section of this document.

Deciding on students' level of achievement

When assessing the level of student achievement for reporting purposes throughout the junior cycle, teachers will use 'on-balance' judgement in relation to success criteria or Features of Quality based on four level descriptors – *Exceptional*, *Above expectations*, *In line with expectations*, and *Yet to meet expectations*.

In cases where it is not clearly evident which descriptor should apply, the teacher looks for the evidence in the student's work that best matches a particular descriptor. This 'bestfit-' approach allows teachers to select the achievement level that 'on-balance' describes the work being assessed. Teachers will develop this key professional skill through on-going discussions with the students themselves and with other colleagues. This understanding of standards and expectations is most likely to be developed when teachers come together in professional discussion 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. The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will also play a key

role in supporting teachers in the development of their own knowledge and skills through professional discussion with the purpose of arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations.

Reporting which is clear, consistent and manageable

Teachers and schools are encouraged to develop their reporting practice over time – ensuring that reporting reflects classroom practice, particularly in relation to providing effective feedback. Where schools have developed their feedback practice and are ready to include teachers' comments in student reports, it is recommended that such comments should be specific, so that they communicate the knowledge and skills that students are expected to gain, but not so detailed or technical that it becomes difficult for students and parents to understand, or burdensome for teachers to write. The report should be seen as part of an ongoing reporting process throughout the whole of junior cycle and as an important tool in assisting future learning.

Ensuring consistency in school reporting

The reporting templates provided will have a common set of features for all subjects and short courses and this will be an important factor in ensuring consistency in school reporting, as some subjects continue for a period with existing Junior Certificate courses while new junior cycle subject specifications are gradually introduced. In this way, schools will be facilitated in providing a coherent, consistent approach in sharing student progress with parents while allowing teachers to develop reporting practice over time.

5. Reporting in Junior Cycle subjects and short courses

This section sets out an approach to reporting that is consistent with the *Framework for Junior Cycle* and with the principles for reporting outlined earlier. The approach encompasses reporting on ongoing assessment and Classroom-Based Assessments over the years of junior cycle. It adopts the perspective that all learning opportunities and experiences encountered during the junior cycle will be valued, acknowledged and affirmed and that parents/guardians and students will be given a broad picture of each student's learning. It also places an important emphasis on reporting being manageable and not taking time away from learning and teaching. The approach to reporting also adopts the idea of reporting on the achievement of students using a nationally determined, common set of descriptors, as outlined on page 18.

The section looks at the following questions:

- What will a student report look like?

- How can reporting be practical, manageable, and flexible?

- How can learning be supported by linking assessment with reporting?

It is noteworthy that while the approaches proposed are not intended to involve additional workload for teachers, there is an expectation, in line with the *Framework for Junior Cycle* that teachers' practice will adapt and develop significantly as a result of changes to reporting.

Examples of reporting templates

In using examples of reporting templates it will be important that any discussion of the templates is supported and informed by a review of the associated support material for teachers, parents and students on reporting that will be made available on the NCCA Assessment Toolkit. It is understood that the introduction of templates will require opportunities for staff discussion and that developing effective commentary on student learning in reporting may be an area for staff development. While brief explanatory notes will be included as part of the template, it will also be critical for schools to engage with parents before the templates are introduced so that parents are fully informed as to the rationale for the changes in a school's reporting process. Similarly, it will be important that students understand the changes that are being made to how their progress is being shared with parents and opportunities should be provided, where appropriate, for students to reflect and comment on their own learning as

part of the reporting process. These templates are provided as examples of how student progress is reported at the end of each year in junior cycle and will be supplemented by other forms of reporting student progress throughout the session including parents' meetings and other ways of providing feedback on student learning.

The following examples of reporting templates (Fig. 1 and Fig. 3) have been developed so that they are:

- User-friendly and easily interpreted by students and parents

- Concise, and do not require extensive, descriptive input by teachers

- Practical in facilitating easy completion.

The reporting template in Fig. 4 illustrates how a school report may appear during the interim period when achievement in both new junior cycle subject and short course specifications and Junior Certificate syllabuses will be reported on.

The example in Fig 1 illustrates how a student report in First Year might be configured. It uses English and science as representative subjects of the new junior cycle. In both subjects, information is provided on Learning Achievement using the four level descriptors, on student effort and on work habits. But the example also illustrates how schools/subject departments have flexibility to decide the areas to report on. Also, the English section reports on a school end-of-term test, the science section does not. This could happen when a subject department chooses not to set an end-of-term test and uses the time freed up to focus instead on reporting student progress using the broad range of evidence collected from ongoing classroom assessment. Similarly, the science section includes a space for a student comment – this is not included in the English section.

Fig. 1: Example of Student Report – First Year

Gracefield Secondary School

Summer Report

Student Name: Joe Brady	Year Group: First Year
Attendance: 98%	Date: 5th June 2017

Subject	English				
Teacher Name					
Teacher comment					
Effort		Homework		Participation	
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations	In line with Expectations	Above expectations		Exceptional
End-of-term Examination	Partially achieved	Achieved	Merit	Higher merit	Distinction

Subject	Science				
Teacher Name					
Teacher comment					
Effort		Homework		Practical work	
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations	In line with Expectations	Above expectations		Exceptional
Student reflection on their learning					

Grading of the end-of-term examinations:

Distinction (90-100%); Higher Merit (75-89%); Merit (55-74%); Achieved (40-54%); Partially Achieved (20-39%).

Fig. 2: Example of Student Report – First Year (annotated)

Comment clearly communicates student achievement and is sensitive to the self–esteem of the student

Provides information about student effort and work habits, schools/subject departments have flexibility to decide the areas to report on.

Values the professional judgement of teachers as the overall summative judgement was arrived at by considering how well the student has performed on a broad range of evidence, which may be supported through discussions with colleagues.

Where a school decides to use end-of-term tests as part of the junior cycle, reporting should employ the grading system used by the State Examinations Commission.

When schools are ready, they can take the option of providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning.

Clearly communicates percentage range used when schools choose to include grading of end-of-term examinations.

Gracefield Secondary School
Summer Report

Student Name: Joe Brady	Year Group: First Year
Attendance: 98%	Date: 5th June 2017

Subject	English			
Teacher Name				
Teacher comment				
Effort		Homework		Participation	
Learning achievement	Yet to reach Expectations	In line with Expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
End-of-term Examination	Partially achieved	Achieved	Merit	Higher merit	Distinction

Subject	Science			
Teacher Name				
Teacher comment				
Effort		Homework		Practical work	
Learning achievement	Yet to reach Expectations	In line with Expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
Student reflection on their learning				

Grading of the end-of-term examinations:

Distinction (90-100%); Higher Merit (75-89%); Merit (55-74%); Achieved (40-54%); Partially Achieved (20-39%).

Fig. 3: Example of Student Report – Second Year

Gracefield Secondary School
Summer Report

Student Name:	Year Group: Second Year
Attendance:	Date: 5th June 2018

Subject	English				
Teacher Name					
Teacher comment					
Effort		Homework		Participation	
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations		In line with Expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
Classroom-Based Assessment 1	Yet to meet expectations		In line with Expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
Student reflection on their learning					

Subject	Science				
Teacher Name					
Teacher comment					
Classroom-Based Assessment 1	Yet to reach Expectations		In line with Expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
Effort		Homework		Participation	
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations		In line with expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional
End-of-term Examination	Partially achieved	Achieved	Merit	Higher merit	Distinction

Grading of the end-of-term examinations

Distinction (90-100%); Higher Merit (75-89%); Merit (55-74%); Achieved (40-54%); Partially Achieved (20-39%).

Fig. 4: Example of Student Report – First Year (including a sample of a Junior Certificate subject where the new junior cycle specification has yet to be introduced)

Gracefield Secondary School
Summer Report

Student Name: Joe Brady	Year Group: First Year
Attendance: 98%	Date: 5th June 2017

Subject	English				
Teacher Name					
Teacher comment					
Effort		**Homework**		**Participation**	
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations	In line with expectations		Above expectations	Exceptional
End-of-term examination	Partially achieved	Achieved		Merit	Higher merit	Distinction

Subject	Science			
Teacher Name				
Teacher comment				
Effort		**Homework**		
Learning achievement	Yet to meet expectations	In line with expectations	Above expectations	Exceptional

New subject specification for Junior Cycle History is not due for introduction until September 2018.

Reporting here is based on the current Junior Certificate syllabus.

Subject	History	
Teacher Name		
Teacher comment		
Effort		**Homework**	
Participation		**End-of-term Examination**	

Reporting in practical, manageable, and flexible ways

It is intended that the reporting system at junior cycle should ultimately be operated and managed online in order to best facilitate practicality, manageability and flexibility. The vast majority of schools utilise the report generation capabilities of their Content Management Systems to minimise the administrative burden of reporting. Therefore, it is important to build on this practice. To provide some insight into the process of generating the sample reports illustrated above online, a short video presentation is linked with this document. Please watch this video presentation before continuing to read the document.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that software solutions of themselves will deliver a practical, manageable, and flexible reporting system. To achieve this, assessment must be closely aligned with reporting. This is also essential to supporting student learning and informing teaching and class planning.

Linking assessment to reporting

Linking and aligning assessment with reporting involves identifying the learning that will be reported on. For the purposes of reporting, it is neither possible nor desirable to provide feedback on each individual learning outcome. The end-of-year report should provide a holistic overview of the key priorities of learning in the subject as identified in the curriculum specification **.**

It is also important to remember that no single measurement is completely reliable. Furthermore, a single measurement or assessment is unlikely to provide sufficient evidence to enable teachers to draw conclusions about achievement in the different priorities for learning in a subject. In this context, rather than making testing time longer and reducing the time available for teaching, teachers can also make use of information from ongoing naturally-occurring, classroom assessments.

Teacher journals are currently used extensively by teachers in post-primary schools in a broad range of imaginative ways including using the journals a record-keeping tool for capturing a wide variety of student information, such as learning progress and strengths, attendance, behaviour, effort, and assessment results. This information is often used to inform discussion at parent-teacher meetings. However, teacher journals have the potential to be used in ways that offer additional benefits. They have an important role to play in ensuring reporting is practical, manageable and flexible, and more importantly, in supporting learning. This is possible as recording occurs throughout the learning cycle. The fine-grained evidence collected from ongoing classroom assessments, similar to samples on www.curriculumonline.ie, collected primarily for formative purposes, can also be used to serve summative purposes (Wiliam, 2014).

6. Conclusion

It is recognised that, at present, the process of reporting is often focused on providing feedback through grades, marks and percentages. It is also acknowledged that the move towards a situation where teachers' professional judgements has greater prominence in reporting student achievement will take time and must involve significant professional development for teachers. A reporting process with a changed emphasis also requires significant engagement with students and parents who have traditionally received feedback about progress based primarily on marks, grades and percentages.

In moving assessment and reporting practice in the direction set out in this document, every effort must be made to ensure that the processes put in place to gather evidence from ongoing assessment for reporting purposes are manageable and sustainable. In particular, the need to maintain large collections of evidence of student work should be discouraged and teachers should instead be asked to identify opportunities for efficiently and effectively noting student achievement and progress where it naturally occurs in a classroom. In line with this approach, teachers can broaden the scope of what is assessed and reported on so that what a student says, does and makes is recognised as well as what student may write. Examples of ways in which this can be done in an efficient and effective way will be included in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit.

In keeping with the prominence given to ongoing assessment in this document, schools will wish to consider the role that end-of-term, in-house tests play in their planning. Assessment and reporting in the new junior cycle is designed on the basis of a dual approach featuring increased use of ongoing assessment and Classroom-Based Assessments, as well as the continued use of state-certified terminal examinations. In schools, ensuring that time is not taken away from a focus on ongoing assessment by an overemphasis on terminal tests will be a challenge of the new approach. However, it is a challenge that must be faced in order to ensure that an excessive, overall assessment burden is not placed on students and teachers.

The new processes for reporting student achievement in junior cycle also provide opportunities to support transition between primary and post-primary schools. The language of the descriptors has much in common with that used in the reporting templates in primary schools and the focus on qualitative comments within the junior cycle templates will be familiar to all parents and students receiving primary school reports. The new junior cycle templates have the potential, therefore, to provide greater coherence and consistency with primary school reporting practice. In addition, the junior cycle reporting process will provide a useful platform for supporting student learning in senior cycle, with the broader

range of assessment information made available through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) acting as an important bridge into learning at senior cycle.