

# THE SHORT COURSE IN JUNIOR CYCLE

## GETTING STARTED

### LEVEL 2

## HOME

### Introduction

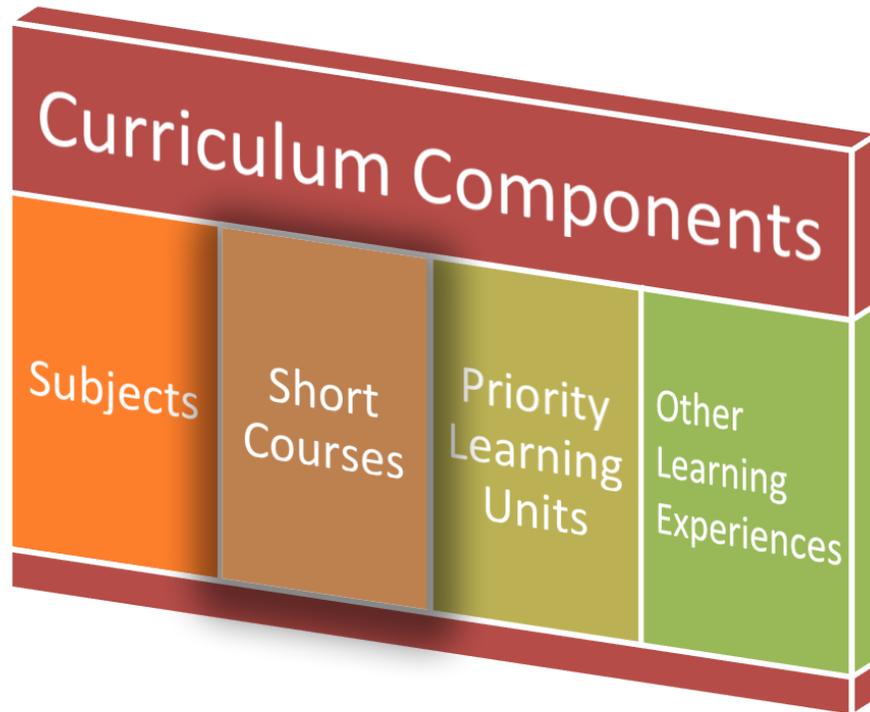
Welcome to Short Course Development.

The short course is a new curriculum component in Junior Cycle.

During the NCCA consultation about Junior Cycle, schools asked for opportunities to include new and different learning experiences for their students.

The introduction of short courses provides opportunities for schools to

- broaden the range of educational experiences they offer in Junior Cycle
- recognise and certify different types and smaller units of learning
- to engage in curriculum development and planning at local level.



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## Introduction / What is a short course?

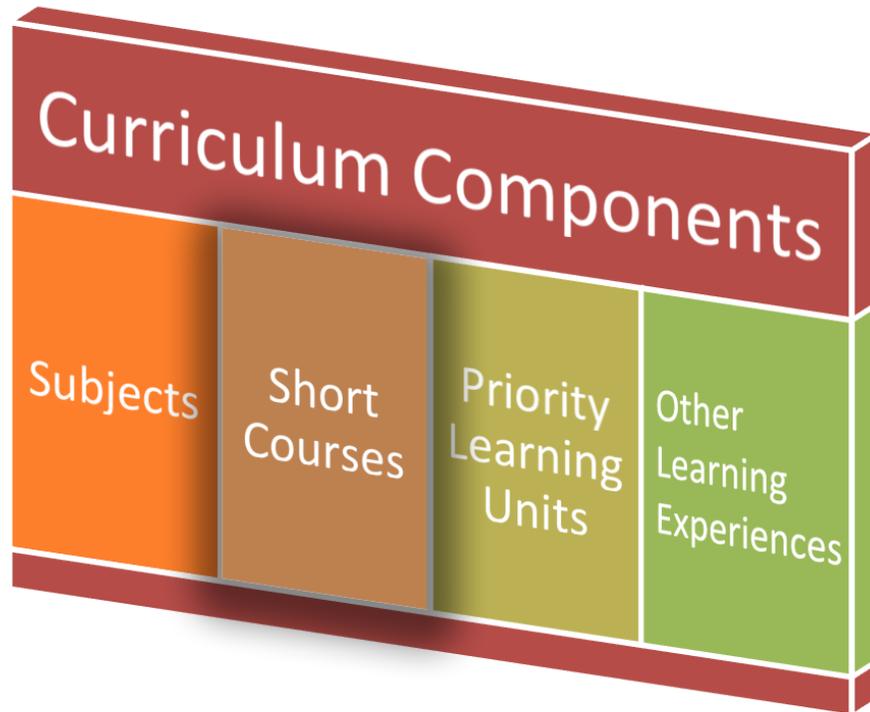
The short course is designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement. Most subjects are designed for 200 hours with the exception of Irish , English and Mathematics which are 240 hours.

Short courses may be devised '**from scratch**' – opening up a new area of learning e.g. A teenage garden.

Some short courses might be related to a subject but have a **learning focus** e.g. Everyday Maths or Local History.

Short courses are flexible enough to **encompass specific events or initiatives** such as school musicals, Young Scientist or Active School Flag.

In some cases, short courses may be made up of two or more separate but **complementary parts** which might be taught **by more than one teacher**, e.g. a Home Economics teacher and an English teacher working on a cook book.

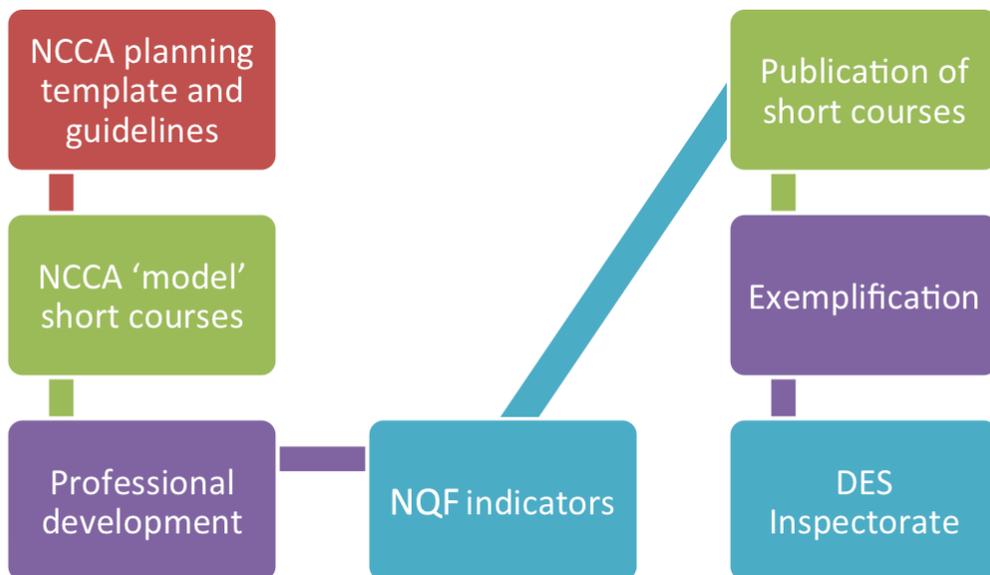


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## Introduction / Quality assurance

The quality of short courses is assured by the following measures:

- Short course developers are required to use the NCCA planning template and guidelines.
- The NCCA will publish two 'model' short courses.
- Professional development will be made available.
- Schools are encouraged to publish their short courses
- Schools are encouraged to look at the short courses that have been developed by other schools.
- Short Courses are aligned with level indicators for Level Two of the **National Framework of Qualifications. (NFQ)**



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### Introduction / NCCA 'Model' Short Courses

The NCCA have developed two short courses at Level Two.

These are

- A personal project: caring for animals
- CSI: Exploring forensic science.



### Planning

Based on our experience of working with NCCA short course developers, we know that **the process takes time and is best done collaboratively**. It is also recommended that developers work through the steps outlined on page 6 of these guidelines.

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### Getting Started

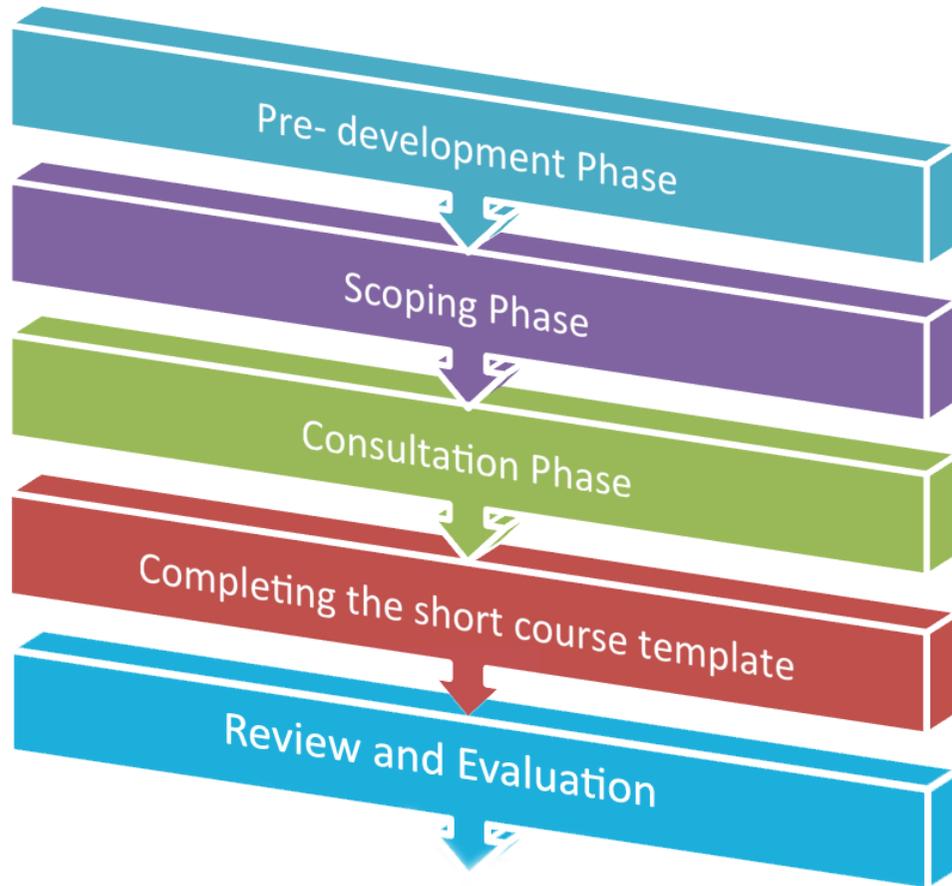
There are five phases involved in developing a short course.

Three of these phases are completed **before** the work begins on the NCCA short course template.

The five phases are:

- Pre-development phase
- Scoping phase
- Consultation phase
- Completing the short course template.
- Review and evaluation

By working through each of the phases, developers of short courses can be more confident that they have explored fully the different ideas for the course, consulted widely and refined their thinking before finalising the short course.



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### Getting Started / Pre-development Phase

We recommend that you set up a small working group (students, teachers and parents) to look at the following questions about your school.

- What is working well in Junior Cycle?  
(Review School Self Evaluation Outcomes.)
- Where are the gaps in the learning experiences of the Level 2 students?
- What areas of learning might be of interest to and worthwhile for your students?
- What sort of short course might assist in providing this/these experience(s)?
- What expertise do you have available in your school community to contribute to the development of short courses?
- Who might be interested in getting involved in the development of short courses?
- How do these considerations link to your overall plan for Junior Cycle?



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### Getting Started/Scoping Document

The short course development group is then established. This group could include students and parents as well as teachers. Its first task is to complete a scoping document for each proposed short course. You can download the scoping document [here](#).

**Points to note:**

**Significant learning in this short course:**

What is the important knowledge and understanding that students can gain in this short course? What PLUs, values and attitudes can students develop in this course?

Remember – it won't be possible to include everything!  
When making choices, ask the question...

*What will be of interest to and worthwhile for students in junior cycle to learn in this area?*



## Draft short course scoping document

Scoping is designed to clarify the important ideas in the short course and, in turn, to assist the developer(s) in completing the NCCA short course template. The document arising from this scoping exercise is used as a basis for discussion with significant others including colleagues, school management, students, parents, other schools and/or relevant agencies. The headings contained in the short course template have been provided here in red to help you later in mapping the ideas explored here with the sections of the template when you come to write it.

### Section 1: Short course title (Title)

*The title should*

- identify the focus and content of the course
- attract students' interest
- represent learning across a wide number of learning areas.

### Section 2: What will be the significant learning in this short course? (Rationale)

*This is an opportunity to envisage learning for your students which is*

- active, fun and engaging
- relevant to life at home, school and in the community.

<b>Knowledge</b> <i>(What will they be learning about?)</i>
<b>Skills</b> <i>(What will they be learning to do?)</i>

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### Getting Started/Scoping Document

Some short courses may be closely related to an existing junior cycle subject(s). If this is the case,

- what, if any, are the areas of potential overlap between the subject specification and this short course?
- is this overlap likely to be helpful or unhelpful for students' learning?

Ask students in what ways they will see the topic and the learning as being:

- interesting and challenging?
- enjoyable?
- connected to prior learning?
- relevant to future learning?
- useful now and in the future?

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### Getting Started/Scoping Document

#### **How will students be assessed in this short course?**

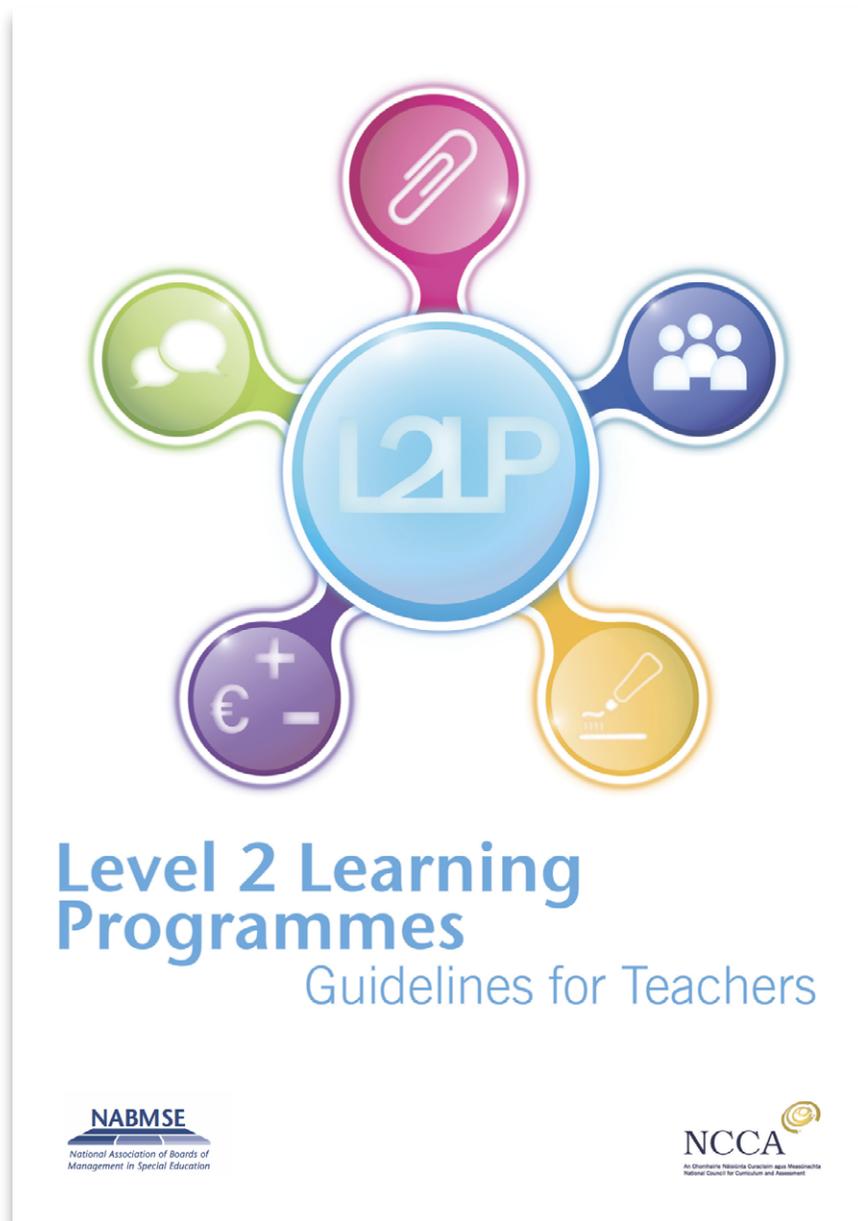
What might students be asked to **say, do, write and/or make** to show evidence of their learning?

#### **How will students learn in this short course?**

The Priority Learning Units (PLUs) are central to the Level 2 Learning Programmes. Read about them in the guidelines for Level 2 Learning Programmes here. There are lots of ideas here about how students might learn in the short course.

#### **What opportunities are there for formative assessment?**

Formative assessment can be used to provide feedback to students about their learning and to adapt teaching to meet students' needs. More ideas on assessment here.



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### Getting Started/Consultation phase

The short course scoping document can now be used as a basis for discussion about the proposed short course, its relevance for students and how the school might accommodate it in its junior cycle programme.

It is important to consult with students, teachers and parents. Each of these groups will provide relevant and focused feedback to inform the development of the short course.

Check out some ideas on how to consult with these groups.



## Draft short course specification (Level 2)

As you complete each section in this template, look back at your scoping document for ideas.

### Title of short course

Each short course will have a title that identifies the focus and content of the course.

### 1. Introduction to junior cycle *(This section is common to all short courses so you do not have to change the text.)*

Junior cycle education 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. Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

The junior cycle allows students to make a greater connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute directly to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity, innovation and enterprise. The learner's junior cycle programme builds on their learning to date and actively supports their progress in learning and in addition, supports them in developing the learning skills that will assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

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### Getting Started/Planning template

You can download the Level 2 short course planning template here.

When completing the template, keep in mind the audience - teachers, students and parents. The language should be clear and accessible. Each section should be concise and address the questions in the template.

### Title of short course

The title should clearly identify the content and focus of the short course. It should be interesting and attractive for junior cycle students and their teachers.

### 1. Introduction to junior cycle

This section is common to all specifications and summarises the main features of the Framework. The NCCA provides this text.

## Example from a personal project short course

### Rationale

This short course builds on and promotes the development of a range of personal, social and practical skills in the context of learning about an animal of special interest to the student. As well as content knowledge, students develop essential skills such as those of communication and language; thinking and reasoning; labelling; classifying; comparison and inferring. Knowledge, skills and attitudes for life are developed through links with the community, creative projects, numeracy, communication and literacy.

### Aim

This short course aims to develop the student's knowledge, as well as cognitive, social and practical skills in the context of learning about and caring for an animal of interest.

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### Getting Started/Planning template

## 2. Rationale

The rationale should answer questions such as

- why learning in this short course would be interesting and challenging for students in junior cycle
- how it is relevant inside and outside school?

Check out the ideas you have identified in the **scoping document** to inform the development of the rationale.

## 3. Aim

The aim should be a brief statement that outlines the expected impact of the course on students' learning. The aim is aspirational in nature and should describe the 'big picture' thinking behind the short course.

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## Getting Started/Planning template

## 4. Links

In this section, the ways in which the short course links to the Statements of Learning and the Priority Learning Units for Level 2 are made explicit. For more information on these, [click here](#).

## 4. a) Junior Cycle 24 Statements of Learning

In this section, you are asked to identify the 3/4 statements of learning to which this course relates significantly, including a brief description of some relevant learning provided in the short course.

Example from a personal project: caring for animals short course	
a) statements of learning	
Statement	Examples of relevant learning in the course
The student communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1 SOL 1	The student uses the correct words when discussing dogs. S/ he communicates appropriately with others in school and in the community in informal and formal situations. There are opportunities throughout for making presentations of varying lengths and degrees of challenge. A range of writing forms are used to suit purpose –writing a learning goal, filling in a simple form or writing instructions for the owner of a dog kennel who will look after the student’s dog.
The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts. SOL 7	In all strands the student explores the responsibilities associated with owning dogs. The student finds out about services available in the local area for dogs. The importance of being a responsible owner and the need to safeguard self and others from potential harm is another important area. The student engages in active citizenship during the course as opportunities arise.
The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/ his wellbeing and that of others SOL 11	The student learns about effective and safe practice when looking after a dog, including the need to safeguard others from potential harm.

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## Getting Started/Planning template

## 4. b) Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

In this section, give one or two examples of how this course contributes to the development of the most relevant elements of each PLU. Find out more about Priority Learning Units here.

Check out these links for more information about literacy and numeracy in the curriculum:

Department of Education and Skills Strategy document, Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and for Life

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) numeracy and literacy resource

National Behaviour Support Service: publications and resources in support of literacy and numeracy

Junior Cycle School Programme: literacy and numeracy

Special Education Support Service literacy resources

Example from a personal project: caring for animals short course		
4. b) Priority Learning Units (PLUs)		
Priority Learning Unit	PLU element	Student learning activity
Communicating and Literacy	Speaking appropriately for a variety of purposes and demonstrating attentiveness as a listener	The student learns to use key words and terms related to looking after the animal. The student presents on a topic about the animal to an audience.
Numeracy	Managing money Using a calculator	The student investigates the cost involved of looking after the animal and plans a budget for this. The student learns to use a calculator in this context.
Personal Care	Developing a healthy lifestyle Being able to manage stress	The student considers the benefits of having the animal, either for exercise and/or mental wellbeing.
Living in a Community	Seeking help and advice	The student researches the work of key animal care professionals in the community.
Preparing for Work	Being able to set goals for learning	In strand 1 the student sets learning goals for the short course, highlighting the areas to work on and develop.

## Example from a personal project short course

### Overview: Course

The specification for this junior cycle short course in caring for animals focuses on developing cognitive, social and practical skills through four inter-connected strands. The four strands presented here are: **Learning about dogs**; **Caring for dogs**; **The dog around the home** and **The dog in the community**.

**Strand 1: Learning about dogs.** In this strand, students are encouraged to research and work with others as they learn about the lifecycle of dogs, the benefits of owning them and what is involved in looking after them.

**Strand 2: Caring for dogs.** This strand deepens the student's understanding of the animal. Through cross-curricular learning they develop skills of classifying, comparing and presenting as they pursue topics of interest to them in relation to caring for dogs.

**Strand 3: The dog around the home.** In this strand, students are introduced to the practical aspects of dog ownership. There are opportunities for students to reach out to the local community as they learn about health and hygiene, healthy diets for dogs and how much it costs to own one.

**Strand 4: The dog in the community.** This strand enables students to build further on skills of communication as well as those of thinking and reasoning. They learn more about responsibilities associated with dog ownership and of the assistance dogs provide in the community.

Although the strands are interconnected, strand 1 is designed to be undertaken by students at the start of the course as it involves the student selecting a dog (their own or imaginary) on which to focus for the remainder of the course.

Teamwork is encouraged throughout all four strands. Students collaborate, peer-explain, seek feedback, provide feedback and reflect on their work. Practical, hands-on and problem-solving learning activities should be in evidence across all strands of the course. Opportunities for reflection on learning are embedded throughout the course.

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined below reflects the learning students undertake in this NCCA short course. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA-developed short course to suit their particular needs and school context, with the exception of the Classroom-Based Assessment, which

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### Getting Started/Planning template

#### 5. Overview: Course

This section provides an overview of the course including how it is organised (strands) and learning outcomes.

Each strand outlines what the student will learn in each part of the course. The strand title is brief and identifies the 'significant content'.

There should be a maximum of four strands and these may be further subdivided into not more than four topics.

The topics are presented in the order in which they are best taught.

Some strands may have a different weighting in terms of content and/or demands on the student. This should be made explicit on the planning template.

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## Getting Started/Planning template

## 6. Learning Outcomes: Some guidelines

Learning outcomes are clear statements about what is expected each student will achieve as a result of the learning associated with each strand. They should be aligned to the Level 2 indicators of the NFQ.

It is not necessary to write a learning outcome for everything you want the student to learn. But it is necessary to write learning outcomes **that draw a clear picture of the kinds of learning that is envisaged in the short course.**

Writing learning outcomes takes time and careful consideration. Guidance on writing learning outcomes is available here.

Remember not to have too many learning outcomes. Ideally four per topic in each strand.

Example from a personal project: caring for animals short course	
Strand 1 – Learning about dogs	
Learning about dogs (Students learn about)	LEARNING OUTCOMES (Students should be able to)
The life cycle of a dog	1.1. create a simple timeline tracing the stages in a dog's life 1.2. classify various pictures of dogs according to stages of development 1.3. list some health/hygiene problems suffered by dogs
Benefits of having a dog	1.4. list some reasons why people have dogs including the social benefits 1.5. work out an exercise plan to benefit both dogs and their owners
The role of dogs in our lives	1.6. present findings to their peers of a survey they've conducted on the value of dogs to people of different ages and needs 1.7. create an artefact to provide information on breeds of dogs and their characteristics
Choosing a pet dog	1.8. discuss with peer(s) the pros and cons of having a dog 1.9. relate what's involved in looking after a dog 1.10. use criteria to select a dog s/he would like to own
Reflection and transfer	1.11. reflect on what has been learned in this strand and apply in a real or imaginary context to 'own' dog



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## Getting Started/Planning template

## 7. a) Assessment and reporting

## Assessment in Short Courses

The purpose of assessment in the short course is to support learning. Assessment is both **formative** and **summative**.

**Formative assessment** (ongoing) - students and their teacher use the criteria for success to reflect on their learning and to plan their next steps. Include examples of formative assessment activities in the planning template.

**Summative assessment** (Classroom-Based Assessments) - are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Junior cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment. The features of quality for this Classroom-Based Assessment are outlined in the assessment and reporting section of the short course planning template.



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### Getting Started/Planning template

#### 7. b) Assessment and reporting

**Features Of Quality** are developed to support teacher judgment of the students' work for Classroom-Based Assessments.

For ideas on how to write Features Of Quality read some NCCA-developed short courses here.

#### Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

For the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA), the assessment of short courses will:

- be carried out in the school by the teacher
- be based on work undertaken by students in second and/or third year

Read more about assessment in junior cycle here:  
[Assessment Toolkit](#)

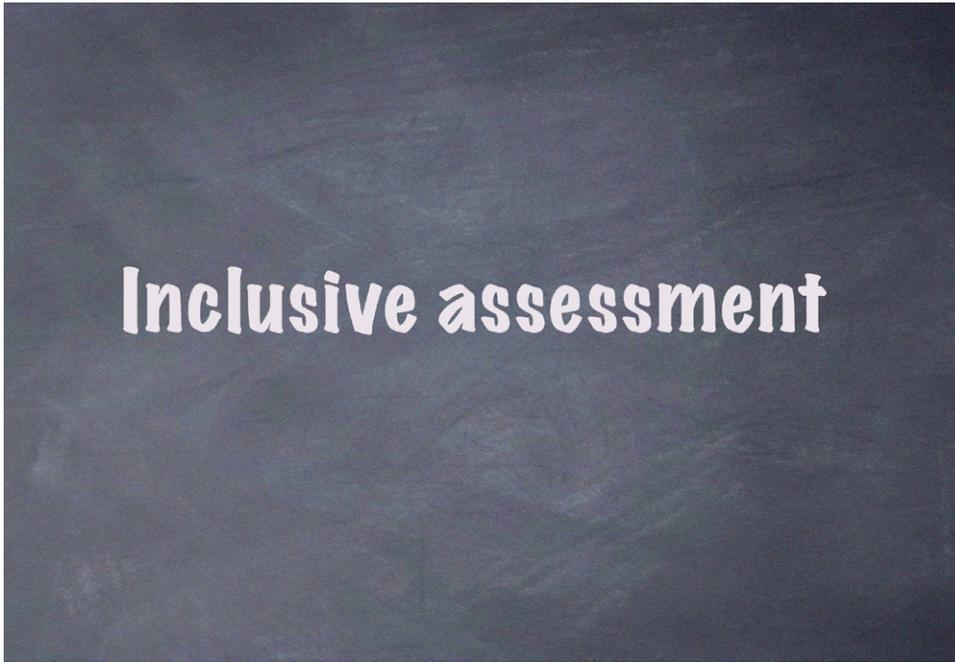


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### Getting Started/Planning template

#### 8. Inclusive assessment

The first part of this section is common to all specifications and NCCA provides the text as contained in the visual on the left here. In addition, you should include some specific examples of opportunities your short course offers for inclusive practice.



#### Inclusive assessment

Inclusive assessment Inclusive assessment practices, whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessment, are a key feature of teaching and learning in schools. Accommodations, e.g. the support provided by a special needs assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year. Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment.