An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programmes
Programme Statement

For introduction to schools from September 2026.

Prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction to junior cycle

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.

Statement on language

The NCCA recognises the changing and evolving nature of language used to describe educational needs and learning profiles. The terms learning, learning needs and learning profile are used throughout this programme statement. They are used in a holistic manner as learning refers to students' learning and skills development across areas including literacy, numeracy, language and communication, sensory, physical, social and emotional development. The term special educational needs (SEN) is also used to align with current policy documents and legislation. This document will be updated to reflect changes in terminology should the need arise.

Purpose of the Programme Statement

The purpose of the Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme (JCL1LP) Programme Statement is to assist teachers[1] and school leaders in designing personalised learning programmes that meet the specific needs of the students, responding to each student's profile of strengths, interests and needs. Table 1 sets out the structure and areas of focus within the Programme Statement.

Table 1: Structure of the Programme Statement

Section	Outline
1	Section 1 introduces the Programme Statement and sets out who a JCL1LP is designed for. It also illustrates the intentional alignment between the other curricula at primary and senior cycle.
2	Section 2 sets out some considerations for teaching and learning.
3	Section 3 provides important learning that is organised in six Priority Learning Units (PLUs). Students following a JCL1LP are engaging in a personalised learning programme appropriate to their strengths, interests and needs.
4	Section 4 looks at how evidence of learning is generated and gathered in the learning programme for assessment and reporting purposes.

[1] The term teachers used in this document is an umbrella term for all teaching staff in a school such as subject teachers, special class teachers, special school teachers and special education teachers (SET).

Who the JCL1LP is designed for

The JCL1LP is designed for a specific group of students. They are likely to have significant developmental delays across a number of areas, including learning, communication, language and adaptive skills. Students with this level of need may be in special schools, mainstream schools with special classes or in mainstream schools and are identified as being on the School Support Plus-Few level on the Continuum of Support (CoS). The CoS is a continuous and graduated problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that supports a student in collaboration with relevant stakeholders through their formal education.

Prior to making the decision that a JCL1LP is appropriate for an individual student, schools will engage in a robust, collaborative information-gathering process. Mainstream post-primary schools will be guided through this process by the CoS framework to collect and collate information and documentation from the student's teachers, parents/guardians and relevant external professionals and agencies. Further information and guidance on this process is available from the **Department of Education and Youth's (DEY) guidelines**.

Student Support File

The Student Support File (SSF) is used to collate all relevant information relating to the student. It is structured to provide a complete, comprehensive and holistic picture of the student, documenting their progress, strengths, interests, needs and response to interventions. This provides the evidence to support the decision for a student to access a JCL1LP. It helps to ensure continuity of support for a student and will enable parental engagement in the student's learning. The SSF identifies the:

- student's individual learning profile
- teaching and/or assistive technology resources required to support the student
- strategies and interventions to support the student
- personnel involved in delivering interventions and support to the student.

Gathering information to identify students' strengths, interests and needs involves the use of a broad range of formal and informal assessment approaches. Formal assessments can include assessments carried out by external professionals and agencies. Informal assessments can include criterion-referenced assessments, teacher-designed assessments or any assessment that is individualised and targeted to identify a student's strengths and specific areas of need.

Feedback and advice from external professionals and agencies on school-based assessments can also inform the identification of the student's learning profile. Using the information gathered from a broad range of sources assists with the creation of a student's learning profile and is necessary as the student may present with needs across a number of areas and they may be inter-related. This detailed information gathering process provides the evidence to support the shared decision for a student to follow a JCL1LP.

The short-term and long-term goals that form part of the Student Support Plan (SSP) are included in the overall SSF. The SSF is a live, workable document that is used to facilitate and support tracking of student progress and their transfer from primary and special school to the most appropriate programme for the student at junior cycle and beyond. The SSF in every school context helps ensure that there is an appropriate progression plan for the student, following completion of their primary curriculum to their junior cycle programme. The following questions are useful to consider alongside the DEY's **Indicators of Effective Practice** support document when identifying the junior cycle programme most suitable to a student:

1. What information has been gathered from the student's primary school experience? This can include but is not limited to: Education Passport, Student Support File, school-based assessment and, if applicable, formal assessments, NEPS Transition to Post-Primary Transfer Profile and pre-enrolment meetings.

2. If the student is already attending post-primary school, have the student's class teachers provided evidence that the student has significant difficulty in accessing the learning in the curriculum at Level 2 in junior cycle, despite support being provided to the student?

3. Has the JCL1LP been explained in detail and discussed with parents/guardians to consider their views?

4. Has the school engaged with the student, and parents/guardians, as appropriate, to capture their views on progression in junior cycle and beyond?

5. Have these views been captured and recorded in the SSF as part of the CoS problem-solving process?

6. Has the student given their assent (if appropriate) and have their parents/guardians given written consent to engage with a JCL1LP?

7. Have all relevant staff and professionals' views been considered?

Further information and supports

The DEY's **Special Education Teaching Guidelines and supporting documents** provide further information on the SSF and identifying needs. The DEY also provide advice on the use of assessment instruments to support the teaching and learning of students with SEN in post-primary schools, which is available **here**.

Further information on the **Continuum of Support for Post-Primary schools** is available from the DEY and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

Information on Student Support Files, assessment of needs and access to and allocation of resources for SEN is available from the **National Council for Special Education**.

Information on professional development and support services for teachers and school leaders is available from **Oide**.

Transitions and continuity

Junior cycle students bring with them a variety of rich experiences from their homes, their communities and their primary school experiences. Transitions from primary experiences to junior cycle, and junior cycle to senior cycle, mark some of the key milestones in their formal education. Sharing information about their learning and development at these transition points will support the planning process to enable the students to manage the transitions successfully.

Where it occurs, the transition to new schools can be guided by the use of the **Education Passport support material** and further supported by NEPS and NCSE if appropriate. Relationship building between primary, special and post-primary schools can also support students and their families in navigating these key transition points.

Students' learning from their primary and special school experiences should provide a strong foundation for their junior cycle experience and similarly their junior cycle experience should provide a strong foundation for their senior cycle experience. The intentional alignment of each sector's themes, key skills and key competencies is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Alignment of each sector's curriculum from Early Childhood to Senior Cycle

Aistear Themes (Early Childhood) (2024)	*Primary Curriculum Framework* Key Competencies (2023)	*Junior Cycle Framework* 8 Key Skills (2015)	Senior Cycle Key Competencies (2024)
Exploring and thinking	Being an active learner	Managing information and thinking	Thinking and solving problems
	Being creative	Being creative	Being creative
	Being mathematical	Being numerate	Numeracy
	Being a digital learner		
Communicating	Being a communicator and using language	Communicating	Communicating
		Being literate	Literacies
Wellbeing	Being well	Staying well	Cultivating wellbeing
Identity and belonging	Being an active citizen	Managing self	Managing learning and self
			Participating in society
		Working with others	Working with others

The next section outlines some important considerations for effective teaching and learning within a JCL1LP.

Section 2: Considerations for teaching and learning

In planning for teaching and learning, it is important for teachers and other relevant professionals working with the student to consider the principles and features of a JCL1LP described in the next subsections.

Principles

The principles are set out to assist schools and teachers in designing personalised learning programmes appropriate to the strengths, interests and needs of their students. They underpin the implementation of all junior cycle programmes as outlined in the *Framework for Junior Cycle* **(DES, 2015)**. One way of delivering these principles is through offering JCL1LPs as an option at Junior Cycle. Students undertaking a JCL1LP will experience some or all of the statements of learning and develop their skills through engagement with PLUs, short courses and other curriculum and learning experiences that are appropriate to their strengths, interests and needs.

Learning to learn

Learning programmes are designed to support the student to become independent in their learning and conscious of themselves as students. This, for example, could involve encouraging the student to think about strategies to use when they approach a learning task, such as applying a step-by-step method.

Choice and flexibility

Programmes are flexible by nature and reflect the reality of the range of contexts and settings involved. Insofar as possible student choice should be facilitated. Choice should be embedded into learning and teaching in terms of how students engage with and demonstrate their learning.

Quality

Programmes are subject to continual review, development and adjustment in the interest of the student and their holistic development.

Creativity and innovation

Programmes give teachers and students the opportunity to engage in the curriculum in creative and innovative ways. They also enable students to explore and develop their creative talents.

Engagement and participation

Students can engage with the PLUs through a variety of educational experiences. Programmes have meaning for students, are enjoyable, and support them in achieving their potential. Learning connects to life outside of school. Consideration is given to the student's prior learning and experiences, personal and social development, and age appropriateness.

Continuity and development

Programmes are planned with a view to easing the major transition points that students face, particularly the move from primary to post-primary. A programme that builds on prior learning and supports students in making links within and across learning areas provides for continuity and opens pathways for further learning. Programmes can encourage and support students to engage with learning at the next level of the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ), to look to the future, and prepare for life after leaving school.

Inclusive education

Programmes are planned within an inclusive environment as much as possible. The learning programmes can be designed to meet the needs of the student to support their presence, meaningful participation and achievement in their school and community alongside their peers.

Wellbeing

Programmes are designed with the student at the centre. This enables the physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing to be an integral part of the programme.

Features

Features describe practices, approaches and elements you would expect to see at work in a learning programme. They may not be continuously in evidence, but reflect how the programmes are realised in schools and other settings. The features identified are neither exhaustive nor exclusive. While they allow for flexibility in the design and implementation of personalised learning programmes, they also ensure a certain degree of coherence across them.

JCL1LPs emphasise that learning for the students:

- focuses on the student's communication, life, and functional skills as well as sensory needs that underpin all future learning.

- must be meaningful and interesting for them, taking a strengths-based approach to meeting their needs.

- is planned through a holistic approach and takes account of students' preferred sensory and learning approaches and their ways of processing information.

- is cross curricular, enabling learning outcomes to be achieved across subjects and curriculum areas.

The students following a JCL1LP have multiple and, in some cases, significant needs. In planning for teaching, learning and assessment, teachers and other relevant professionals working with the student consider the following features:

- Student-centred teaching

- Meaningful learning

- Learning environments

- Materials and resources

- Collaboration and family involvement

- Observation

- Language

- Routine

- Problem solving.

Each of these features are described next in more detail.

Student-centred teaching

All planning starts with the student at the centre. The student's strengths, interests and needs can be identified in consultation with parents/guardians and other relevant professionals. Insofar as possible, the student's own voice should be accessed in setting goals and when decisions are made about which direction to take next in the learning programme. Using this information, along with the interests and motivators identified in the student's SSF, a JCL1LP is planned to enable the learning outcomes from the PLUs to be made specific to the student. The JCL1LP will also outline the modes of teaching, learning and assessment appropriate to the student. Critical to assessment of some students is the noting by family members of learning being transferred from school to home and by teachers (and other adults in school) where the reverse is observed. Above all, the learning needs to engage the student, motivating them to learn more and to find learning enjoyable.

Meaningful learning

It is important that all learning experiences for students be as meaningful and relevant as possible. Thus, judicious choices are made by teachers when deciding on appropriate curriculum content for the student. Material chosen to illustrate and work with specific content should be age appropriate. If learning outcomes from a Level 2 PLU are chosen, then they may need to be tailored to suit the strengths, interests and needs of the student following a JCL1LP. Teaching approaches can be practical and realistic in nature, using everyday experiences, materials and resources. Students working at this level may have difficulty retaining and transferring skills between different environments and situations. Meaningful experiences that can be repeated will help to consolidate learning. Process-based teaching and learning is most successful, with specific skills being taught in context. Practitioners working with this group of students will also be aware that they need a lot of overlearning and consolidation in order to transfer what is being learned from working memory to long-term memory.

Learning environments

Care must be taken when setting up a learning opportunity. Some students may have sensory processing difficulties which may hinder their ability to fully engage with a learning experience. Light, sound and temperature can all have an effect on the environment and its conduciveness to learning. For example, preparing food in the same room where young people are learning may affect their ability to focus on the lesson being taught, despite the fact that the meal preparation in itself might be a good learning opportunity. Areas within the classroom can be set up to create an interactive and inviting place to learn with sensory, relaxation, feeding and table-top areas among others needed. It must be remembered that for some students an uncluttered, low-arousal environment gives them the best opportunity to learn without distraction.

Inclusive learning environments work to remove barriers to make learning more meaningful and relevant for every student, particularly those most vulnerable to exclusionary pressures. In implementing the JCL1LPs, schools should endeavour to ensure that students access the curriculum alongside peers, regardless of the level of curriculum being followed.

Materials and resources

Although the students may present at an early stage of their learning development, it is important to remember that they are teenagers and that all materials and resources should, insofar as possible, be age-appropriate. They may respond very well to a toy or song aimed at a much younger child, however with good planning, another more appropriate object or song may garner the same reaction and motivation. The introduction of digital technology has revolutionised what is possible for all students in today's world. Augmentative technology, assistive technology and access to the internet provide great supports to students. However, use of technology is not limited to its assistive features as all students can benefit by using digital technologies across the curriculum. All students may also need to be supervised for effective use, and accessible material reviewed for suitability in line with a school's internet usage policy.

Collaboration and family involvement

Programme planning requires a collaborative approach, between students, their parents/guardians, teachers, and other relevant professionals. Teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs) and other professionals will all have developed very close relationships and understanding of the students they work with. However, the importance of the family cannot be underestimated. The student may present very differently in school and at home, and family input is invaluable when compiling the SSF and learning goals. Priority learning needs should be regularly discussed with parents/guardians to ensure consistency of educational goal-setting. The whole school systems in place that foster a close, supportive and trusting working relationship between school and home will support this process.

Observation

Much of the learning will take place over an extended period of time. Students who follow a JCL1LP need to experience activities repeatedly in order to consolidate their understanding. Staff need to use careful observational skills to track progress and development. Videos and photographs (with parental consent) can be invaluable in recording subtle responses which can be easily overlooked.

Language

Clear communication also aids learning. All adults working with students can use the same vocabulary when communicating verbally with students. The repetition of simple instructions, delivered in a calm clear voice supported with objects of reference, Irish Sign Language (ISL)[2], Lámh,[3] or a visual communication system is necessary.

Routine

A predictable and regular routine allows the student to feel safe, secure, and to know what will happen next. Any element of the unknown or fear may hinder their ability to learn. Objects of reference, Lámh, ISL signs, visual schedules, communication passports, and a classroom timetable can all help to keep structure and maintain security for the student. Consistently using certain areas of the classroom for specific activities enables students to identify what will happen next, e.g. always arranging chairs in a particular area of the classroom for musical activities. Opportunities to engage in unfamiliar or changing routines can also be offered to those students able to do so.

Problem solving

Students need to develop skills that will help them navigate the world they live in. Learning to recognise problems in everyday situations, identify steps to solve the problem and work through these steps is a skill required across all areas of the students' lives. Therefore problem solving underpins all PLUs in a JCL1LP.

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[2] Irish Sign Language is formally recognised in the Irish Sign Language Act of 2017. It is a visual language, not based on any spoken language. It is the term used to describe the sign language of the Republic of Ireland.

[3] Lámh is a manual sign system based on Irish Sign Language (ISL) used by children and adults with significant communication needs in Ireland. Lámh signs are always accompanied by speech.

A note on planning for JCL1LPs

The learning experience for students participating in a JCL1LP include:

- the student's JCL1LP
- other learning experiences
- wellbeing
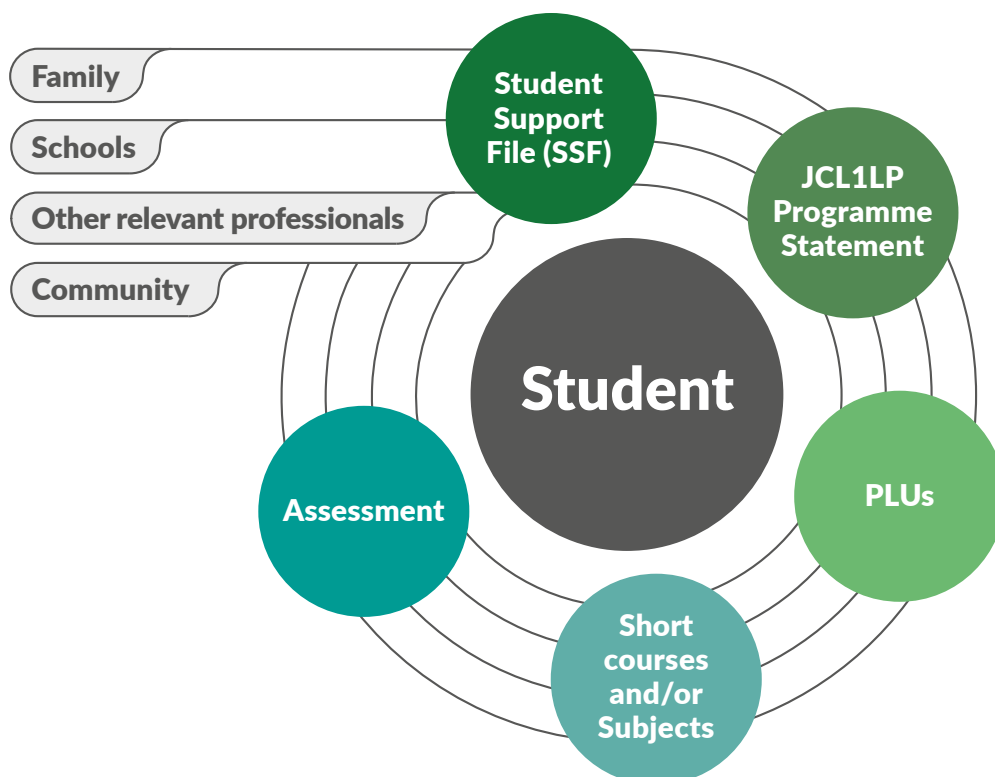- elements of the student's Student Support File (SSF).

Schools and teachers are required to have documentation that shows evidence of planning for learning, assessment of learning, reflection, and monitoring of students' learning. As every school is different there is no 'one fits all' template for this planning. All planning for students participating in a JCL1LP is student-centred, with the SSF playing a central role in the process. Teachers prepare yearly, termly, and short-term plans that function as live working documents. These plans support and evidence continuous reflection, assessment and monitoring of the student's learning, outline progression steps for students, and are adjusted regularly to reflect ongoing developments.

The following are the main features of that planning process:

- the student's needs at the centre as informed by their areas of interests and the student's SSF.
- the alignment of the JCL1LP to the student's strengths, interests and needs.
- the use of PLUs and their relevant learning outcomes for that student.
- the use of short courses, level 2 PLUs as appropriate, and other curriculum material to facilitate learning and provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- the identification of teaching approaches to areas such as communication, language and literacy development.
- the plan for gathering of evidence of work undertaken and learning achieved by the student.

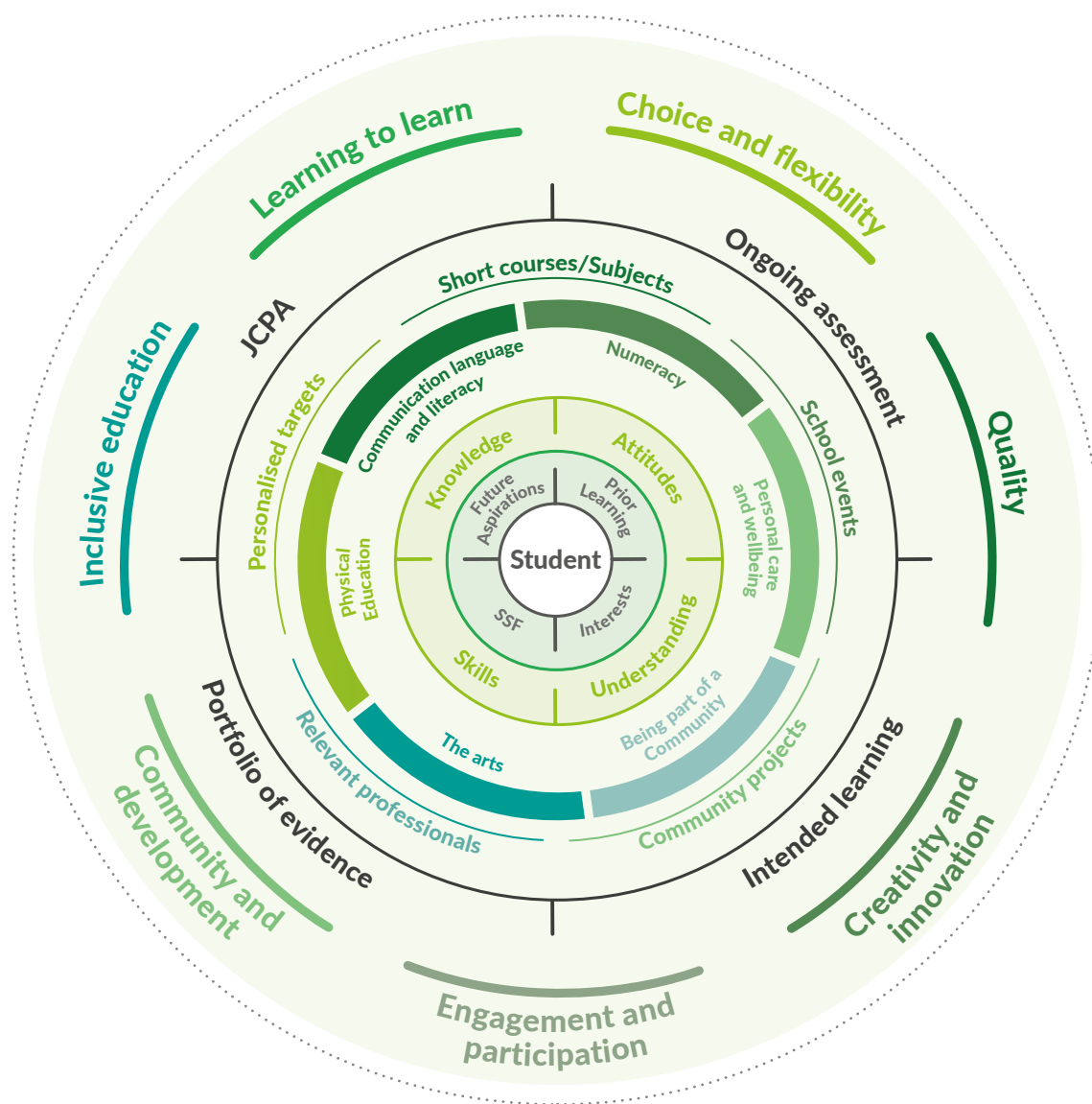Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of this process.

Figure 1: Supports for JCL1LP planning, teaching, learning and assessment
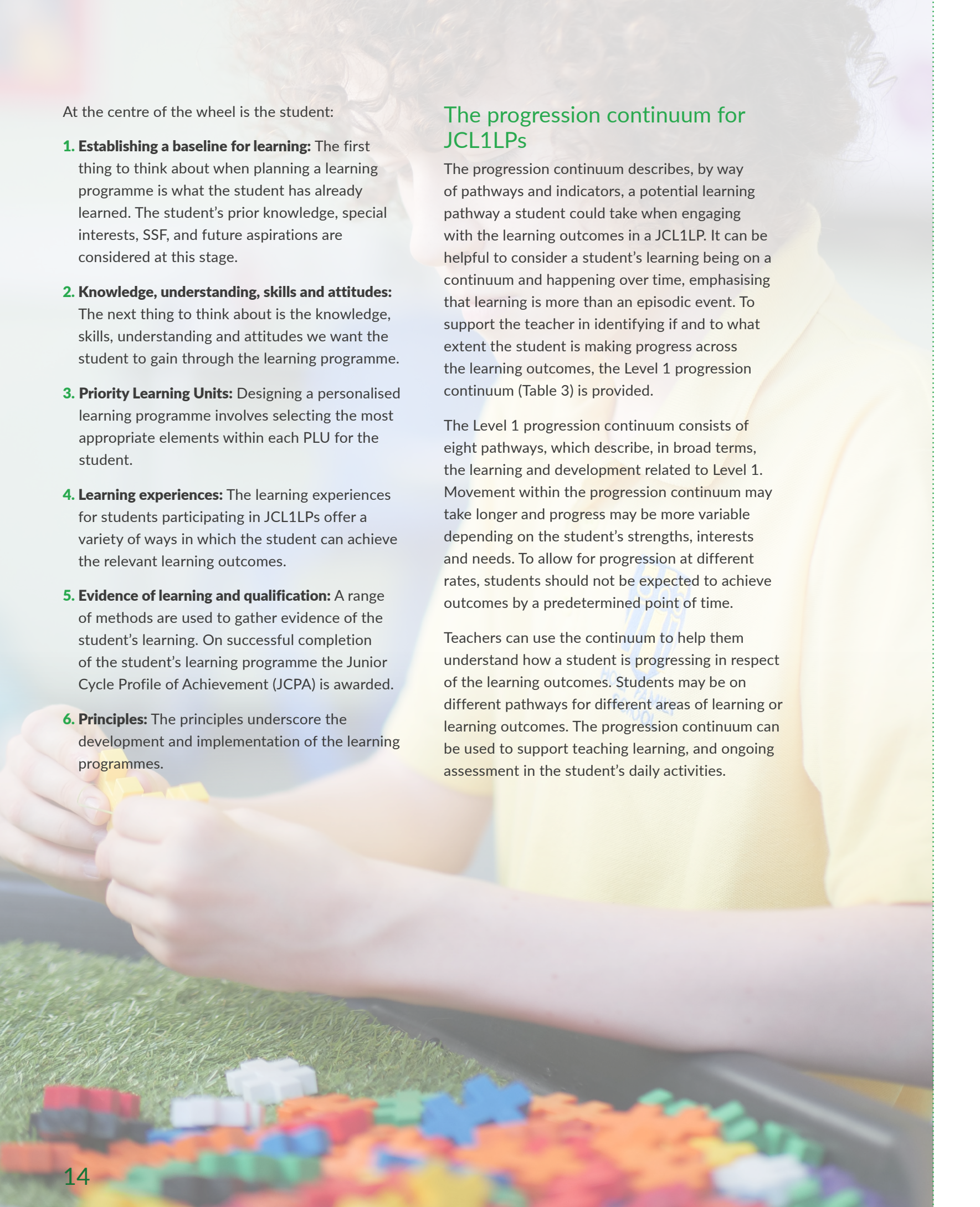
To assist in planning personalised learning programmes, the learning wheel, (Figure 2) offers a schema that places and relates the different elements of a JCL1LP. This learning wheel follows the same format as that used in the JCL2LP but is tailored to the strengths, interests and needs of students participating in the JCL1LP. The learning programme revolves around the student. It is represented as concentric circles on a wheel to act as a visual reminder and reflective tool for teachers and students that emphasises the importance of maintaining a holistic view of the learning.

The concentric circles, from the inside out, reflect the students, aspects of their learning such as the SSF, the categories of learning outcomes involved, the PLUs, potential curriculum areas included in the programme, the assessment and qualifications dimension and, finally, the principles involved which underpin the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2015). The elements of the wheel are described in greater detail following the diagram (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Planning for learning: the learning wheel

At the centre of the wheel is the student:

1. **Establishing a baseline for learning:** The first thing to think about when planning a learning programme is what the student has already learned. The student's prior knowledge, special interests, SSF, and future aspirations are considered at this stage.

2. **Knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes:** The next thing to think about is the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes we want the student to gain through the learning programme.

3. **Priority Learning Units:** Designing a personalised learning programme involves selecting the most appropriate elements within each PLU for the student.

4. **Learning experiences:** The learning experiences for students participating in JCL1LPs offer a variety of ways in which the student can achieve the relevant learning outcomes.

5. **Evidence of learning and qualification:** A range of methods are used to gather evidence of the student's learning. On successful completion of the student's learning programme the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) is awarded.

6. **Principles:** The principles underscore the development and implementation of the learning programmes.

The progression continuum for JCL1LPs

The progression continuum describes, by way of pathways and indicators, a potential learning pathway a student could take when engaging with the learning outcomes in a JCL1LP. It can be helpful to consider a student's learning being on a continuum and happening over time, emphasising that learning is more than an episodic event. To support the teacher in identifying if and to what extent the student is making progress across the learning outcomes, the Level 1 progression continuum (Table 3) is provided.

The Level 1 progression continuum consists of eight pathways, which describe, in broad terms, the learning and development related to Level 1. Movement within the progression continuum may take longer and progress may be more variable depending on the student's strengths, interests and needs. To allow for progression at different rates, students should not be expected to achieve outcomes by a predetermined point of time.

Teachers can use the continuum to help them understand how a student is progressing in respect of the learning outcomes. Students may be on different pathways for different areas of learning or learning outcomes. The progression continuum can be used to support teaching learning, and ongoing assessment in the student's daily activities.

Table 3: Level 1 progression continuum

Progression Pathway	The student...
Attend	attends and is present at the learning activity or event.
Recognition	shows awareness of, or recognition of, the learning activity/event including a fleeting focus.
Attention	pays attention to the learning activity/event but it can be inconsistent and often brief.
Acknowledgement	begins to respond to, or acknowledge the learning activity/event, often inconsistently and the response is appropriate to the student.
Engagement	shows more consistent attention to learning activities/events
Involvement	begins to share, take turns, show enjoyment of the learning activity/event, and express choice.
Anticipation	begins to anticipate familiar learning activities/events.
Action	joins in, gestures, vocalises on learning activity and others, appropriate to the student's form of communication.

The student may also show progress through:

- higher levels of enjoyment of the activity
- increased use of senses; from nearby senses such as tactile to more distant senses such as visual or auditory senses
- increased use of movement such as body language right through to the use of visuals.

Progress can also be shown by movement. Students may progress from showing resistance through movement to enjoying their interactions, such as:

- a reduction in intervention, support or reinforcement
- when a student demonstrates achievement more than once
- when a student combines skills or uses skills across contexts
- when a student decides not to respond, having previously done so, is a sign of progression in itself.

Section 3: Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

Introduction

There are six Priority Learning Units (PLUs) at the heart of every JCL1LP. These PLUs explicitly identify and develop the key areas of learning needed to prepare the students for their future lives. Though presented as self-contained units, these PLUs interconnect and overlap when used as part of a learning programme. The order (Table 4) in which the PLUs are presented is to assist teachers who are planning for JCL1LPs.

Table 4: JCL1LP PLUs

Communication, language and literacy	Being part of a community
Numeracy	The arts
Personal care and wellbeing	Physical education

Each PLU is described in general terms, followed by a summary list of the main elements of each PLU set out in a table. Each PLU is divided into elements and these elements have a number of associated learning outcomes which specify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students can demonstrate they have learned.

The learning outcomes developed for JCL1LPs are broadly aligned with the indicators at Level 1 of the NFQ (see Appendix 3). Within each PLU, teachers can ensure that the learning outcomes engaged with by the student build on their strengths, their interests, and support their identified areas of need. They can engage with learning outcomes at a level and pace commensurate with their ability and identified needs. While a student may not fully realise or achieve an individual learning outcome, they can be encouraged and supported to make incremental progress within each PLU.

Learning in JCL1LPs will largely comprise of learning outcomes from PLUs. Apart from the PLUs, a second curriculum component—which JCL1LPs have in common with all junior cycle programmes—is the short course[4]. Short courses relate to and can support the learning outcomes of the PLUs. They are curriculum areas developed to focus on a particular area of interest to students of junior cycle age. Level 1 short courses will also share these features and will provide students with access to as broad a range of curriculum areas as possible. A small number of NCCA-developed short courses are available on NCCA's website **curriculumonline.ie**. However, schools are also free to develop their own following a **template and guidelines** developed by NCCA. Short courses may be developed by other organisations. Schools can decide on the short courses most suitable for their students – they may be subject-based or they may be thematic and cross-curricular in nature. They are focused on topics that are age-appropriate for junior cycle students and on areas of interest to the students involved.

Students should be facilitated in applying their learning from one situation to another at every opportunity. This ensures that they consolidate their skills. Although repetition is essential for some, learning should take place in varied learning environments in order to maintain student motivation and to judge whether a student is able to generalise his/her learning.

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[4] See the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2015) for more detail on short courses and NCCA developed short courses can be found **here**.

PLUs for Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programmes

The six PLUs identify and develop the main areas of learning for students undertaking a JCL1LP.

PLU 1 Communication, language and literacy

Introduction

Communication underpins all learning and is fundamental to the capacity to transfer learning. Communication and language form the foundation for all other PLUs. Learning in this unit covers both verbal and non-verbal ways of receiving and giving information. Language development requires social interaction between the student and a communication partner. Some of the students in this cohort may first need to be alerted to the fact that they live in a world outside of their own body. Communication for some can be enabled and progressed with aids like augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), visual and object cues, verbal prompts, facial expressions, gestures, sign language (such as ISL), electronic devices, Braille (or Moon[5]), and the written form. Through developing communication skills, students enhance their social interactions and improve their self-esteem.

Exposure to a broad literacy experience is a feature of all JCL1LPs. This definition of literacy includes multi-modal literacies encompassing spoken, printed, visual, and digital literacies. The Communication, language and literacy PLU is made up of 5 elements, which include:

- Developing communicative relationships
- Understanding
- Exploring and using
- Reading
- Written expression.

A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

[5] Moon is a reading system of embossed symbols for the blind. It is claimed by its supporters to be easier to understand than Braille.

Table 5: Communication, language and literacy learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to...
Developing communicative relationships	**1.1** indicate awareness of sensory stimuli in the learning environment
	1.2 establish consistent patterns of attending to stimuli/personnel/activities in the immediate environment
	1.3 engage in an activity requiring joint attention with one or more people
	1.4 demonstrate turn-taking with a communicative partner
	1.5 show awareness of and/or use tone, body language, gestures, pace, vocalisations, and volume to impact communication
	1.6 initiate communication with a familiar adult and peers
	1.7 engage in and enjoy a meaningful exchange with a communicative partner
Understanding	**1.8** show recognition of personal and/or standardised objects of reference
	1.9 respond to verbal and non-verbal cues related to familiar communicative routines
	1.10 attend and respond to increased vocabulary in text[6]
	1.11 consistently respond to familiar factual questions
	1.12 show signs of anticipating next steps in a familiar activity when presented with a stimulus
	1.13 predict outcomes for a familiar or unfamiliar story or event choosing from a range of possible outcomes
Exploring and using	**1.14** clearly indicate preferred objects and/or activities and refuse non-preferred items
	1.15 request repetition and/or more of and/or change of objects or events
	1.16 make a request and/or express a need, verbally or non-verbally
	1.17 participate in the sharing of a familiar or personal story, activity or event
	1.18 communicate to express feelings verbally or non-verbally
	1.19 express interests and opinions through a range of verbal or non-verbal communication methods
Reading	**1.20** illustrate signs of engagement and enjoyment with stories, texts, poetry, funny or favourite reading material
	1.21 choose and handle books, demonstrating familiarity with book handling skills
	1.22 show recognition and understanding of symbols, signs, logos, familiar words, letters or visual representations of items
	1.23 seek meaning from combinations of signs, symbols or text for enjoyment or practical purposes
	1.24 read a book, magazine or other text with understanding
	1.25 recall a story read or personal experience using objects, marks, gestures or vocalisations

[6] Throughout the JCL1LP Programme Statement, 'text' includes all products of language use: oral, gesture, sign, written, visual, electronic and digital.

Element	Students should be able to...
Written expression	**1.26** show enjoyment while making marks and or texts, and use gestures, sounds or words to focus attention on these, showing signs of understanding that texts carry meaning
	1.27 engage in/with mechanics of mark-making exercises to create a form of text according to their strengths, interests and needs, using motor or eye-gaze skills as appropriate
	1.28 explore a variety of implements[7] and surfaces[8] for creating texts
	1.29 place marks, signs, symbols or texts in the correct sequence and/or with the correct orientation to infer meaning
	1.30 use signs, symbols or text to share experiences, thoughts, opinions and preferences with peers with growing confidence

[7] Implements to include but not confined to any object capable of mark making, such as hands/feet, electronic device, wheelchair, crayon/pencil/paint, foam, etc.

[8] Surfaces to include but not confined to any surface used for applying marks, such as paper, a digital device, floor, wall, desk, etc.

PLU 2: Numeracy

Introduction

Everyday activities provide genuine opportunities for mathematical discovery—from matching cutlery items to pouring drinks and from coordinating clothes to preparing ingredients for cooking. As with all learning, activities related to this PLU need to be varied to allow for multiple ways of representing concepts, expressing understanding and engaging. The more practical and related to everyday actions or tasks the context is, the more enabling they are. Opportunities to use digital technologies in the classroom can further develop students' learning.

Numeracy is fundamental to daily living. The skills acquired through the Numeracy PLU translate across school, home and community life. Exposure to a broad numeracy experience is a feature of all JCL1LPs. This unit is broken down into six elements:

- Awareness of environment
- Pattern and sequence
- Developing number sense
- Shape and space
- Measures and data
- Time.

Students use their senses to investigate, discover and explore objects and people using the concepts of shape, measure, time, pattern and sequence. Students need to experience a mathematically-rich environment. A key aspect of learning in this area is in supporting students to participate in real-life situations where the use of mathematics is relevant.

> A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Table 6: Numeracy learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to...
Awareness of environment	**2.1** discover and explore a range of objects/stimuli
	2.2 investigate objects/stimuli in motion
	2.3 recognise and/or show preferences for objects/stimuli
	2.4 match identical items that are familiar to the student
	2.5 recognise objects/stimuli that are the same and/or different in one or more ways
	2.6 participate in cause and effect activities[9]
	2.7 explore the concept of object permanence[10]

[9] Cause and effect refers to the understanding that there is a relationship between events or things, where one is the result of the other (e.g. turning on a light when going into a dark room).

[10] Object permanence is the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be observed (seen, heard, touched, smelled or sensed in any way).

Element	Students should be able to...
Pattern and space	**2.8** explore pattern through a variety of sensory experiences
	2.9 observe patterns in the student's environment
	2.10 engage with language, objects, symbols, signs and stimuli associated with ordering and sequencing which forms part of the student's daily routine
	2.11 participate in activities where the aim is to repeat patterns
	2.12 recognise and/or anticipate familiar activities or routines with predictable patterns and sequences
Developing number sense	**2.13** participate in counting activities
	2.14 explore and use familiar numerals
	2.15 explore the relationship between sets and numbers
	2.16 experiment with differences in quantity and the language associated with it[11]
	2.17 explore the concepts of addition and subtraction
Shape and space	**2.18** experiment with the movement of body parts in the immediate environment
	2.19 participate in activities where the language of movement and position is used
	2.20 explore the features and properties of 2D and 3D regular and irregular shapes through a variety of sensory experiences
	2.21 recognise and/or identify shapes in the immediate and local environment
Measures[12] and data	**2.22** investigate objects and language in relation to measurement
	2.23 participate in everyday activities associated with measurement in the student's environment
	2.24 participate in a shopping experience or in an activity where real money is used functionally
	2.25 participate in recording and displaying number and/or familiar data
Time	**2.26** engage with language, objects, symbols, signs, stimuli or activities associated with times of the day and/or days of the week
	2.27 explore language, objects and stimuli associated with significant personal and cultural events in the student's life
	2.28 participate in activities/actions that are used to transition from one event to the next or to show the passage of time, waiting or turn-taking
	2.29 use instruments such as timers, visual timetables, objects of reference or clocks functionally

[11] These activities underpin addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
[12] Categories in this element include of temperature, length, distance, weight, capacity and area.

PLU 3: Personal care and wellbeing

Introduction

In undertaking this PLU, students become aware of their own bodies, develop an understanding of routine bodily functions and take as much control as possible of their personal care and wellbeing. Care is something that is done with students, not to them, thus every care routine is an opportunity for learning, for involvement, and ultimately, where possible, for independence on the part of the student. They learn that they are valued for who they are. They are offered the chance of empowerment (making choices), increased self-esteem and as much autonomy as possible. Emotional and physical wellbeing are also enhanced through learning about food and nutrition as well as how to express feelings and stay safe in a range of contexts. Students identify and value their own skills and talents and learn to celebrate them.

This unit is broken down into six elements:

- Self-awareness
- Personal care and hygiene
- Food and nutrition
- Emotional wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- Personal safety.

A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Table 7: Personal care and wellbeing learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to...
Self-awareness	**3.1** demonstrate awareness of their own body
	3.2 show awareness of self in the immediate and/or wider environment
	3.3 recognise their own features as being unique to them
	3.4 demonstrate awareness of their own abilities and skills such as self-help skills or kindness to others
	3.5 exhibit perseverance and the motivation to develop and improve personal abilities and skills
Personal care and hygiene	**3.6** co-operate with adults who provide daily support
	3.7 participate in personal care routines
	3.8 indicate personal care needs or ask for help verbally or non-verbally
	3.9 make choices related to personal care
	3.10 complete personal care tasks independently

Element	Students should be able to...
Food and nutrition	**3.11** use the senses to explore different types of foods
	3.12 show preferences for foods
	3.13 communicate hunger, thirst and messages such as 'more please' or 'no more' when being supported to eat and drink
	3.14 use eating and drinking utensils
	3.15 participate in preparing food
	3.16 demonstrate basic hygiene procedures around food
	3.17 follow safety rules for using kitchen equipment
	3.18 participate in making healthy snacks
	3.19 plan, shop for and prepare personalised healthy food (with support if necessary)
Emotional wellbeing	**3.20** express some feelings consistently (with or without intent) so that a familiar adult can respond appropriately
	3.21 Show interest in the feelings expressed by others and react appropriately
	3.22 develop an awareness of strategies that support self-regulation, with support as necessary
	3.23 show interest and enjoyment in being with particular peers or familiar adults especially while engaging in hobbies and extra-curricular activities
Physical wellbeing	**3.24** use the body to have an effect on objects in the environment
	3.25 move to improve gross motor control of the body
	3.26 practise fine motor control for self-help
	3.27 participate in activities to develop a healthy lifestyle
	3.28 identify preferred physical activities
	3.29 demonstrate enjoyment of co-operating with peers in team games and group activities
Personal safety	**3.30** accept appropriate attention from others
	3.31 differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar people
	3.32 object to inappropriate attention and/or show awareness of another person/people who can help if uncomfortable in a situation
	3.33 follow agreed social rules
	3.34 show awareness of risks in familiar environments
	3.35 recognise public and private places and how they are different
	3.36 identify or name body parts using correct anatomical language
	3.37 follow social conventions of privacy
	3.38 demonstrate awareness of appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with others

PLU 4: Being part of a community

Introduction

This unit enables students to develop positive relationships with others in their community, whether that community be their family, school or the wider community in which they live. The core elements of socialising requires a process-based way of teaching. In this context, this PLU offers opportunities for students to spend curriculum time learning outside of school and to further work on the processes of communication they develop in the PLU Communication, language and literacy. They have opportunities to contribute to and participate in their community, use the facilities within it safely and appropriately, and to take care of it.

A key aspect of learning in this area takes students out into their communities. Supporting students who find change and transition difficult is essential here. Developing social scripts[13] for the students in advance, accompanied by photographs and/or audio or video recordings reduces anxiety and reassures them by making the unfamiliar less so. Some students find social interaction particularly challenging so where collaborative work or socialising with others present difficulties, they could work in parallel with or alongside their peers and not forced to participate. This unit consists of 5 elements:

- Relating to others
- Using local facilities
- Transitioning between environments
- Being safe in the community
- Contributing to the community.

A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Table 8: Personal care and wellbeing learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to...
Relating to others	**4.1** express contentment in the company of others
	4.2 acknowledge unfamiliar people
	4.3 show enjoyment from an interaction with another person or other people, and show a desire for it to continue
	4.4 respond consistently to familiar people
	4.5 indicate/choose preferred companion(s) for different activities
	4.6 communicate an ability to connect people with their roles
	4.7 engage in supported activities on daily life skills
	4.8 be a member of one or more groups in or outside of school, actively participating where possible
	4.9 communicate ideas of what it means to be 'a friend'

[13] Social scripts describe the physical environment students will visit, and include details of what the excursion will involve. They are often written in the first person, e.g. When we climb the steps to the entrance I will be able to leave my bag in a room, where it will be safe until I get back.

Element	Students should be able to...
Using local facilities	**4.10** participate appropriately in using different areas/rooms in their immediate environment
	4.11 visit and participate appropriately in using facilities in their environment
	4.12 demonstrate knowledge of where familiar items are stored/located in their environment
	4.13 make choices when using facilities
	4.14 show respect for items belonging to others and use them appropriately
Transitioning between environments	**4.15** show recognition of being in familiar places
	4.16 respond with curiosity to unfamiliar environments
	4.17 co-operate in preparing for and transitioning to a new location
	4.18 actively engage in transitioning to a new location
	4.19 respond to cues (visual, verbal, gesture, sound) to locate familiar places
	4.20 indicate a desire/request to leave a group or go to another place
Being safe in the community	**4.21** gain attention from an adult if feeling unsafe or uncomfortable
	4.22 communicate 'No'
	4.23 move/remain near to a carer/guardian when in unfamiliar places
	4.24 observe rules of safety in different environments
	4.25 show recognition of places and people in the community who can help us
Contributing to the community	**4.26** respond to positive reinforcement from others
	4.27 behave appropriately in familiar routine or special events and where possible play their expected role within it
	4.28 show awareness that actions have consequences
	4.29 participate in the care of the immediate and local environment
	4.30 engage in a task or job in the community

PLU 5: The arts

Introduction

This unit covers the three areas of visual art, music and drama. Students are exposed to a rich and varied range of experiences using all of their senses. They are creatively engaged in learning and have opportunities to express their emotions, reactions and imaginations as an individual and as a member of a group. Due to the strong visual, auditory and tactile aspects of each of the three elements, students with visual and hearing impairments are included fully and successfully in learning. The arts can support all students in making sense of the world around them.

They learn about their own cultural heritage and traditions and that of others. Students are exposed to the work of artists, musicians and to the world of theatre and performance. Through the retelling of contemporary and historical events which become familiar, students become more secure and relaxed in their surroundings. In this PLU's elements, there is an emphasis on experiencing, exploring and creating in:

- Visual art
- Music
- Drama.

A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Table 9: The arts learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to…
Visual art	**5.1** explore and experience a variety of mark-making tools, media and materials, surfaces and techniques, including using parts of the body
	5.2 show interest in coloured light, colour in the environment and in art materials
	5.3 look at and handle natural and manufactured objects with different textures, shapes and patterns
	5.4 gather, explore and use 3D materials (new and recycled)
	5.5 participate in creating art work based on real or imagined stimuli
	5.6 use visual art to communicate, including the creative expression of emotion
	5.7 work independently and/or collaboratively to produce a piece of art
	5.8 observe, appreciate and/or react to the work of self and others, including the work of famous local or global artists

Element	Students should be able to...
Music	**5.9** identify the source and direction of a sound
	5.10 listen and respond to a wide range of sounds and music (environmental, body percussion, vocal, instrumental, digital, technological, from a variety of traditions and cultures)
	5.11 respond to the elements of music (pitch, pulse, duration, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture, style, tempo)
	5.12 experiment with creating vocal sounds
	5.13 use parts of the body to make sounds by moving on/through a reactive environment[14]
	5.14 explore and use a variety of sound-making equipment
	5.15 participate in choosing and/or making appropriate sounds for stories, events and celebrations
	5.16 participate in group music-making activities
	5.17 create short pieces of music using relevant digital technologies
	5.18 link sounds to pictorial representations
	5.19 play an uncomplicated tune on a chosen instrument
Drama	**5.20** show an awareness of being part of an audience
	5.21 explore and react to props, costumes, actions and sensory stimuli in a dramatic context
	5.22 participate in the re/telling of contemporary/historical/cultural events or stories through interactive games and/or dramatic activities
	5.23 show an awareness of being part of an acting group
	5.24 co-operate or work alongside/in parallel with others in making, choosing and using props, costumes and sets
	5.25 work independently or collaboratively to produce a rehearsed piece of drama for an audience
	5.26 express and/or identify emotions in a dramatic context

[14] Reactive music adapts to a listener and their environment by using built-in sensors, e.g. camera, microphone, touch screen. In this way, listeners become part of the creative process.

PLU 6: Physical Education (PE)

Introduction

Physical exercise and movement improve concentration, mood, sleeping, and eating patterns. The ability to work as an individual, to develop personal skills and to work as a member of a team, are important aspects of PE. The usual considerations apply when teachers are planning their students' PE learning activities. Issues such as safety, as well as students' medical and physical needs all need to be taken into account. Recommendations from relevant professionals may need to be sought in choosing equipment and movement which are appropriate for the students' needs.

At the beginning and end of each PE session, warm-up and cool-down periods which are important for anyone about to engage in physical exercise can be especially beneficial in awakening the senses before the lesson begins and relaxing the student, both physically and mentally, before returning to the classroom or moving on to other learning activities. Along with the recommendations from the relevant professionals, advice about what is required for some students who need their limbs moved for them will be helpful. It is also important to note that the starting point for some students will be to tolerate the acoustics/smells/temperature of PE environments.

It is important that a positive attitude to a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Reflection on the amount of time students spend on physical activity, as well as on their dietary habits informs programmes that will provide the greatest benefits. Health-related physical activity that includes cardiovascular exercise where possible is vital to develop fitness levels, where it does not compromise underlying health conditions. Some students need motivation to engage in physical exercise. It is important that the reward offered is commensurate to the amount of effort required of the student.

The development of gross motor skills (the ability to control large muscles of the body for sitting, crawling, walking, running, and other activities) and fine motor skills (smaller actions such as grasping a ball, holding a bat, picking up a bean bag) are important because they underpin not only learning within the PE PLU but other Level 1 PLUs.

Fundamental movement skills (FMS) are the foundational movement patterns that involve various body parts. They can be broken down into three categories—locomotor skills (running, hopping, swimming); balance skills (keeping the body in one place but balancing in different ways); and object skills (kicking, throwing, pushing). FMS are developed as the student participates in the PE PLU.

Students following a JCL1LP should be given many opportunities to experience the fun, enjoyment and social aspects of physical exercise. In this area their sense of team and their participation as team members are desirable outcomes.

The PE PLU is made up of the following elements:

- Movement skills (athletics/gymnastics)
- Co-operative activity (games)
- Creative movement (dance)
- Aquatics.

A student will work on learning outcomes based on their strengths, interests and needs as indicated in their SSF. A student may achieve a learning outcome at any one of the eight progression pathways. Curriculum content from any curriculum area can be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Table 10: PE learning outcomes

Element	Students should be able to...
Movement skills	**6.1** move whole or some body parts (arms, head, track with eyes etc.) voluntarily
	6.2 move whole or some body parts to explore immediate environment
	6.3 move purposefully/with intent
	6.4 develop consistent movements to have an effect on equipment or in response to a stimulus
	6.5 refine gross motor skills, supported by equipment where appropriate
	6.6 refine fine motor skills, supported by equipment where appropriate
	6.7 move whole body or individual limbs in a range of directions and at different speeds[15]
	6.8 become aware of sensory signals as prompts for movement
	6.9 participate in activities which promote cardiovascular exercise and fitness
Co-operative activity (games)	**6.10** participate in physical activities in parallel with/alongside others
	6.11 engage in an activity requiring joint attention with one or more people
	6.12 explore equipment and/or elements of traditional and invented games or sports in circuit activities
	6.13 participate in games with one or more people
	6.14 show awareness of, or interest in, being part of a team
	6.15 support and/or play sports for enjoyment as a member of the community
Creative movement (dance)	**6.16** observe the movements of another and attempt to copy or imitate with sight of self in a mirror[16]
	6.17 move whole or parts of body creatively in response to stimuli
	6.18 develop awareness of pathways and directions of movement[17]
	6.19 link two or more movements to create a sequence of movements
	6.20 interact with another/others to create co-ordinated movements
	6.21 move with control/poise showing awareness of others and the environment
	6.22 express emotional response to stimuli through movement
Aquatics	**6.23** explore water in different situations and environments
	6.24 enter and exit a swimming pool safely
	6.25 tolerate and adjust to water moving over body
	6.26 explore the effects of water buoyancy on self/others and other objects/floatation devices
	6.27 move through water in different directions—forwards, backwards, sideways, jumping, using swimming strokes, etc.
	6.28 practise breath control—blowing and holding breath
	6.29 float on back and front in water
	6.30 move on the flat of the back through water

[15] In some instances this may include controlling the speed of a wheelchair.

[16] The ability to achieve this without sight of self is a later developmental step.

[17] In a straight line, around cones/markers in a zigzag direction, etc.

Section 4: Assessment and reporting

Assessment in education involves gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways. All assessment in junior cycle, formative or summative, moment-in-time or ongoing, State Examination Commission (SEC), NCCA or teacher-designed, should have as its primary purpose, the support of student learning. Research shows that the greatest benefits for students' learning occur when teachers provide effective feedback to students that helps them to understand how their learning can be improved.

That is why consideration of approaches to quality learning cannot be separated from consideration of assessment. Ongoing classroom assessment practices are of crucial importance in supporting student learning and promoting student achievement. Ongoing assessment involves practice that is both formative and summative. Schools use a range of assessment methods for formative or summative purposes which emphasise the interlinked and complementary nature of the assessment process at junior cycle. These assessment practices build on existing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
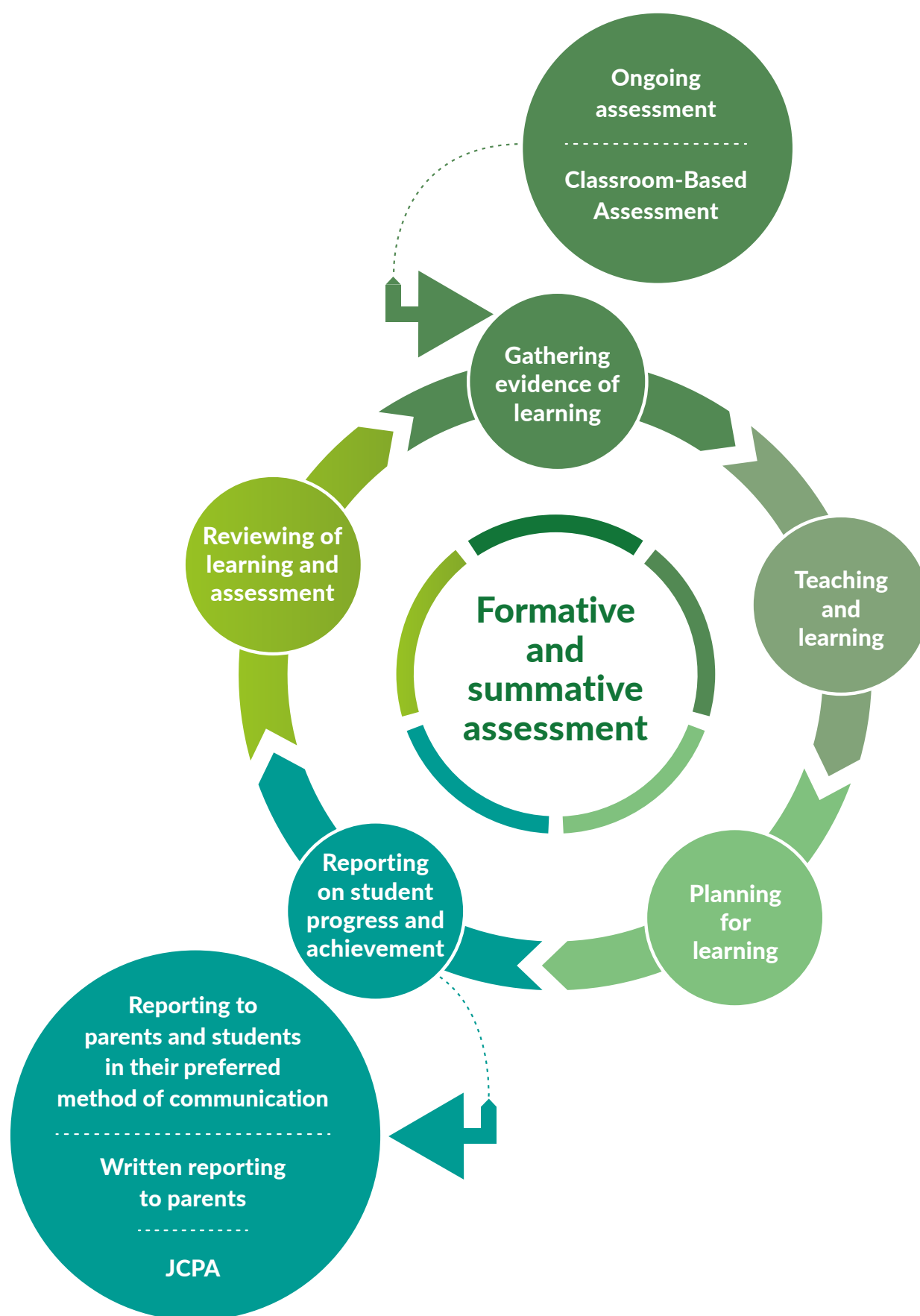
Most of the assessment activities over the three years of junior cycle are formative in nature. Teachers use the learning outcomes from PLUs or short course specifications as a starting point for planning a unit of learning and to develop learning intentions and success criteria to be shared and discussed with their students as appropriate.

These learning outcomes clearly set out what the students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities which they have undertaken during the course of junior cycle. As part of their daily practice, teachers continue to assess students' learning by observing and listening as students carry out tasks and by considering how they respond to questions.

Teachers use learning intentions and success criteria as the basis for providing feedback to help students plan their next steps in learning. Students are also encouraged to reflect on how they are progressing in their own learning and provide feedback to their teachers. In developing the capacity for self-management and self-awareness, students approach their learning more confidently and are better prepared to meet the challenges of life beyond school. To engage with assessment in the context of JCL1LPs and beyond and for more information on learning outcomes, learning intentions, success criteria and features of quality see the NCCA's **junior cycle 'Focus on Learning' supports**.

Figure 3 illustrates how formative and summative assessment are linked. It provides a guide for teachers on how they might plan for learning, teaching and assessment at junior cycle.

Figure 3: Using assessment to promote learning and supporting teaching

Ongoing assessment
Classroom-Based Assessment

Gathering evidence of learning

Reviewing of learning and assessment

Formative and summative assessment

Teaching and learning

Reporting on student progress and achievement

Planning for learning

Reporting to parents and students in their preferred method of communication

Written reporting to parents

JCPA

Assessment in JCL1LPs

Assessment is an intrinsic part of any learning programme as it promotes learning and supports teaching. Having established where the students are starting from, they are supported in coming to terms with the new learning in the PLUs. Then, by receiving regular feedback on their learning progress, students know when they are successful in learning and when they need further assistance to make progress. Gaps in learning are viewed as opportunities for providing good information on the student's current levels of understanding or misunderstanding. Assessment must be authentic, real and purposeful. Teachers can enable students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways appropriate to their learning and communication strengths. The assessment generated by JCL1LP Priority Learning Units is classroom-based. Over the three years in junior cycle, students assemble evidence of their learning in a portfolio. Students submit this portfolio to their teachers and the students' work is assessed and reported on.

Portfolio assessment

Portfolio assessment has been identified as an approach that is well-suited to the students who follow JCL1LPs and to the kinds of tasks involved in assessing work on PLUs. Portfolios provide students with concrete evidence of their progress and achievements, which they discuss, review and share with teachers, parents/guardians and peers as appropriate. This in turn enhances their self-esteem as active students. Portfolios can exist in hard copy and/or electronic form. An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of a student's work created using word processing and other multimedia presentations.

Examples of types of evidence of learning that might be included in the portfolio are:

- written work
- project work
- homework
- charts, diagrams, photographs
- audio or video recordings of the student's participation in an activity, event or achievement
- recordings of work in the arts.

Assessing evidence of learning in JCL1LPs

On completion of a learning programme, students are expected to present evidence that they have successfully been facilitated in accessing and achieving the elements and learning outcomes pursued. The evidence can be presented in any of the forms or media above. Features of Quality, which are the criteria through which the student's work is assessed, will accompany the evidence of learning. These set out what the evidence should include/convey to demonstrate that the student has successfully met the relevant learning outcome/s. An example of gathering evidence of assessment is set out on Table 11 in the Observation/Assessment Sheet.

Table 11: Junior Cycle Teacher Observation/Assessment Sheet

Student name:	Class:	Teacher:
_____	_____	_____

Junior Cycle Teacher Observation/Assessment Sheet

Learning outcomes in focus:	Where was the student working?
JCL1LP	**Community**
_____	_____

Code	Priority Learning Unit (PLU)	Communication, language and literacy
1.7	Element:	Developing communicative relationships
	Learning Outcome:	Engage in and enjoy a meaningful exchange with a communicative partner.

Code	Priority Learning Unit (PLU)	Communication, language and literacy
1.16	Element:	Exploring and using
	Learning Outcome:	Make a request non-verbally.

Code	Priority Learning Unit (PLU)	Communication, language and literacy
1.16	Element:	Exploring and using
	Learning Outcome:	Make a request non-verbally.

Code	Priority Learning Unit (PLU)	Numeracy
2.24	Element:	Measures and data
	Learning Outcome:	Participate in a shopping experience where real money is used functionally.

Background:

Sam is working within the 'Anticipation' stage of the progression continuum for this activity. He uses visual cues to communicate with others. He has practiced communicating his needs in school, and in the community. Sam likes having choices but needs time to decide. He enjoys being independent.

Assessment Activity: A trip to the shop.

Features of quality: *What do you want the students to do?*

To make a choice of product from a selection of 3 (crisps, ice-cream, apples) using PECS.

To give the visual card to an adult independently (teacher/shop assistant).

To get appropriate note from wallet to pay for chosen item.

Observations: *There is evidence of...*

Sam selected a photograph of a green apple when in the local shop from a choice of (Tayto cheese and onion, Brunch and green apple) which were pre prepared. He needed 3 verbal prompts to with a 1 minute pause between each before handing the card to the teacher. Sam was given his apple. He independently took out his money and gave €10 note to the teacher (He also had a €5 note in his wallet). He waited for change and went back to the bus independently.

Next steps:

Work on making requests to unfamiliar people.
Reduction in prompts and time.
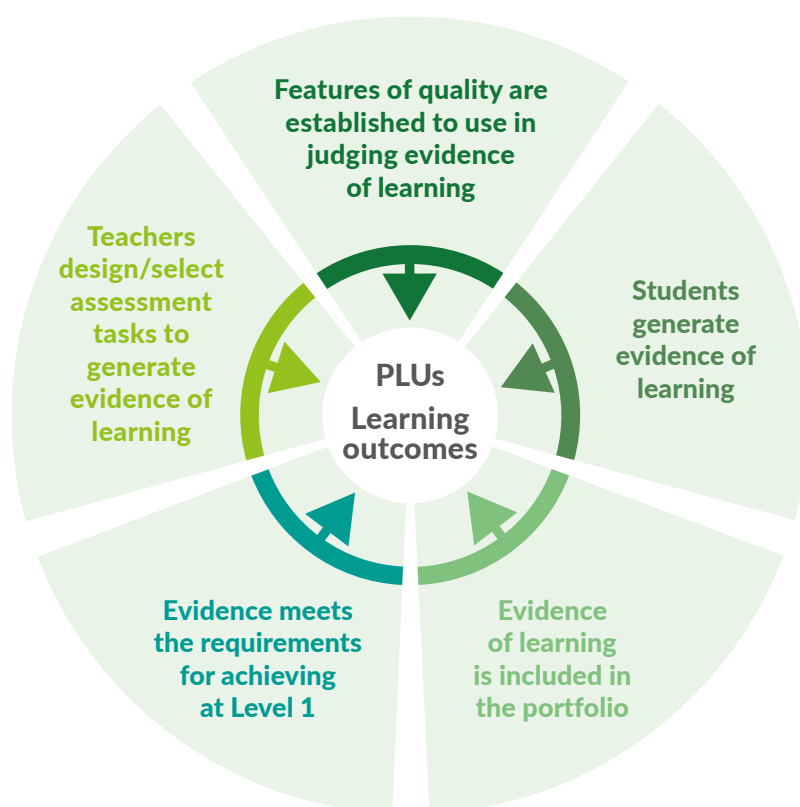Rounding up to a lower price to select appropriate note.

Assessment level (Junior Cycle level 1 only):

Tick Current working level	Progression continuum
	Attend
	Recognition
	Attention
	Acknowledgement
	Engagement
	Involvement
✓	Anticipation
	Action

Signed: _____

Evidence of learning can be generated through a wide range of assessment methods and in a variety of forms. The process through which evidence of learning is generated, gathered and judged is set out in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The process of generating, gathering and judging evidence of learning at Level 1

Sometimes evidence of learning can be captured by someone other than the teacher. It is helpful when others are able to help gather evidence of the student's learning even (and particularly) if it is demonstrated outside the classroom. This might include a parent/guardian, SNA or other relevant professional working with the student. Evidence of the learning observed can then be passed to the teacher.

School reporting

Effective reporting practice is sensitive to the self-esteem and general wellbeing of students while providing honest and constructive feedback. Schools have responsibility for ensuring that all students, including students who follow a JCL1LP, can make progress with their learning and that progress is reported appropriately. In the main, this is achieved through accessing a differentiated curriculum and, in the case of reporting, should feature progress made towards learning targets that have been identified and planned for by students, their parents/guardians, teachers and other relevant professionals involved. Schools may wish to consider how they identify the progress of all students, including those following a JCL1LP and are achieving at their own level. In reporting the progress and achievement of students, 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 students following a JCL1LP, 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 provides 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.

Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement

The evidence of learning gathered in the JCL1LP portfolio will be presented for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). The learning recognised in the JCPA will be broadly aligned with Level 1 of the NFQ. The JCPA will be issued by the school. Two curriculum components will feature in the award of the JCPA. They are the Priority Learning Units (PLUs) outlined earlier and short courses. As with PLUs, the content of short courses are aligned with the learning indicators at Level 1 of the NFQ. The fact that requirements for the JCPA focus on PLUs and Level 1 short courses does not mean that students are completely confined to learning at Level 1. Where it meets the strengths, interests and needs of the student involved, their school programme can also include curriculum components at other levels. For example, the student could take a PLU or short course at Level 2 and have their achievements at this level recognised as part of their JCPA also. An outline of the main features and requirements associated with a JCPA at Level 1 is presented in Table 12.
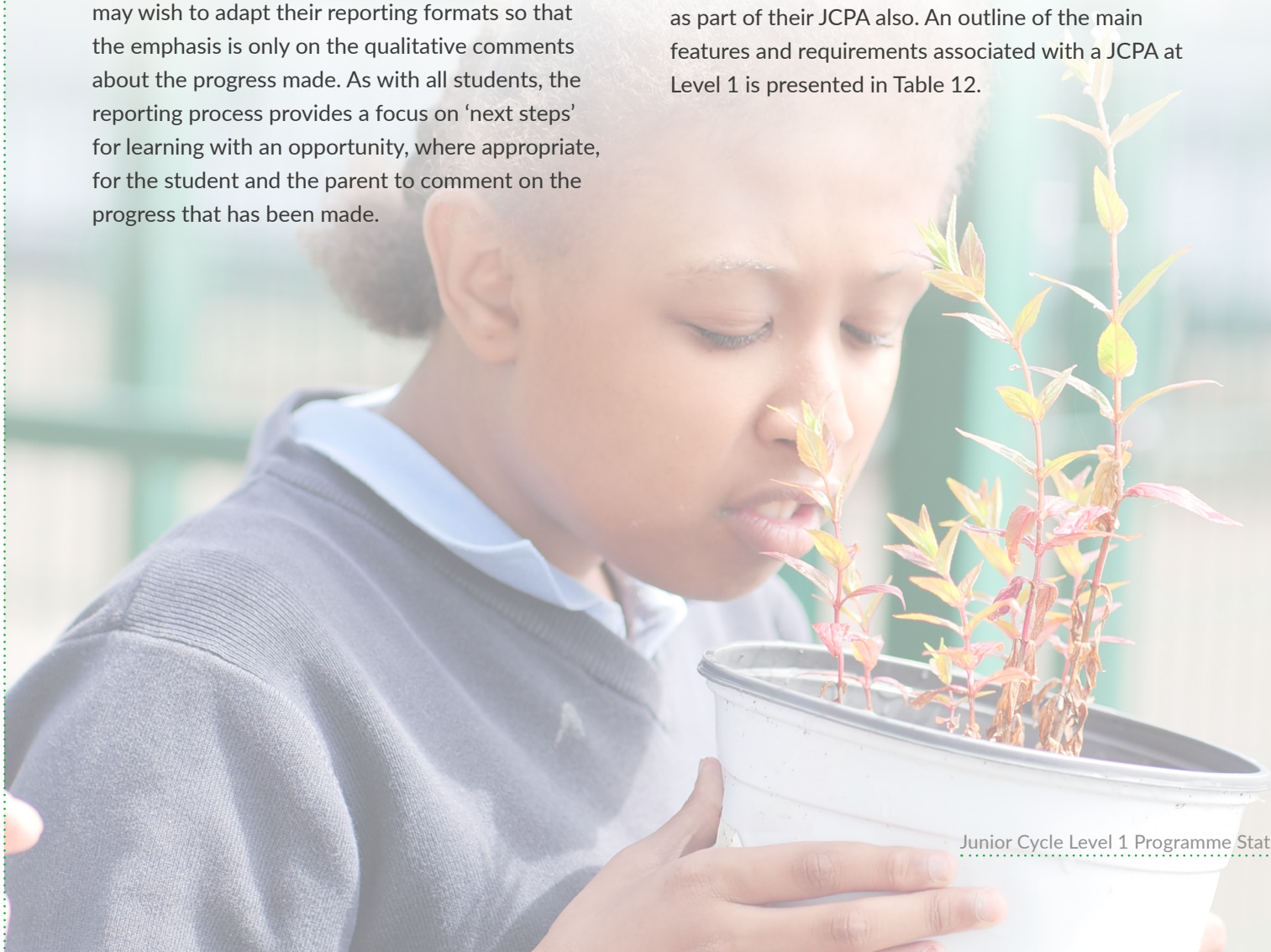
Table 12: Features and requirements of JCL1LPs for reporting through the JCPA

Key questions	

What components are included in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)?	1. **Priority Learning units**
	  • Communication, language and literacy
	  • Numeracy
	  • Personal care and wellbeing
	  • Being part of a community
	  • The arts
	  • Physical education
	
	2. **Two short courses**

What time should be allocated to the components on the school timetable?	The time required to achieve each PLU will be dependent on the student's strengths, interests and needs. A guide for teachers is approximately 250 hours for each PLU and 100 hours for each short course.
Who specifies the curriculum and assessment arrangements to be followed?	The NCCA has set out specifications and assessment arrangements for the PLUs in the *Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme Statement*. The NCCA provides **examples and templates** where the short courses are being developed by schools.
What role does the NCCA play in assessment?	The NCCA, through the Junior Cycle Level 1 Programme Statement and examples of work, provides schools with sample materials showing how to assess learning outcomes in PLUs. The NCCA, through **examples of Level 1 short courses**, will provide schools with sample materials on the assessment of short courses.
What role do schools play in assessment for the JCPA?	Assessment of PLUs and short courses and the awarding of the JCPA is school based. All students who have met the requirements for achievement outlined below in relation to PLUs and short courses have their learning recognised for each curriculum component in the JCPA.
How will the components be recorded in the JCPA?	Achievement in both PLUs and Short Courses (Level 1) is on the basis of one of the following descriptors: **Successfully Completed or Progress Achieved**.
What are the requirements related to each descriptor?	For **Successfully Completed** to be recorded on the JCPA for each PLU, the student must present evidence that indicates they have accessed all and achieved the majority of learning outcomes related to the PLU. For **Successfully Completed** to be recorded on the JCPA for each Level 1 short course, the student must present evidence that indicates they have successfully completed the Classroom-Based Assessment related to the short course. For **Progress Achieved** to be recorded on the JCPA for each PLU, the student must present evidence of learning that indicates the student has benefited from accessing some learning outcomes for that PLU. For **Progress Achieved** to be recorded on the JCPA for each Level 1 short course, the student must present evidence of learning that demonstrates the student has benefited from accessing some learning outcomes in the short course.

Appendix 1: Glossary of action verbs

This glossary is designed to clarify the learning outcomes of the Level 1 Learning Programme. Students can achieve learning outcomes at any of the progression pathways in a way that suits their individual learning profile. Appropriate levels of adult support for each task will be determined by the teacher, the student's family and other professionals according to the individual needs of each student.

Action verb	Within the context of their individualised learning programme, students should be able to...
Accept	tolerate/allow an interaction or experience.
Acknowledge	change behaviour in some way (gesture/eye gaze/vocalisation/speaking) to demonstrate an awareness of the presence of a person, object or stimulus.
Anticipate	demonstrate an awareness of/predict what will happen next.
Attend	direct attention (visual/tactile/auditory) to focus on a person, object or stimulus.
Awareness	demonstrate understanding of a concept (e.g. object permanence—look for hidden object) or indicate the knowledge of the existence of a person, object or stimulus.
Behave appropriately	act in a way that is expected in the surroundings/activity (e.g. sit with the class group at a table for snack while visiting a café). Teachers will determine what behaviour/role is appropriate for each student in different settings, considering their sensory, physical, emotional and learning strengths and needs.
Choose/Make choices	indicate a preference from given options using any text.
Communicate	adapt behaviour in a variety of ways including, but not limited to: vocalising, gesturing, moving eye gaze or use of text to convey a message.
Co-operate	work with/willingly accept support from an adult or peers for a specific purpose.
Create	be involved in the process of making something new.
Demonstrate	behave in such a way as to display an awareness, skill or understanding.
Differentiate	demonstrate an awareness of a difference between things/people (e.g. a student may behave differently when there is a new teacher in the room).
Discover	find/notice, something new, information about an object, stimulus, place or person.
Engage	become involved in a task/process (through looking, touching, smelling, listening or tasting).
Exhibit	clearly display a behaviour/response.
Experiment	trial or explore an activity/object in a variety of ways, with the potential of acquiring new learning.
Explore	use the senses (in terms of touch, taste, sound, sight etc) to inquire into an item/concept/activity. The student may make new discoveries during this process.
Express	convey a feeling, opinion or message through any text/reactive changes in behaviour.
Follow	adhere to rules/conventions specific to an environment or activity (e.g. slowing down from a run to a walking pace in a supermarket in response to the teacher giving the instruction verbally and showing a 'walking' symbol).
Gather	be involved in any way with the process of collecting items.

Handle	explore an item through touching/feeling it in some way. This may involve body parts other than the student's hands (e.g. feeling fur rubbed on their arm/cheek) if necessary to support the student's physical or sensory needs.
Identify	locate and/or specify who or what a person, object or stimulus is. This may be communicated using any text.
Illustrate	display/show a response or behaviour as outlined in the learning outcome.
Indicate	change behaviour in a way that identifies/communicates a response to an object, person, environment or stimulus using any text. This may or may not be intentional communication (e.g. crying in response to a loud noise).
Interact	experience having an effect and/or being affected by an exchange with another person.
Investigate	get to know more about an item, environment, person or stimulus through sensory exploration and examination (e.g. feeling/banging/listening to/smelling/squeezing).
Listen	focus auditory attention on the experience of sounds. Students may not always pay visual attention to the sound source.
Link	form an association between/connect two or more items, people, stimuli or actions.
Look	visually attend to something. Some students may use their peripheral vision/an alternative area in their visual field to attend to an item.
Match	indicate an awareness of/identify a connection between items with common or identical features, meaning or qualities.
Move	change position in space with or without support.
Observe	show an awareness of and adhere to rules or visually notice/attend to a person, activity or stimulus.
Participate	demonstrate any type of involvement in the learning activity.
Play	perform/take part in a process, game or activity.
Practise	repeatedly rehearse a skill or action. Students may show signs of improvement over a period of time.
Predict	indicate an awareness/knowledge of what will come next based on previous learning and experiences (e.g. when the teacher reaches into a bag of props at a certain point in a familiar story, the student reacts by grimacing and moving their face in anticipation of a water spray that is used at this point of the story).
Read	extract meaning from and demonstrate understanding of any form of text (e.g. looking at an object of reference for 'snack' then immediately turning head towards the snack cupboard expectantly).
Recall	show an awareness and recognition of past events (e.g. smiling when shown a video of an activity enjoyed that morning/identifying photographs of props used regularly to tell a familiar story).
Recognise	demonstrate understanding of/familiarity with a person, context, object or stimulus from previous experiences. The student may be able to use knowledge, gained from previous experiences, to identify a person, context, object or stimulus.
Request	use any text to express a desire or need (e.g. pressing a BIGmack[18] switch to request more bubbles to be blown).

[18] The BIGmack is a single-message communicator device designed to support communication or interactive activities.

Refine	clarify/improve a skill.
Respond	change behaviour in some way (movement/shift in eye gaze/respond verbally/communicate through text/demonstrate emotions etc) in reaction to something or someone.
Seek	search for/look out for something. This requires the student to focus their attention on the activity/task with intention and purpose.
Show	express awareness, understanding, knowledge or feelings through actions.
Tolerate	allow/accept an experience. The student may still appear hesitant or unsure due to the challenges they face during such an experience (e.g. being sensitive to sounds in a noisy room) but they will allow for the experience to occur, even for a brief period.
Use	apply sensory awareness/skills/learning to a practical setting for a given function.

Appendix 2: Glossary of JCL1LP terms

This glossary is intended to define and clarify terms within the JCL1LP Programme Statement.

Anatomical language	Anatomical language refers to the accepted terms used in the field of human anatomy for parts of the body.
And/or	When a learning outcome includes 'and/or' the student may attain 'Successful Completion' of this learning outcome when they achieve one or both stated outcomes at any level on the progression continuum. The teacher must determine which aspects of the learning outcome are most suitable for each student.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)	Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to a wide range of methods used to augment (add to) or act as an alternative to speech. These methods may be aided (using external tools) or unaided (no tools required). Examples of unaided systems include signing, facial expression and gesture. Aided communication systems may include, but are not limited to, objects of reference, communication boards, symbols, photographs and various forms of voice output technology.
Book-handling skills	Book-handling skills include those of holding the book using the correct orientation, opening the book, page turning and so on.
Cause and effect	Cause and effect refers to the understanding that there is a relationship between events or things, where one is the result of the other (e.g. turning on a light when going into a dark room).
Communicative partner	The communicative partner is an individual engaged in the act of communicating in a concentrated way with a student undertaking a JCL1LP. Communicating intentionally is a very large step for some students. Communicative partners learn to 'read' the signs in the student that s/he is learning to communicate at a level of progression on the continuum.
Element	Elements outline the specific areas for learning covered within each Priority Learning Unit (PLU). For example, PLU 5: The arts is comprised of three elements: Visual art, Music and Drama. Teachers include learning outcomes from all elements over the course of delivering the JCL1LP to ensure students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
Features of Quality	Features of Quality are the criteria which are used by the teacher to support a judgement about whether learning outcomes have been achieved or not.
Generalising learning	Generalising learning is the term used to describe the stage when a student can be observed transferring learning in a specific context to other, less familiar or unfamiliar situations.
Joint attention	Joint attention is a situation where the individuals involved in the communication act both focus on the same object. It is more than just looking at an object; the individuals understand that they are attending to the same thing. For some students, eye contact or visual attention can be a challenge. In this case, joint attention may be achieved through the use of alternative senses (smell, taste, touch or hearing) so long as the student demonstrates an understanding that the experience is shared and their partner is smelling/feeling/hearing or tasting the same thing.
Learning intentions	A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, that describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning and teaching activities.

Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills and attitudes students can demonstrate they have learned within each element of a PLU. Learning outcomes are not expected to be followed in a linear manner but in a way that best suits the student. The unconstrained nature of the learning outcomes ensure flexibility for adaptation so that they can be made specific to the individual student to reflect their strengths, interests and needs.
Mark making	Students begin their writing development by making marks. These can be made using body parts or a range of implements. Slowly the marks they make begin to have more meaning for them. This is an important step in learning to write.
Priority Learning Units (PLUs)	Priority Learning Units (PLUs) explicitly identify and develop the key areas of learning needed to prepare the students for their future lives. There are six PLUs in the JCL1LP: Communication, language and literacy; Numeracy; Personal care and wellbeing; Being part of a community; The arts; and Physical education. Each PLU is then broken down into elements and then further into learning outcomes.
Process-based teaching and learning	Process-based teaching and learning is a holistic approach to teaching and learning that places a focus on the process of the learning rather than individual outcome targets. The JCL1LPs places an emphasis on 'real-world' learning for students who are following the programme.
Self-regulation	Self-regulation can be defined as the ability to manage energy levels, emotions, attention and behaviour (NCSE, 2025). For more information on self-regulation, see the 'NCSE Relate' document.
Sensory signals	Sensory signals include any source of sensory stimulation/output that may or may not elicit a response (e.g. sounds, tastes, smells, textures or images /lights).
Short courses	It is envisaged that schools will have autonomy to develop units of learning specifically to meet their students' strengths, interests and needs. The themes will be appropriate to the chronological age of students and will reflect their interests. They will allow for cross-curricular learning and teaching and will have the learning outcomes of PLUs embedded in them.
Social conventions of privacy	Social conventions of privacy are societal 'norms' relating to behaviours, information and places which are considered private.
Social scripts	Social scripts describe the physical environment students will visit and details of what the excursion will involve. They are often written in the first person, e.g. 'When we climb the steps to the entrance I will be able to leave my bag in a room, where it will be safe until I get back'.
Specification	This term replaces the word 'syllabus'. A specification is an outline of the curriculum and assessment components of a subject or learning programme. Unlike a syllabus, learning outcomes are not content-driven but are statements that describe what understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.
Standardised objects of reference	Standardised objects of reference are concrete, three-dimensional objects that have been standardised in the student's life to communicate, e.g. using a wooden spoon to indicate that it is 'time for cooking'.
Stimulus/ Stimuli (plural)	A stimulus or stimuli can be defined as any object or event that may trigger a reaction of some sort. For example, a piece of music may trigger an emotional response, resulting in a student laughing.

Stories	Stories, in this context, are a connected series of events, invented or factual, that are recalled in sequence in any meaningful way. This may include picture books, sensory stories, massage stories, story trays, photo stories or the incorporation of any other items/approaches that are meaningful to the student.
Text	Throughout this Programme Statement, 'text' includes all products of language use: oral, gesture, sign, written, visual, electronic and digital.
Visual representations of items	Visual representations of items are picture systems which are used to standardise the student's communication. They are sometimes called augmentative communication systems. They are ONE form of augmentative communication systems.

Appendix 3: NFQ Indicators of Level 1 learning

An award at Level 1 reflects basic learning with well supported direction. Learning is developmental but may include knowledge, skill and competence related to particular fields of learning. For more information on NFQ indicators, please visit their **website**.

NFQ Level 1

KNOWLEDGE BREADTH	Elementary knowledge
KNOWLEDGE KIND	Demonstrable by recognition or recall
KNOW-HOW & SKILL RANGE	Demonstrate basic practical skills and carry out directed activity using basic tools
KNOW-HOW & SKILL SELECTIVITY	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable
COMPETENCE CONTEXT	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts
COMPETENCE ROLE	Act in a limited range of roles
COMPETENCE LEARNING TO LEARN	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources
COMPETENCE INSIGHT	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self

AWARD-TYPE DESCRIPTOR 'A'

Title	Level 1 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	1
Volume	Small
Knowledge - *breadth*	Elementary Knowledge
Knowledge - *kind*	Demonstrable by recognition or recall
Know-how and skill - *range*	Demonstrate basic practical skills, and carry out directed activity using basic tools
Know-how and skill - *selectivity*	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable
Competence - *context*	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts
Competence - *role*	Act in a limited range of roles
Competence - *learning to learn*	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources
Competence - *insight*	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to a Level 2 Certificate, or at a higher level if appropriate.
Articulation	

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