



Short Course

**A Personal Project:
Caring for Animals**

Level 2

Specification for Junior Cycle Short Course



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Level indicators for Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications

Short courses and Level 2 Learning Programmes

In the new junior cycle, students taking this short course should be following a personalised Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP) alongside other curriculum components (from Level 2 and possibly one or two from Level 3). The L2LPs are planned around a number of Priority Learning Units (PLUs) which focus on developing the personal, social and practical skills of students. In addition to the Priority Learning Units, students can study short courses with learning outcomes broadly aligned with the level indicators for Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1). A personal project: Caring for animals¹ is the first of these short courses that the NCCA has developed.

The target group of students for whom L2LPs and Level 2 short courses have been developed are typically students presenting with significant learning needs. Some of them will have had a formal assessment by an educational psychologist which will have placed them in the low-mild to high-moderate categories of learning disability and they will have had a personalised learning plan while in primary school. In this context, the L2LPs and short courses are designed for students who would benefit from opportunities to improve learning and skills in areas such as elementary literacy and numeracy, language and communication, mobility and leisure skills, motor co-ordination, and social and personal development. The L2LPs also offer the chance for students to improve the length of time they can concentrate on activities, along with their capacity to generalise and transfer knowledge and skills across situations, and to process information from more than one sensory channel

¹ In the remainder of the document, the course will be referred to simply as a personal project.

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.

Junior cycle allows students to make a strong 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 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 and enterprise. The student's junior cycle programme builds on their learning in primary school. It supports their further progress in learning. It helps students to develop the learning skills that can assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond school.

Rationale

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

Aim

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

Overview: Links

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages show how a personal project may be linked to central features of learning and teaching in junior cycle.

A personal project and statements of learning

Table 1: Links between a personal project and the statements of learning

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

A personal project and key skills and Priority Learning Units

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of junior cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The junior cycle curriculum focuses on eight key skills.

Figure 1: Key skills of junior cycle



There is an overlap between the learning in the PLUs with the key skills of junior cycle developed for all students.

Table 2 below lists the PLUs, some elements of those PLUs and the sorts of associated learning activities that will support students in achieving the learning outcomes and elements of the PLUs. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of the key skills of junior cycle into their classroom planning.

Table 2: Links between the Priority Learning Units (PLUs), elements of the PLUs and student learning activity

PLU	PLU element	Student learning activity
Communicating and literacy	Speaking/signing appropriately for a variety of purposes and demonstrating attentiveness as a listener	The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reads and/or listens to obtain information • reads social sight vocabulary/recognises symbols and signs related to dog control
Numeracy	Managing money Using a calculator	The student investigates the costs involved in looking after a dog and plans a budget for this. Through role-play and real-life shopping experiences the student learns to use a calculator in this context.
Personal care	Developing a healthy lifestyle	The student lists the benefits of having a dog, e.g. for exercise, for social reasons and/or mental wellbeing.
Living in a community	Seeking help and advice	The student researches the work of key professionals in the community who work with dogs and from whom they can seek help or advice. The student role-plays reporting an emergency situation by phone, verbally or by text.
Preparing for work	Being able to set goals for learning	In strand 1, the student sets learning goals for the short course, highlighting the areas to work on and develop. Achievements in meeting these goals are recorded by the student.

Overview: Course

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

Strand 1: Learning about dogs.

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

Strand 2: Caring for dogs.

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

Strand 3: The dog around the home.

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

Strand 4: The dog in the community.

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

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

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

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined below reflects the learning students undertake in this NCCA short course. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA-developed short course to suit their particular needs and school context, with the exception of the Classroom-Based Assessment, which all students taking this short course will complete. Schools may also develop their own short course(s) and related Classroom-Based Assessment. Guidelines for schools who wish to develop their own short courses are available at http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle_Short-Courses.

The learning outcomes in this short course are broadly aligned with the level indicators for Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1).

The course has been designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement.

Expectations for students

Expectations for students is an umbrella term that links learning outcomes with annotated examples of student work. For NCCA-developed short courses, in some cases examples of work associated with a specific learning outcome or with a group of learning outcomes will be available. Schools who design their own short courses may wish to create a bank of examples of student work for discussion and for future reference.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate having completed this junior cycle short course in a personal project. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students and represent outcomes for students at the end of their period of study (approximately 100 hours).

The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply any hierarchy of importance across the outcomes themselves.

Strand 1: Learning about dogs

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

² The student builds a profile of the dog chosen so that it becomes 'his/her dog'. Further learning in the course may be related to that dog.

Strand 2: Caring for dogs

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Food	2.1 label foods as healthy or unhealthy for dogs 2.2 draw comparisons with healthy food for humans 2.3 plan and design a menu for a healthy dog diet 2.4 compare prices of dog foods in local retailers 2.5 make edible treats for their 'own' dog
Grooming	2.6 list hygiene routines for dogs 2.7 compare the consequences of not following hygiene routines in humans and dogs 2.8 show evidence of learning following a visit to a specialist, such as a dog groomer or vet
Exercise	2.9 identify healthy exercise for dogs 2.10 make comparisons with the benefits of exercise for humans 2.11 explain how to exercise the dog safely 2.12 demonstrate good practice and awareness of safety when walking with a dog
Shelter	2.13 explain why dogs need shelter 2.14 draw comparisons with humans needing shelter 2.15 research different types of shelter for the dog
Reflection and transfer	2.16 reflect on what has been learned in this strand 2.17 design and make something for their 'own' dog to use as shelter, warmth, comfort or fun

Strand 3: The dog around the home

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Health and hygiene	3.1 outline the possible health risks for humans in having a dog in the home 3.2 identify essential personal care practices that need to be carried out when there is a dog in the home
Costs associated with keeping a dog	3.3 calculate the cost of keeping a dog for a day/week and/or month/year using a calculator 3.4 gather evidence of some of these costs through visits in the community and/or online shopping 3.5 explain shopping receipts, reasoning (if appropriate) for the difference between luxury and essential goods
Dangers around the home	3.6 list possible dangers for a dog in the home environment 3.7 make a checklist of good practice for keeping a dog safe in the home 3.8 identify people, groups or organisations that could help in emergency situations 3.9 role-play making a call to or texting the emergency services to report an incident involving a dog
Reflection and transfer	3.10 reflect on what has been learned in this strand and apply it in a real or imaginary context to their 'own' dog

Strand 4: The dog in the community

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Owner responsibilities	4.1 list the responsibilities associated with owning a dog 4.2 show understanding towards people who are afraid of dogs 4.3 name the relevant agencies that offer support and advice to dog owners 4.4 explain what to do if confronted by an angry dog
Places and events associated with dogs	4.5 recognise the need to check if dogs are allowed in certain areas 4.6 identify places and events associated specifically with dogs 4.7 make a visit to at least one of these places or events
Dogs that help us	4.8 name the ways that dogs can help us in the community 4.9 interview someone who works with or has a dog that helps them 4.10 demonstrate an awareness of how dogs can assist people towards independence
Reflection and transfer	4.11 reflect on what has been learned in this strand and apply it in a real or imaginary context to their 'own' dog

Assessment and reporting

Essentially, the purpose of assessment and reporting at this stage of education is to support learning. This short course supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. Some learning outcomes lend themselves to once-off assessment, others to assessment on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as discussing, explaining, presenting, planning, taking action and, at an appropriate level, finding out information. In these contexts, students with their teachers and peers reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work (according to their ability). They plan the next steps in their learning, based on feedback they give and receive. Ongoing assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this short course.

It is envisaged that students will provide evidence of their learning in a variety of ways including digital media, audio recordings and written pieces.

Assessment is most effective when it moves beyond marks and grades and reporting focuses not just on how the student has done in the past but on the next steps for further learning. Student progress and achievement in short courses, both in ongoing assessments and in the specific Classroom-Based Assessment relating to this short course will be communicated to parents in interim reporting and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). To support teachers and schools, an Assessment Toolkit is available online. The Assessment Toolkit will include learning, teaching, assessment and reporting support material.

Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-Based Assessments are the occasions when the teacher assesses the students in the specific assessment(s) that are set out in the subject or short course specification. Junior cycle short courses will have one Classroom-Based Assessment.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Presentation

This Classroom-Based Assessment is the culmination of the work undertaken in the four strands of the personal project short course. The Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after work in the four strands has been completed.

The presentation completed for the Classroom-Based Assessment is on an aspect of the short course which is of interest to the student. It provides an opportunity for the student to 'show what they know' using a format of their choice. It may require collaboration with others to research, find information, plan and organise what to say and how to say it. It builds confidence and encourages social interaction with others. It may also provide an opportunity to demonstrate skills in working with digital technology. The title is open to wide interpretation. The Classroom-Based Assessment can include any format – conversation, interview, role-play, spoken, signed or electronic which allows learning to be presented by the student. The choice of format is determined by the potential it has to draw attention to the student's finest achievements in relation to knowledge or concepts learned and skills developed.

Features of quality

The features of quality support student and teacher judgement of the Classroom-Based Assessment and are the criteria that will be used by teachers to assess students' Classroom-Based Assessments.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this junior cycle short course, including features of quality and details of the practical arrangements related to assessment of this Classroom-Based Assessment, will be available in separate assessment guidelines for a personal project. The guidelines will include, for example, the suggested length and formats for the presentation and support in using 'on balance' judgement in relation to the features of quality.

Inclusive assessment

Inclusive assessment practices, whether as part of ongoing assessment or the Classroom-Based Assessments, are a key feature of teaching and learning in schools. Accommodations, e.g. the support provided by a special needs assistant or the support of assistive technologies, should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the year.

Where a school judges that a student has a specific physical or learning difficulty, reasonable accommodations may be put in place to remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the student's performance in the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Accommodations which enable all students to access curriculum and assessment are based on specific needs. For example, a student who cannot physically type may use free dictation software to complete ongoing assessments and the Classroom-Based Assessment. Equally, a student who cannot speak may sign/draw/write/type/create visuals and subtitles to present and communicate ideas. A student with a specific learning difficulty may benefit from having learning tasks and activities presented in a different way. Comprehensive guidelines on inclusion in post-primary schools are available [here](#) and guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities are available [here](#).

Appendix 1:

Level indicators for Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, Level 2 certification and awards involve basic learning with well-supported direction. The range of knowledge is usually narrow. Learning is developmental but may include knowledge, skills and competence related to particular fields of learning, e.g. aspects of literacy and numeracy and learning within familiar contexts.

NFQ Level	2
Knowledge <i>Breadth</i>	Knowledge that is narrow in range
Knowledge <i>Kind</i>	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension
Know-how and skill <i>Range</i>	Demonstrate limited range of basic, practical skills, including the use of relevant tools
Know-how and skill <i>Selectivity</i>	Perform a sequence of tasks given clear direction
Competence <i>Context</i>	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts
Competence <i>Role</i>	Act in a range of roles, under direction
Competence <i>Learning to learn</i>	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment
Competence <i>Insight</i>	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self



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