Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) short course

Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment (for use with the 2016 short course only)

Contents

Introduction

This document, *Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) short course: Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment*, provides:

- General information on Classroom-Based Assessments

- Detail of the nature and scope of the Classroom-Based Assessment described in the 2016 specification for the Junior Cycle SPHE short course.

- The Features of Quality used to describe the level of achievement in the Classroom-Based Assessment

- Guidelines for schools, teachers and students on completing the Classroom-Based Assessment

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the 2016 specification for the Junior Cycle SPHE short course and the NCCA's online assessment support materials for junior cycle.

All documentation can be accessed at www.curriculumonline.ie. An outline of assessment in Junior Cycle can be found in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015, which can be accessed at https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf.

Classroom-Based Assessments: General Information

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific task(s) set out in the NCCA short course specification or in the school developed short course specification. The tasks are described and the Features of Quality, which support teacher judgement, are set out in these guidelines.

Although the assessment is similar to the ongoing assessment that occurs every day in class, in the case of classroom-based assessment the teacher's judgement is used in the school's reporting to parents and students and may also be recorded for subject learning and assessment review meetings. Students prepare for the Classroom-Based Assessment over a suggested period of time in second or third year. The results of other projects, homework or tests undertaken by the students in the course of their normal classwork do not add up to the award of a descriptor for the Classroom-Based Assessment.

Deciding on the level of achievement

There are four level descriptors of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment: *Exceptional, Above expectations, In line with expectations,* and *Yet to meet expectations.* All work submitted is judged to fit one of these four descriptors.

Teachers use the Features of Quality, set out in these guidelines (p14), to decide the level of achievement in each Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality are the criteria that will be used to assess the student work as best fitting one of the following Descriptors:

Exceptional describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment to a very high standard. While not necessarily perfect, the strengths of the work far outstrip its flaws, which are minor. Suggestions for improvement are easily addressable by the student.

Above expectations describes a piece of work that reflects the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment very well. The student shows a clear understanding of how to complete each area of the task. Feedback from the teacher might point to the necessity to address some aspect of the work in need of further attention or polishing, but on the whole the work is of a high standard.

In line with expectations describes a piece of work that reflects most of the Features of Quality for the Classroom-Based Assessment well. It shows a good understanding of the task in hand and is free from significant error. Feedback might point to areas needing further attention or correction, but the work is generally competent and accurate.

Yet to meet expectations describes a piece of work that falls someway short of the demands of the Classroom-Based Assessment and its associated Features of Quality. Perhaps the student has made a good attempt, but the task has not been grasped clearly or is marred by significant lapses. Feedback will draw attention to fundamental shortcomings that need to be addressed.

When using the Features of Quality to assess the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment, teachers use 'on-balance' judgement. The teacher should read the Features of Quality (starting with *Yet to meet expectation*) until they reach a descriptor that best describes the work being assessed. Where it is not clearly evident which quality descriptor should apply, teachers must come to judgment, based on the evidence from the student's work, to select the descriptor that best

matches the student's work overall. This 'best fit' approach allows teachers to select the descriptor that 'on balance' describes the work being assessed.

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

Time for Classroom-Based Assessments

Classroom-Based Assessment is included within the time allocated for short courses, which is approximately 100 hours. This Classroom-Based Assessment is the culmination of the work undertaken in at least two strands of the SPHE short course. However, the Classroom-Based Assessment should begin after work in at least three strands has been completed. It is envisaged that preparation for and completion of this Classroom-Based Assessment takes place over approximately 6 hours of class time. Whilst the timing of Classroom-Based Assessment in short courses may vary from school to school, Classroom-Based assessments for reporting purposes in the JCPA cannot be conducted in first year.

The autonomy of the school in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment

These guidelines set out a range of options for the Classroom-Based Assessment so that it can suit the particular needs and circumstances of students and the school. Students and teachers have a choice of topics and formats when undertaking the Classroom-Based Assessment. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA short course to suit their particular interests, needs and school context. If adapting the course, schools may also need to adapt the Classroom-Based Assessment, so that it reflects the learning their students undertook. Schools may also develop their own short course(s) and related Classroom-Based Assessment. Guidelines for schools who wish to develop their own short course(s) are available [here](#).

How the school supports the completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment

The school supports the completion of the assessments by

- ensuring that the NCCA Specification and Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment are provided to teachers

- supporting teachers in recording the level Descriptors awarded to each student

- retaining records and pieces of work, as appropriate, for the purposes of Subject Learning and Assessment Review

- applying the guidelines for Subject Learning and Assessment Review

- applying inclusive assessment practices and ensuring accessibility of assessment for all students

- reporting the outcomes of Classroom-Based Assessments to students and their parents/guardians as part of the school's reporting procedures and through the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

To facilitate providing feedback to students during their engagement with assessment, the process of completing the Classroom-Based Assessments should be viewed as part of teaching and learning, and not solely for assessment purposes. It is envisaged that teachers will guide, support and supervise throughout the process.

Support may include

- clarifying the requirements of the Classroom-Based Assessment

- using annotated examples of student work to clarify the meaning and interpretation of the Features of Quality to students

- providing instructions at strategic intervals to facilitate the timely completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment

- providing supports for students with special educational needs (SEN).

Note that only work which is the student's own can be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

Classroom-Based Assessment in SPHE (short course)

Assessment in SPHE will be classroom-based. There is one Classroom-Based Assessment, which can be undertaken in second or third year, depending on how the short course is timetabled. It is important to note that work completed in year one of Junior Cycle cannot be included for reporting in the JCPA.

Project and reflection

Each Classroom-Based Assessment includes an SPHE project and an individual reflection. The project can be based on any topic related to the course and should draw upon learning from at least two strands of the SPHE short course. By drawing on their learning in at least two strands, students can make important connections between the different aspects of their personal, social and health wellbeing, e.g. *Making decisions about substance use and its relationship to mental health, Reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy and how it can support young people who experience relationship difficulties.* Sample Classroom-Based Assessments are included in APPENDIX 1.

The learning outcomes assessed through the final project will, to an extent, depend on the topic chosen and the format in which the project is presented. Some that may be particularly relevant are:

Classroom-Based Assessment: Project and Reflection
1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 3.2, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9, 3.11, 4.1, 4.4, 4.13.

Students should be encouraged to choose the most suitable format in which to complete the project; written, digital, visual or audio formats. Students complete the project in pairs or small groups. The student's individual role or contribution to the work will be the focus of the assessment. Work which cannot be authenticated by the teacher cannot be accepted for assessment in the JCPA.

Guidelines for completion of the Classroom-Based Assessment:

Assessment in SPHE is directly related to the aim of the short course. As students learn in SPHE, as a class group, or in small groups, the students in consultation with their teacher identify a worthwhile and meaningful project which provides evidence of learning from at least two of the four strands.

To support this process, as students learn in a particular strand, it would useful to take note of particular areas of interest or questions that arise for the students as they progress through the strand. Having completed one or more strands, these notes can be re-visited in an effort to identify a possible

project for Classroom-Based Assessment. Small groups of students could then be asked to scope out one of these proposals in greater depth, making a case to the class as to why this might be a worthwhile project to pursue and how it relates to learning in two or more of the strands in the short course.

The project should be completed with a partner or group. It is recommended that a group ought not to comprise more than three students to help ensure that every student can contribute to the process. Working with others is central to learning in SPHE as it provides opportunities for students to discuss their learning about social, personal and health issues helping to ensure that students are enabled to tease out the important learning for themselves.

At this point, it would be important to decide whether the entire class will complete the same project for their Classroom-Based Assessment (working in separate small groups) or if it will possible to support a range of different projects. Whilst students may work in pairs/groups, the student's individual role and contribution to the work will be the focus of this classroom-based assessment

Students can be encouraged to draw on a wide range of resources in completing their project. They can be guided in identifying and critiquing health information which is reliable and age appropriate. They can be directed towards policies and guidelines either within the school or at local and/or national level that are relevant to the project. They can also learn about any local initiatives relevant to the project.

Each project should include:
- evidence of a wide range of reliable background information about the topic including its relevance and importance to young people

- awareness of audience where this is relevant to the project, e.g. an information pamphlet for parents.

It is envisaged that it will take students approximately six hours to complete the project but this may vary from school to school. In responding to the project, it is important to highlight the importance of a creative and original interpretation of the project. Sample projects are set out in Appendix I. The list of sample projects should not be seen as definitive but rather as guidance for the kinds of projects that students might undertake in the Classroom-Based Assessment. Students should be encouraged to choose the most suitable format in which to complete the project; written, digital, visual or audio formats. The features of quality can be used to support conversations with students about the quality of their project.

Reflection

Having completed the project, students are required to complete an **individual** reflection. The reflection should include

- an explanation about how they, individually and collectively, completed the project

- a commentary about their learning from the project and if and how it has influenced their attitudes, values, opinions and behaviours

- insights about the importance of the topic for young people's health and wellbeing.

In SPHE, one of the most important skills that students develop is their capacity to reflect on their learning in the different strands and its meaning for them in their personal and social lives. The ability to reflect can be developed over time as students are encouraged to reflect regularly as part of their learning in SPHE. Quality reflections can be encouraged by sharing and discussing the feature of quality pertaining to reflection with students.

It is important to provide different ways of reflecting to ensure that students do not become weary of the process but are energised and enthused by it and see its value. Students can submit their reflections in a variety of formats including written, audio and video formats. A sample reflection template is set out in Appendix 2.

The first three statements in the Features of Quality relate to the project. The final statement relates to the reflection. For example, in the Features of Quality for Exceptional -

Exceptional
- The project reflects excellent use of background information.

- It demonstrates an excellent level of creativity and original interpretation of the material.

- It shows excellent awareness of audience, where this is relevant to the project

- There is substantial evidence of meaningful reflection on their learning.

In the first instance, the teacher decides what descriptor to award the student for their project. The teacher then considers the quality of the individual student's reflection in making a decision about the final descriptor for the student's Classroom-Based Assessment.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Advice for students

- Choose a project that you are interested in learning more about. If you are doing a group project, try to ensure that each member of the group is interested and cares about the topic being addressed.

- Keep a record of the topics that interest you as you learn in the different strands of the SPHE short course. Look out for images, videos, written materials that will help you to learn more about this topic(s). These will also help you to make your projects more interesting.

- Your project will focus on learning in at least two strands of the SPHE short course. It is a good idea to begin by making links between topics in the different strands. This will help you to choose a really worthwhile project.

- When your teacher is helping you and your classmates to decide on a project for your Classroom-Based Assessment, use information you have gathered already and research further to help you encourage your group/class to consider doing the project that you think is worthwhile.

- Once the focus of the project has been decided, identify sources of reliable information with your teacher.   Divide the project tasks out between the group in such a way that everybody can work to their strengths.

- Use your creativity in both capturing and presenting your project. You can complete your project as a document, a presentation, a video and/or through images.

- Your teacher will support you in planning and completing your project for the SPHE Classroom-Based Assessment. The Features of Quality will be used to provide you with feedback about what you are doing well and what you can do to improve.

- Keep notes on what you learning as you complete the project in your personal journal. These notes will help you complete a quality reflection about your learning in the project.

Features of Quality: SPHE Project and Reflection
Exceptional The project reflects excellent use of background information. It demonstrates an excellent level of creativity and original interpretation of the material. It shows excellent awareness of audience, where this is relevant to the project. There is substantial evidence of meaningful reflection on their learning.
Above expectations The project reflects very clear use of background information. It demonstrates a very high level of creativity and original interpretation of the material. It shows a clear awareness of audience, where this is relevant to the project. There is strong evidence of meaningful reflection on their learning.
In line with expectations The project reflects satisfactory use of background information. It demonstrates a satisfactory level of creativity in the design of the project. It shows satisfactory awareness of audience, where this is relevant to the project. There is good evidence of reflection on their learning.
Yet to meet expectations The project reflects a limited understanding of the background information. Creativity or an ability to interpret the material in the design of the project is missing. It lacks an awareness of audience, where this is relevant to the project. There is little evidence of reflection on their learning.

These Features of Quality will be applied to authentic examples of student work. Arising from this process

- adjustments may be made to the Features of Quality
- amended Features of Quality, where necessary, will be published in the assessment guidelines and
- annotated examples of student work will be published on www.curriculumonline.ie

Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings

Shared understanding of standards within junior cycle short courses will arise through professional discussion in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings. Teachers gather examples of student work and compare their judgements with other colleagues. Over time, this process will help develop a greater understanding of standards and ensure consistency of judgement about student performance.

Sample CBAs by students will be gathered for discussion at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. In preparation for the meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of students' work for each descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting. Any audio or audio-visual recording device, such as a tablet, mobile phone, laptop or video camera, available in the school can be used for this purpose. School rather than personal devices should be used. The recording should take place with cognisance of child protection guidelines and in line with the school's acceptable use and data protection policies. (This only applies to situations where students will be recorded.)

Where there is a single teacher of a short course in a school, where feasible, the teacher will participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting with another school. The potential of ICT to support such meetings will be explored.

Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review each individual teacher re-considers the judgement they had made of their student's work, based on the outcomes of the meeting, and where necessary makes the appropriate adjustments to the level of achievement awarded to the work. The Descriptors awarded are used in reporting progress and achievement to parents and students as part of the school's reporting procedures and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

Further details on managing and participating in Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings can be accessed at https://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings.

Using feedback

Providing effective feedback is a crucial step to support learning. Students will be informed of the Descriptor they have been awarded once the review meeting has taken place and its outcomes have been processed. However, effective feedback goes beyond the naming of the Descriptor awarded. Feedback on the strengths of the student's work, and on areas for improvement can be used to support their future learning. Further information on the use of feedback can be found at Focus on Learning | NCCA.

Appendix 1: Sample Projects

Overall, the SPHE project should focus on evidence of learning in at least two of the four strands of the SPHE short course. The following sample projects illustrate how this might be achieved.

Related strands and learning outcomes	Project
Strand 1 1.5 Identify short, medium and long-term personal goals and ways in which these might be achieved 1.6 Apply decision making skills in a variety of situations 1.7 Source appropriate and reliable information about health and wellbeing **Strand 2** 2.1 Evaluate how diet, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to self-confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing 2.6 Reflect on the personal, social and legal consequences on their own and others' drug use 2.7 Critique information and supports available for young people for young people in relation to substance use	Design a resource for your peers called 'Aid to Decision Making'
Strand 1 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.9 **Strand 2** 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9,2.9, 2.10 **Strand 3** 3.2, 3.3, 3.8, 3.9 **Strand 4** 4.1, 4.2, 4.8, 4.9	Contribute to an advertising campaign on 'Adolescence – the age of opportunity'
Strand 2 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 **Strand 4** 4.7, 4.8, 4.9	Design a media campaign about the consequences of alcohol and tobacco use and where and how to get help for drug-related problems

Appendix 2: Reflection Template

Students complete an individual reflection on their SPHE project. Reflections may be completed in oral or written form.

Sample stem sentences...
In this project, I/we were asked to...

In completing this project, the best sources of information were…..because…

My particular contribution to the project was…
By doing this project I learned the following about this topic in SPHE…

Completing this project has influenced my thinking/behaviour/attitudes in the following ways -

I think that this learning is important for young people because…

Sample reflection template

Strand   Topic
Outline of the project
How I/we completed the project
Important information sourced and how I/we made decisions about what to include
My role in the project and what I did well
What my group did well
What I might do differently next time
Challenges/obstacles encountered
This project is important for young people because…
How would I apply what I have learnt in my own life?