

St Joseph's College Garbally Assessment and Attainment Policy

"Learning together for a better future."

Approved by:	
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MISSION STATEMENT

Ours is a Catholic boy's school which aims to provide a holistic education for our students, enabling them to acquire the life skills necessary to live fulfilled lives. The qualities of respect, justice, and compassion, which are rooted in Gospel values, should permeate all school policies. We believe that promoting healthy relationships and a spirit of collaboration within the school itself and with the wider community, are the best means of ensuring a good school. We recognise that each pupil entrusted to us is unique and has different gifts as well as diverse needs. Garbally College, Ballinasloe does not discriminate against its students on grounds of religion, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status membership of any minority or other group or organisation or on any grounds whatsoever.

1. Introduction

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. The term "Assessment" refers to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths, and learning needs. Assessment is an integral part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

- To monitor a student's progress and to provide the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and adapt his or her teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
- To provide the students and parents with feedback regarding progress.
- To establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects which will in turn assist in determining their suitability to study that subject.
- To assess a student's eligibility for additional support through our Additional Educational Needs Department, AEN, and to inform consultations with the National Educational Psychological Service, (NEPS), psychologist where necessary though not under obligation.
- To assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for further assessment or direct intervention.

Rationale for Assessment:

Rationale - Why Assess?

Assessment is part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

1. Assessments enable the teacher to monitor a student's progress and make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in advancing the student's learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessments help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate in collaboration with student, guardian/parents.
3. Assessments help identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
4. Assessments assist school management in identifying students, subjects, classes, and areas of the curriculum that require further timetabled support.
5. Assessments play a key role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.
6. Monitor a student's progress and to provide the teacher with information about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and to adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.
7. Provide the student and his parents with information regarding his progress.
8. Establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects
9. Assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention, though not under obligation.
10. Teach students to assess their own work.

2. Forms of Assessment

There are two main forms of assessment – Formative and Summative.

2.1 Formative Assessment

Formative assessment involves a range of formal and informal assessment procedures and strategies carried out by teachers during the learning process to:

- 2.1.1 Make necessary modifications to their teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.
- 2.1.2 Provide students, teachers, and parents with feedback about students' understanding of what they have learnt.

In our formative assessments through Assessment for Learning, (AFL), we provide important and useful feedback to students on how to improve their learning. Assessment For Learning, AFL, is designed to improve students' performance and create effective feedback. The main aim here is to close the gap between the learners current learning and where they need to be for their summative assessment. Examples of AFL strategies are, Traffic Lights and Bar charts, tracking students' performance. Students ask themselves, what have I learnt? What have I found difficult? What do I want to know now? The key principles underlying this approach are:

- 2.1.3 Sharing learning goals and objectives with the student
- 2.1.4 Helping students to recognise the standards they are aiming at.
- 2.1.5 Involving students in assessing their own learning.
- 2.1.6 Providing feedback which helps students to recognise what they must do to close any gaps in their knowledge or understanding.
- 2.1.7 Communicating confidence that every student can improve.
- 2.1.8 Adjusting teaching to take account of assessment.
- 2.1.9 Using differentiated classroom strategies to support various levels of learning abilities.

Homework is an essential element in the assessment process. Teachers are encouraged to set regular and appropriate levels of homework to all their classes following each lesson. The school homework policy is used to guide teachers in this area of teaching and learning.

Assessment work should be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of individual students.

Classroom-Based Assessments in subjects (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They will be used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA.

Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, one in second year and one in third year depending on the subject involved. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level.

• Informal Assessment

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature, and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who will use them constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in this process. Where appropriate, teachers will keep records of these assessments to provide an insight into a students' progress and to fully inform them regarding the learning process. Informal Assessments methods include –

Worksheets & written classwork
Questions and answers in class
Essays, projects & assignments
Reading & writing in Class
Sample exam questions
Homework – written or learned.
Presentations

A student's progress is assessed in class using our Traffic Light System.

Green: I understand.

Orange: I need a little help.

Red: I am having trouble.

The aim of the Traffic Light Strategy is to help the teacher and the student to assess how much a student understands and to measure their learning. The Traffic Light strategy helps students to take responsibility for their own learning. These traffic lights are printed in the school journal. The Student Journal is also an excellent way to track progress using Bar Charts.

3.3 Assessment Task

An Assessment Task is a written task completed by students during class time. The written Assessment Task for each subject will be specified and published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, (NCCA). It will relate to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. Students must complete their second CBA to undertake the associated Assessment Task.

The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher in accordance with a timeframe and guidance from the NCCA. The Assessment Task will be returned to the State Examinations Commission, (SEC), for marking and will be marked as part of the Final Examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the calculation of the grade for that subject by the SEC.

The value to be assigned to the Assessment Task will be included in the assessment guidelines for each subject. A separate Assessment Task will not be required in those practical subjects where the second CBA will continue to be assessed by the SEC (Art, Craft and Design, Music, and the Technology subjects – MTW and T.G).

Subjects in Junior Cycle with new specifications will be assessed through:

Two Classroom Based Assessments (one in second year and one in third year depending on the subject involved) reported on to parents/guardians by the school on our Vs Ware

Circular 0055/2019 Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school year 2019/20.

This Circular sets out arrangements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. When assessing the level of student achievement in a Classroom-Based Assessment against the learning outcomes, teachers will use professional judgement in relation to the Features of Quality, which are set out in four level descriptors:

Classroom Based Assessment Descriptors

Exceptional

Above Expectations

In Line with Expectations

Yet to Meet Expectations

- An Assessment Task (marked by the SEC) in each subject.
- A Final Examination set, held and marked by the SEC.

The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination will generate a final grade, certified by the SEC.

3. Summative Assessment

Traditional summative assessment takes place at the end of a unit or period of learning. The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. Examples of summative assessments include end of term examinations and submission of project work or assignments. Summative assessments can also take the form of an average grade from several continuous assessments over a period or over the course of an instructional unit. To facilitate tracking of student's attainment over the academic year, teachers are required to record multiple summative grades for each student based on either of the above means and record them on VShare.

Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests
House Examinations
Mock Examinations Aural/Oral Tests
Aptitude Tests
Leaving and Junior Certificate Examinations
Cognitive Ability Test, CAT 4

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. It aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner.

- All students undertake in-house exams in November, February, and May.
- Third- and sixth-year students undertake 'Mock' exams in the week before the midterm, in the second term. Examination papers are usually sourced and marked externally. The companies who supply and mark independently created examination papers are introducing online marking and online result delivery. Students and teachers will now be able to access and view the corrected scripts online. The return of scripts will depend on whether the exam was marked online or in person. If marked online hardcopy scripts can no longer be returned.
- The total number of days required for Leaving Cert mock exams will be kept under review to protect tuition time.
- All Summative Assessments are coordinated by the Assistant Principal with responsibility for exams. The formality of these exams is highly regarded by students, staff, and parents.
- Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests - These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis.

Please Note: If a student is absent for a Mock Exam and if the student or their parent/guardian request a copy of the exam, the exam Co Ordinator will upload a copy or photo of the exam on Teams for the student to access. This exam must be completed and returned to the school on the same day for it to be sent for external correction. This grade would not be entered as a grade for the exam on VShare.

Schedule of Assessments

As indicated by Circular Letter 0055/2019 - There is a need to avoid 'over-assessment' and the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments across the full range of subjects. In this context, the classroom-Based Assessments will substitute other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as in-house examinations, etc. as appropriate.

When appropriate, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students, and parents, on the level of each students' attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests. The results of these exams will be put on VShare as per school calendar.

All Junior Cycle Specification exams will be graded as follows:

Grading of the Examination

GRADE	RANGE (%)
Distinction	≥90 to 100
Higher	≥75 and 90
Merit	≥55 and 75
Achieved	≥40 to 55.
Partially Achieved	≥20 and 40
Not Graded	≥0 and 20

Junior Cycle Specification Subjects include, Irish English, Mathematics, French, German, Religious Education, Geography, Art, History, Science, Business Studies, Graphics, Home Economics, Wood Technology, Music, Engineering.

At Garbally College, we carry out summative assessment as follows:

- Written examinations (Formal or class based)
- Practical's
- Aural work
- Oral work
- Worksheets and written classwork
- Essays and assignments
- Project work
- Homework

Please note:

If a student is absent for an exam this week and if the student or their parent/guardian request a copy of the exam, the class teacher would upload a copy or photo of the exam on Teams for the student to access after the exam was completed in school.

Alternatively, the class teacher could provide the student with a hard copy of the exam when they return to school. The student can complete the exam at home.

The class teacher would then mark the exam and provide formative feedback, but they would not enter a grade for the exam on VShare.

4. State Examinations

St Joseph's College will strive to ensure that all 3rd and 6th year students participate - as directed by the State Exams Commission - in the many assessments that make up the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, class-based assessments and portfolio work amongst others, will be operated in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission.

5. Other Assessments

St. Joseph's College will engage in other forms of assessment from time to time.

- Incoming 1st years will undertake a Cognitive Ability Test, (CAT), which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability 1st Year classes. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's potential.
- All 1st year students will be screened by our AEN Department to investigate the possible provision of additional help where necessary and where possible. CAT is an assessment designed to help students and teachers understand how they learn and what their academic potential might be. It assesses how students think in areas that are known to make a difference to learning.
- All 4th year students will undertake a Differential Aptitude Test, (DATs), to assist in their investigation of possible college and career choices when they proceed to 5th Year. DATs is an aptitude test used to measure an individual's ability to acquire, through future training, some specific set of skills. DATs covers several areas, is performed under strict conditions and is strictly timed. The test can be useful to help choose among educational and career options based on strengths and weaknesses.
- The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management, may carry out psychological assessments and other assessments on students at different times throughout the year in consultation with our Additional Educational Needs Department.

6. Reporting

Depending on the form of assessment being used, the results of these assessments will be communicated to students and parents in different ways:

- 1) Directly to the students individually or in small groups
- 2) Student Journal (Such notes are required to be signed by the parent/guardian)
- 3) Positive Postcards
- 4) Direct face to face meetings
- 5) Parent Teacher Meetings
- 6) Termly reporting, as indicated above, through VShare.

Reports, with teacher and Year Head commentary, are shared electronically with parents/guardians following the Term 1, 2 and 3 examinations. The grade contained on this report reflects where they are currently and is not a predicted final grade for their education.

7. Attainment Tracking

It is the policy of St. Joseph's College to track student's attainment over the course of their time in the school.

- 1) An electronic copy of results will be made available to all parents through VShare and is accessible at any stage.
- 2) A Year Head will be responsible for
 - Academic progress of pupils
 - Tracking student's attendance
 - Liaising with teachers re pupils' performance
 - Meeting with parents to keep them informed of their child's academic progress.

Academic tracking is a core function of the school Year Head's and the procedure recommended is as follows:

- Regularly monitor the examination grades of the students in the year group. This can be done through VShare.
- Discuss issues with the student:
 - Are they finding difficulties with the work?
 - Are they simply not putting the effort in?
 - Are there issues with study and homework.
- Discuss solutions with the student and set manageable targets for them to aim at for the next Assessment
- Discuss findings and suggestions with the class teacher.
- Pass on particularly serious cases to the post-holder who will take further action including contact with parents, meeting with the student etc.
- Make a point of meeting with those students who are exceeding their targets to give them the necessary recognition and encouragement
- Keep a record of all meetings with students, actions taken, and suggestions made.

Assessment of L1LP and L2LP

Assessment in the Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes is an important aspect of the teaching and learning in the classroom. Level 1 is an educational programme designed for, though not exclusively for, students who have a learning disability in the range of Low, Moderate to Severe and Profound. Level 2 is designed for those with disabilities categorised as being in the Lower Mild to Higher Moderate range of general learning disabilities. Teachers will identify what a student's starting point is and will support their learning from here. Assessment is classroom based with evidence being collected and assembled into a portfolio over 3 years. Portfolios can be hard copy, electronic or a combination of both. These are stored securely on school premises.

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

- Written work (worksheets, letters)
- 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.

Evidence of learning is primarily gathered by the teacher. However, evidence can also be gathered by other parties including SNAs, therapists, parents/ guardians or other professional bodies that may be working with the student. This evidence should be passed to the teacher who will add it to the student's portfolio.

The main components that are used for assessment at Level 2 include:

Priority Learning Units

- Communicating and literacy
- Numeracy
- Personal care
- Living in a community
- Preparing for work

Two Level 2 short courses

The evidence of learning gathered in the L2LP portfolio will be presented for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement, JCPA. Students who are working on the L2LP may also complete curriculum components e.g., subject, or short course at Level 3 with their achievements at this level recognised as part of their JCPA. This will be individually decided upon for each student in cooperation with all professional bodies working with the student and the student's parents/ guardians. The main components that are used for assessment at Level 1 include:

Priority Learning Units

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

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA- or school-developed short courses

At Level 1 students will receive either a successfully completed or progress achieved grade.

School Reporting

This is an integral part of the assessment of learners. The teacher will provide feedback to students at their level of ability. This will be constructive to the learner and will help them to find ways to continue to make progress. It will be important to motivate and encourage learners. There will be a focus on what will be the 'next steps' the learner needs to take and both students and parents/ guardians will get an opportunity to comment if appropriate. This will be done through a combination of meetings, feedback reports between teachers, parents/guardians. This will vary depending on the individual needs of each student.