



An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí

# Junior **CYCLE** for teachers



SLAR Facilitator  
Training

*Autumn/Winter  
2019*



## Glossary of Terms

### **Formative Assessment** (Framework p. 35-36)

The junior cycle will be underpinned by the further integration of formative assessment as a normal part of teaching and learning in classrooms. Formative assessment involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding next steps to ensure successful outcomes. A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students. Through a range of assessment activities, the teacher helps the student to identify what has been achieved and where there is room for further learning and development. To facilitate the type of learning envisaged above, the role of the teacher and the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship will evolve. Teachers will place a greater emphasis on integrating assessment into their teaching so they can better monitor students' progress in learning and identify how they can support students to reflect on and critically analyse their own learning.

### **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement** (Framework p. 46)

The JCPA will reward achievement across all areas of learning as applicable: Subjects, Short Courses, Wellbeing, Priority Learning Units, other areas of learning. The JCPA will draw upon and report on achievement across all elements of assessment including ongoing, formative assessment; Classroom-Based Assessments; and SEC grades which include results from the state-certified examinations and the Assessment Tasks. The JCPA will have a nationally determined format. It will be compiled by the school and received by students in the autumn following third year, when all assessment results from the SEC and the school are available and confirmed.

### **Learning Intentions and Learning Outcomes** (NCCA Glossary of Terms)

**Learning Intention:** A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, which describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities.

**Learning Outcomes:** Learning outcomes are statements in curriculum specifications to describe the understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.

**Success Criteria** (NCCA Glossary of Terms) Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success looks like. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.

**Summative Assessment** (NCCA Glossary of Terms) Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the

end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.

### **Unit of Learning**

A unit of learning links learning outcomes which clearly set out what the students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities within that unit.

### **Classroom-Based Assessments (CBA)**

Classroom-Based Assessments are best described as the occasions when the teacher assesses the students using the specific tasks set out in the subject specification. The tasks are clearly described, as are the criteria for assessment to support teacher judgement. The criteria are found in the features of quality linked to each Classroom-Based Assessment. Although the assessment is similar to the formative assessment that occurs every day in class, in the case of Classroom-Based Assessment the teacher's judgement is recorded for Subject Learning and Assessment Review and is used in the school's reporting to parents and students.

### **Features of Quality**

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

### **Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) Meetings** (Framework p. 39-40)

In Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings, teachers will share and discuss samples of their assessments of student work and build a common understanding about the quality of student learning. Each Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting will be subject-specific and will focus on the Classroom-Based Assessment undertaken by the particular year group.

### **Assessment Task (AT)**

The Assessment Task is a written task completed by students during class time, which is not marked by the class teacher, but is sent to the State Examinations Commission for marking. The Assessment Task is specified by the NCCA and is related to the learning outcomes on which the second Classroom-Based Assessment is based.

**What do we need to have in place to ensure we get the most out of this session?**

**Agreed ways of working together**

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**The Role of the Facilitator at a SLAR meeting**

**What do I know?**

**What would I like to know?**

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## Before the SLAR meeting

As a first step, teachers may find it helpful to review some of the relevant NCCA annotated examples prior to coming to decisions about their own students' work.

Once students have completed their Classroom-Based Assessment, the teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of the students' work based on the Features of Quality. These provisional assessments may be modified in light of the discussions that take place at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting.

The teacher will make a note of the descriptor allocated to each student and any other point they may wish or find useful to refer to during and after the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. This note will be for the teacher's own use. It might also be useful to make notes which could be referred to during the meeting.

In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of student's work for each descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting.

### What could help me as a facilitator to prepare for our SLAR meeting?

## During the SLAR meeting

The facilitator explains that the purpose of the meeting is to support consistency of judgement about students' work and to develop a common understanding about the quality of student learning. The value of the meeting in providing feedback to students on how they might improve their work should also be highlighted.

- The facilitator asks one member of staff to introduce a sample of work they have assessed. Following a short introduction by the teacher, the facilitator leads a general discussion on the extent to which the student's work matches the relevant Features of Quality. If the meeting affirms the judgement, this is noted in the meeting record by the facilitator.
- Where there is a lack of agreement, the facilitator should refer to relevant annotated examples of student work provided by the NCCA and, if appropriate, a couple of examples of student work that other teachers in the group have assessed and awarded that descriptor to.

- The facilitator should look to establish consensus during the discussion of examples but the emphasis should be on developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills rather than on seeking unanimous agreement over every Feature of Quality in every example.
- The emphasis in affirming judgements during the review meetings should always be on a 'best fit' approach which allows teachers to agree the descriptor that 'on-balance' is most appropriate for the work being assessed.
- While reasonable time should be allowed for discussion, the facilitator should use his/her professional judgement to decide when it would be appropriate to proceed to the next sample.
- If possible, there should be discussion of at least two samples for each descriptor and the facilitator should ensure that each teacher has at least one of their samples discussed during the meeting.
- The process is repeated, in turn, with samples assessed as In line with expectations, Above expectations and Exceptional being discussed and shared in the group. At the end of the meeting, the facilitator briefly summarises the key points from the discussion.

<p><b>What could we do to make the SLAR experience a success?</b></p>	<p><b>What are the potential challenges?</b></p>
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## Personal Facilitation Skills Audit

*Reflect on the facilitation skills below and rank your current confidence level using a scale of 1 to 5.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not Confident		Quietly Confident		Very Confident

**Facilitation Skill**

**My Rating**

	Before	After
Would have confidence opening the meeting, clarifying its purpose and establishing ways of working together		
Skilled at active listening, paraphrasing and summarising key points		
Able to manage time and maintain a good pace		
Able to conduct meetings in an orderly and effective manner		
Knowledge of techniques for getting active participation and encouraging discussion		
Confident asking good probing questions that challenge one's own and others' assumptions in a non-threatening way		
Able to stop the action and check how things are going		
Able to manage debate between participants and remain focused		
Able to deal with resistance non-defensively		

<i>What strengths have I identified?</i>	<i>What are possible areas for development?</i>

## Effective Questioning

How a question is posed can sometimes unintentionally put people off. Thinking about how you word questions can be important in opening up responses.

Some useful questions to use are:

- Tell us more about that...
- What has worked well here in terms of the Features of Quality?
- What are the strengths of this piece of work?
- What are the areas for development in the work?
- How could this work be improved?

## SCOPE



**Stop:** If you feel the conversation has moved in an unhelpful direction, don't be afraid to stop the meeting and directly address what is happening. The longer something is allowed to rumble on, the more difficult it is to manage. Don't feel that you need to respond or react to things immediately. Allowing silence can be very powerful and will demonstrate that you are confident in your facilitation.

**Clarify:** It may be an idea to ask some questions to diagnose what is happening and why. Or it may be enough to simply allow yourself a moment to take stock of what is happening. Are participants confused by the process? Is there a greater underlying issue in relation to the process? Has the group fallen back into old ways of working?

**Organise:** Once you have taken a moment to understand what is going on, you can decide how best to deal with the situation. Possible approaches include: simple clarifications, reminding participants of the norms, documenting issues for discussion at the next department meeting, inviting others to offer their perspective. If the discussion about a topic has become particularly heated and it is difficult to reach consensus, suggest putting the topic 'on ice' and coming back to it later.

**Proceed:** Once you have allowed yourself a moment to clarify and organise, you will be ready to proceed. Phrases like "I think we may have a misunderstanding as to what we should be doing right now. I may not have been clear so I will run through the process again" or "John, I appreciate all the challenges you are having with your 2<sup>nd</sup> years. I think we should put behaviour management on the agenda for the next meeting. However, I am conscious of time and the purpose of today's meeting is..." or "It is great to see how engaged everyone is in the process. However, we agreed at the beginning that we wouldn't interrupt one another so can I ask that we stick to that agreement please."

**Examine Progress:** As the facilitator, you need to remain constantly alert and constantly review the progress of the group.

Adapted from Mike Clayton *Handling Resistance Pocket Book* and David Allen and Tina Blythe *Facilitating for Learning; tools for teacher groups of all kin*

## SLAR Meeting in Action: Professional Learning

Whilst watching this video of a SLAR meeting in action, reflect on our discussions this evening.

My observations	Notes from others

## After the SLAR meeting

After the meeting, each teacher considers the assessment of their students' work based on the outcomes of the meeting and, where it is considered necessary, makes the appropriate adjustments to their provisional assessments. Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, the facilitator submits their report from the meeting, focusing on the outcomes of the discussion of student work at the meeting, and submits it to the school principal.

The facilitator may also ask teachers, should they wish, to contribute some student work to a bank of examples:

- To support the induction of new teachers
- To support future Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- To use with students and parents in demonstrating the standard of work achieved

*Suggestions from [www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings](http://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings)*

***How can the learning from the SLAR process support our practice as teachers and our subject department in the future?***



## SLAR Meetings: Before, During and After

Before the SLAR Meeting	
<b>Teachers will</b>	
	Assess student work based on the Features of Quality Review relevant NCCA annotated examples as necessary ( <a href="http://www.curriculumonline.ie">www.curriculumonline.ie</a> ) Record the descriptor and any other relevant points that may be useful to refer to during the SLAR meeting Identify one example, where possible, for each descriptor, to be used in the SLAR meeting Submit details of samples of work for discussion to the facilitator before the SLAR meeting
<b>Facilitators will</b>	
	Collect & copy samples of work submitted by teachers Develop a running order for the SLAR meeting
During the SLAR Meeting	
<b>Teachers will</b>	
	Introduce one sample at “Yet to Meet Expectations” level Collaboratively review the piece of work Make note of the implications of decisions made during the meeting for the rest of the student work that they have assessed Focus on a ‘best fit’ approach which allows teachers to agree the descriptors that on-balance is most appropriate for the work being discussed Repeat the process, in turn, for a sample at each of the other descriptors
<b>Facilitators will</b>	
	Open the meeting with a focus on consistency of judgement and a common understanding about the quality of student learning Highlight the value of the meeting in providing feedback to students Lead the general discussion of samples of work and Descriptors and note any decisions made Look to establish consensus but focus on the development of professional knowledge and skills
After the SLAR Meeting	
<b>Teachers will</b>	
	Consider the assessment of their students’ work based on the SLAR meeting Report their final descriptors for each student
<b>Facilitators will</b>	
	Complete and submit the Facilitator’s Report to the Principal Reflect on what worked well or what could be improved upon in the next SLAR meeting. The Facilitator may also ask teachers, should they wish, to contribute some of their samples of student work to a bank of examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the induction of new teachers</li> <li>• To support future SLAR meetings</li> <li>• To use with students and parents in demonstrating the standard of work achieved</li> </ul>



*Scan the QR Code to access the NCCA SLAR Toolkit*

## Facilitator's Report

### *Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting*

Subject:	Date/time
Attendance	
Key decisions taken	
Points of note for future review meetings	
Any further outcomes?	
Facilitator:  Date:	

## Discussing Student Work During SLAR Meetings

The **Facilitator** asks one teacher to introduce a sample of work they have assessed as **Yet to Meet Expectations**

The **Teacher** presenting the piece gives a short introduction to the sample of work and the facilitator leads a general discussion on the extent to which the student's work matches the relevant **Features of Quality**. This **discussion** will involve input from all colleagues and will be **based on the Features of Quality**. The emphasis in affirming judgements during the SLAR meeting should always be on a **'best-fit'** approach which allows teachers to agree the Descriptor that **'on-balance'** is most appropriate for the work being assessed.

The **Facilitator** should **look to establish consensus** during the discussion of examples but the emphasis should be on **developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills** rather than on seeking unanimous agreement over every Feature of Quality in every example. It is strongly recommended that teachers in the Subject Department use the SLAR meeting to develop collaboration and focus on teaching, assessment and learning.

Where there is **agreement** and the meeting affirms the provisional judgement, this is **noted in the meeting record** by the facilitator.

Where there is a **lack of agreement**, the facilitator **should refer to relevant annotated examples of student work provided by the NCCA** and, if appropriate, an additional example of student work that other teachers in the group have assessed and awarded that descriptor to.

While reasonable time should be allowed for discussion, **the Facilitator should use his/her professional judgement to decide when it would be appropriate to proceed to the next sample**. The facilitator should endeavour to promote collaborative discussion and support discussions around teaching, assessment and learning. It may be useful to place a piece of work 'on ice' to support progressing the discussion.

The process above is repeated, in turn, with samples assessed as **In Line with Expectations**, **Above Expectations** and **Exceptional** being discussed and shared in the group.

At the end of the meeting, the facilitator briefly summarises the key points from the discussion. It is important that **each teacher notes the implications of the decisions made during the meeting** for the rest of the student work they have already assessed, particularly in the case of descriptors where their judgement did not align with the view of the majority of teachers at the meeting Teachers should also note any **feedback that might support student learning** moving forward

Adapted from: [www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings](http://www.ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/slar-meetings)

# Key dates for Classroom-Based Assessments



## Key dates for Classroom-Based Assessments 2019/2020

The window within which schools can complete Classroom-Based Assessments, SLAR meetings and Assessment Tasks (where relevant) is provided below. Classroom-Based Assessments must be completed within the time period allocated (e.g. 3 weeks, 4 weeks) as specified in the Assessment Guidelines for each subject. The SLAR meeting should take place no more than a month after completion of the CBA.

### Student cohort 2017-2020 (3<sup>rd</sup> years)

Junior Cycle English, Science, Business Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, Visual Art and Gaeilge Classroom-Based Assessments and Assessment Task (where applicable)

CBA1 <b>Gaeilge</b> date for portfolio completion	Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2019
Latest date for award of provisional descriptors by the teacher	Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Latest date for completion of Subject Learning and Assessment Review and for award of final descriptors by the teacher	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
<b>CBA2 Visual Art</b> window for completion	
	Monday September 9 <sup>th</sup> 2019 – Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Latest date for award of provisional descriptors by the teacher	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
Latest date for completion of Subject Learning and Assessment Review and for award of final descriptors by the teacher	Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
<b>CBA2 Science, Business Studies</b> window for completion	
	Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 – Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
CBA2 <b>English, MFL</b> earliest date for collection/portfolio completion	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
latest date for collection/portfolio completion	Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
CBA2 <b>Gaeilge</b> window for completion	Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 – Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Earliest date for commencement of Assessment Task	Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
Latest date for completion of Assessment Task	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020
Latest date for award of provisional descriptors by the teacher	Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Latest date for completion of Subject Learning and Assessment Review and for award of final descriptors by the teacher	Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Student cohort 2018 – 2021 (2<sup>nd</sup> years)  
Junior Cycle English, Science, Business Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, Visual Art, Maths, Music, History, Geography, Home Economics Classroom-Based Assessment 1

CBA1 <sup>1</sup> window for completion <b>English, Science, Business Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, Visual Art, Maths, History, Geography</b>	Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2020 to Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
CBA1 <b>Music</b> latest date for portfolio completion	Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
CBA1 <b>Home Economics</b> window for completion	Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 to Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Latest date for award of provisional descriptors by the teacher	Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
Latest date for completion of Subject Learning and Assessment Review and for award of final descriptors by the teacher	Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2020

<sup>1</sup> A 14-week window is available for Visual Art CBA1 with themes issued by the NCCA on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

**Available at:** [https://www.ncca.ie/media/3959/junior\\_cycle\\_key\\_dates\\_2019\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ncca.ie/media/3959/junior_cycle_key_dates_2019_2020.pdf)

**A Leagan Gaeilge version of these dates are also available at:** <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/22cddb55-df21-4068-95f7->

## Student Work for SLAR Meeting: Teacher Template

Each teacher should submit four samples of student work for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review Meeting. Where feasible, these samples should **contain an example at each of the four descriptor levels**. The information will be used to create a running order for our upcoming Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meeting. As we may not have time to discuss all the samples, please number the pieces 1 to 4. Number 1 should indicate the sample that you would most like to discuss.

Please submit your samples with a copy of this template to me by \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Group: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Sample 1</b>	<p><b>Format:</b> _____ <b>Sample Shared via:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Topic/Title:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Provisional Descriptor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Preference for use at SLAR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>Sample 2</b>	<p><b>Format:</b> _____ <b>Sample Shared via:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Topic/Title:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Provisional Descriptor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Preference for use at SLAR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>Sample 3</b>	<p><b>Format:</b> _____ <b>Sample Shared via:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Topic/Title:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Provisional Descriptor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Preference for use at SLAR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>Sample 4</b>	<p><b>Format:</b> _____ <b>Sample Shared via:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Topic/Title:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Provisional Descriptor:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Preference for use at SLAR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>

## Acceptable Usage Policies and Storing Student Work

During their Junior Cycle journey, students may produce work themselves and store it online or may have work recorded and stored by their teachers. In Business Studies, this occurs for example as part of CBA2, the Presentation. In English, this occurs as part of the Oral Communication CBA.

In all instances teachers and schools are required to act in accordance with the school's Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP). The school's AUP must be cognisant of data and child protection guidelines. Boards of Management, School Management and teaching staff all have a role to play in the safe recording and storage of student work.

Section 1.13.2 of the Child Protection Procedures sets out the duties relating to 'data controllers' and states that the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 "requires both data controllers and data processors to protect the data they keep, and imposes on them a special duty of care in relation to the individuals about whom they keep such data." (pg 12). Some Frequently Asked Questions regarding AUPs are dealt with at <https://www.webwise.ie>

'Samples of Oral Communication by students will be recorded for discussion at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings. An example at each of the four descriptor levels, where feasible, will be needed for this purpose. 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. The recording should take place with cognisance of child protection guidelines and in line with the school's acceptable use policy.'

*Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages Assessment Guidelines Pg. 16*

'Teachers' professional judgement underpinned by a good understanding of the Features of Quality, with knowledge of the students' strengths and areas for development, will be important factors in identifying the sample of students to be recorded. Any audio or audio-visual recording device, such as a tablet, mobile phone, laptop or video camera, available in the school can be used. 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 GDPR policies.'

*Junior Cycle English Assessment Guidelines Pg. 17*

'In some instances, students' work, developed as part of the CBA process, may need to be recorded and/or stored online. For example, teachers will record samples of presentations made by students which will be used for discussion at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings. In all instances, when recording and storing students' work, teachers and schools are required to act in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in force since 25 May 2018, and child protection requirements.'

*Department of Education and Skills Circular 55/2019 p.18*



*Scan the QR Code to access the Webwise website for further information on Acceptable Usage Policies*

**SLAR Facilitator: Action Plan and Notes**

<b>Action Point/ Observation</b>

<b>Support for my Role as Facilitator</b>

<b>Support for Subject/Professional Learning</b>

## Key Websites Referenced in the Workshop



### English

Welcome to Junior Cycle English.

The curriculum sets out clear expectations for students, across the three integrated strands of oral language, reading and writing. To access the [curriculum specification](#), [assessment guidelines](#), [examples of student work](#), and the [text list](#), click on the graphic:

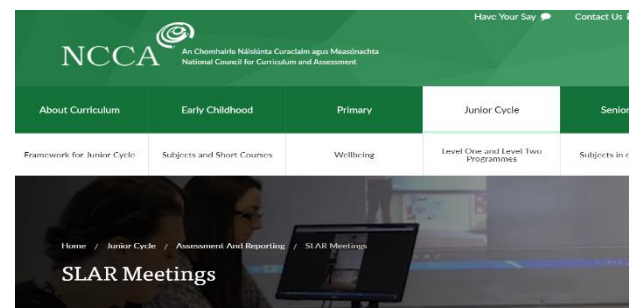
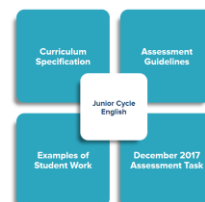
**UPDATE:** December 2017 Assessment Task and stimulus materials are available [here](#).

**Revised key dates** CBAC and Assessment Task for student cohort 2015 - 2018 (current third year) are available [here](#). **Key dates** for student cohort 2016 - 2019 (current second year) are available [here](#). **SLAR meetings** - to view a review meeting in action, [click here](#) and log in.

The Junior Cycle English text list has been extended to one further cohort of students (2017 - 2020). The circular confirming this is available [here](#).

**Text List:** to suggest a text for Junior Cycle English, [click here](#).

Click on graphic below:



[www.ict.ie](http://www.ict.ie) is the home website for the Junior Cycle for Teachers support service. On the landing page of each subject area, you will see a purple tile called 'Assessment'. In here you will find all **subject specific resources and supports** in relation to SLARs in your subject area.

On the NCCA website [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) website you will find the new **subject specifications, Assessment Guidelines** and **annotated examples of students' work**.

On the NCCA website [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) you will find the **Assessment Toolkit** for Junior Cycle. The toolkit includes a range of assessment supports, advice and guidelines that will enable schools and teachers to engage with all aspects of assessment system (including SLARs) in an informed way, with confidence and clarity.

## Notes