



Short Course
**Civic, Social &
Political Education**
A Citizenship Course

Specification for Junior Cycle



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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

Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) contributes to building the skills students will need to contribute positively to a democratic society and to promote sustainable living. It gives them an understanding of social, economic and political structures at local, national and global levels and the opportunity to imagine and create ways in which they can make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities. CSPE builds on related learning experiences in primary education. It helps students to question, critique and evaluate what is happening in the world; provides students with an understanding of their human rights and social responsibilities; prompts students to consider how to create a more sustainable future for all; fosters an awareness of what it means to live responsibly in a democracy; and most importantly, it places active reflective citizenship at the centre of the learning process by providing students with the opportunity to take action and influence change around local, national and global issues.

CSPE is an important part of a wellbeing programme within junior cycle as it enables students to grow in awareness of how their wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of others, locally and globally. It also develops students' sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others.

Aim

The short course in CSPE aims to inform, inspire, empower and enable young people to participate as active citizens in contemporary society at local, national and global levels, based on an understanding of human rights and social responsibilities.

Overview: Links

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

CSPE and statements of learning

Table 1: Links between junior cycle CSPE and the statements of learning

Statements of learning (SOL)

Statement	Examples of related learning in the course
SOL 7: The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.	Across all strands of the course, students learn about issues that concern them and the wider world and consider the role and responsibility of all citizens in bringing about positive change. Student-led action based on an understanding of human rights and social responsibilities is encouraged.
SOL 9: The student understands the origin and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him.	Students gain an understanding of the causes and consequences of a range of global challenges, identifying how different issues, people and places are connected. They also explore the role and relevance of economic and political structures to their lives. Finally, the course allows students to examine the contribution citizens can make to creating a more equal, just and sustainable future at local, national and global levels.
SOL 10: The student has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably.	Students are challenged to consider their roles in contributing and responding to the challenges facing the world. Strand 2 focuses on sustainable development and invites students to discuss the sustainable living strategies they can employ in their lives.
SOL 11: The student takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others	In each strand students decide on, plan and carry out an action which aims to promote the wellbeing of others, whether within their school, community or the wider world.

CSPE and key skills

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



This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some of the elements that are related to learning activities in CSPE. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Table 2: Links between junior cycle CSPE and key skills

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Imagining	Students use their imaginations to develop empathetic thinking by considering issues from different perspectives take inspiration from the community leaders and activists they encounter in their research and in person envison ways that they can make a positive difference in the world.
Being literate	Reading for enjoyment and with critical understanding	Students research, examine and critique case studies and information presented in different media.
Being numerate	Seeing patterns, trends and relationships	Students develop an awareness of the patterns, trends and relationships between different economic, environmental and social issues and the links between causes and effects.
Communicating	Discussing and debating	Students become more confident through class debates and discussions as they learn how to present their opinions and support them with evidence from case studies and/or numerical data.
Managing information and thinking	Thinking creatively and critically	Students question their assumptions and the assumptions of others. They are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and review it in light of new information.
Managing myself	Being able to reflect on my own learning	Students keep a reflection journal in which they record how their learning relates to their lives. They also reflect on and evaluate progress in carrying out their actions.
Staying well	Being social	Students become aware of themselves as local and global citizens with rights and responsibilities and develop a sense of care for the wellbeing of others as they learn how their wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of others and of our planet.
Working with others	Contributing to making the world a better place	There is a strong focus on linking learning with action. Through taking meaningful action, students become more empowered and see how, by working with others, they can make a real difference.

Overview: Course

This junior cycle short course in CSPE focuses on supporting students in become active citizens through their learning in three strands: **Rights and responsibilities**, **Global citizenship**, and **Exploring democracy**.

Strand 1: Rights and responsibilities.

In this strand, students learn what it means to live with rights and responsibilities and examine the main human rights instruments that protect people's rights. This is a foundation strand.

Strand 2: Global citizenship.

In this strand, students explore issues of poverty, inequality and sustainable development and look at ways to bring about effective change.

Strand 3: Exploring democracy.

This strand enables students to examine how democracy works and the role of the media in a democracy.

The study of strand 1 is essential for students' successful engagement with strands 2 and 3. Strands 2 and 3 can be taught sequentially; in reverse order; or in an integrated way.

Collaborative and active learning and the development of skills in citizenship, research, reflection and action are integrated across each of the three strands. A range of suggested actions, of varying degrees of challenge, are given at the end of each strand and it is also possible for teachers and students to decide on other relevant action. It is expected that students will engage in action as part of their learning in each of the three strands.

Students might be encouraged to maintain a reflection journal to help them reflect on their learning throughout the course. The journal could include

- some of the big ideas they have learned
- reflection on skills they have developed
- questions they are still left with
- reflection on key insights they have gained and what it means for their own lives or for the future.

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined below reflects the learning students undertake in this NCCA short course. Schools have the flexibility to adapt any NCCA short course to suit their particular 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.

The learning outcomes of this course are broadly aligned with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (Appendix 1).

The CSPE short 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 CSPE. 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: Rights and Responsibilities

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Human dignity: the basis for human rights	1.1 discuss what it means to be human and to live in a community with rights and responsibilities 1.2 create a visual representation to communicate a situation where human dignity is not respected 1.3 create a hierarchy of their needs, wants and rights 1.4 assemble a 'basic needs basket' representing the needs of a family living in Ireland (not just their economic needs). 1.5 access and interpret numerical data showing local and global distribution of basic resources and patterns of inequalities
Human rights instruments	1.6 share stories of individuals or groups who inspire them because of their work for human rights 1.7 create a timeline tracing the origin of the concept of human rights, showing five or more key dates, events, people and documents 1.8 communicate their understanding of how the UDHR, UNCRC and ECHR ¹ apply to their lives, in terms of both their rights and their responsibilities 1.9 identify examples of social, cultural, language, economic, civic, religious, environmental and political rights 1.10 outline different perspectives in situations where there is an apparent conflict of rights or an abuse of rights 1.11 show an appreciation of their responsibility to promote and defend their individual human rights and those of others 1.12 reflect on what has been learned in this strand

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

Human rights actions

Complete one of the following actions, or another relevant action:

- identify a human rights issue of concern and engage with an individual, group, organisation or campaign focusing on that issue
- devise a class charter of rights and responsibilities
- organise and participate in a mock Equality Tribunal hearing, a mock European Court of Human Rights trial or a mock International Criminal Court trial using simplified cases
- develop and conduct a survey focusing on a human rights issue(or issues) and publicise the survey findings
- organise a celebration of International Human Rights Day
- use technology to engage with a young person or a group of young people from another country about a human rights issue of mutual concern.

Strand 2: Global citizenship

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Sustainability	<p>2.1 communicate how they are connected to and dependent upon eco-systems, people and places, near and far</p> <p>2.2 consider a variety of definitions of development and devise their own definition of sustainable development</p> <p>2.3 create a visual representation of data depicting their ecological footprint</p> <p>2.4 discuss three or more sustainable living strategies they can employ in their lives</p>
Local and global development	<p>2.5 examine case studies or personal testimonies of people experiencing poverty or inequality from different contexts and countries and how they are working to overcome this</p> <p>2.6 express an informed opinion about the root causes of poverty, both locally and globally</p> <p>2.7 discuss, with evidence, positive and negative effects of development in their local area</p>
Effecting global change	<p>2.8 identify one person and one institution with power and influence in the world today, explaining the role of each</p> <p>2.9 analyse one global issue or challenge, under the following headings: causes, consequences, impact on people's lives and possible solutions</p> <p>2.10 evaluate how they can contribute in responding to one challenge currently facing the world</p> <p>2.11 examine a campaign for change in the area of sustainability and assess reasons why it has or has not been successful</p> <p>2.12 reflect on what has been learned in this strand</p>

Global citizenship actions

Complete one of the following actions or another relevant action:

- organise a debate about a local or global development issue of concern
- investigate the influence of the media on consumption patterns among young people and share the findings
- use digital technology and/or other means to create awareness about a local or global development issue
- start or support a local, national or international initiative or campaign which aims to address a local or global development issue
- invite a local political representative to answer questions about addressing a local or global development issue of concern
- lobby a local, national or international body about a development issue of concern.

Strand 3: Exploring democracy

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
The meaning of democracy	<p>3.1 create a visual representation of the day-to-day contexts and institutions to which they belong, highlighting where they have power and influence</p> <p>3.2 describe decision-making processes and the roles of different groups in their class/school</p> <p>3.3 compare two or more systems of government, taking particular note of the ways in which the state interacts with its citizens, and citizens can shape their state</p> <p>3.4 use the correct terminology to describe Irish and European democratic institutions, structures, political parties and roles</p> <p>3.5 discuss strengths and weaknesses of the democratic process</p>
The law and the citizen	<p>3.6 identify laws that directly relate to their lives</p> <p>3.7 explain how laws are made, enforced and evolve over time</p> <p>3.8 explain the role and relevance of local, national and international courts</p> <p>3.9 list the nine grounds under which discrimination is illegal in Irish law, with examples</p> <p>3.10 investigate how individuals or groups have used the law to bring about change in society</p>
The role of the media in a democracy	<p>3.11 debate the pros and cons of media freedom</p> <p>3.12 examine case studies of the use of digital or other media in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a social justice movement • a political election or referendum • a criminal investigation • an environmental movement <p>3.13 reflect on what has been learned in this strand</p>

Democracy actions

Complete one of the following actions or another relevant action:

track and present the process of a local, national or international political election or a national referendum

participate in one of the following

- a. a class election
- b. a mock election using the proportional representation (single transferable vote) system of voting
- c. a mock referendum
- d. a mock trial

organise a guest speaker, event or field trip to examine an aspect of the legal or democratic system that is of interest to them

engage in democratic action on an issue of concern using digital technology or any other media

organise an exhibition/display to raise awareness about an aspect of the legal or democratic system that is of interest to them

organise a consultation with the student body on matters of interest to them.

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, researching, presenting, planning and taking action. 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. 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 only 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. Along with the guide to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process, 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. Where feasible, teachers of short courses will participate in learning and assessment review meetings.

Classroom-Based Assessment: Citizenship Action Record

Students will complete at least three citizenship actions as part of their learning across the three strands of the CSPE short course. Students are expected create an Action Record for one of these as their Classroom-based Assessment. A particular purpose of the Classroom-based Assessment will be to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the task and at the end of the process. The Classroom-Based Assessment for the CSPE short course can be completed in second or third year.

The Classroom-based Assessment can be produced in written, digital, visual or audio formats and it may be supported through the use of an interview or presentation.

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 students' final Action Record.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this CSPE 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 CSPE. The guidelines will include, for example, the suggested length and formats for student pieces of work, 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 Assessment, 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 learning 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 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 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications

This short course has been developed in alignment with the level indicators for Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Usually, for Level 3 certification and awards, the knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.

NFQ Level	3
Knowledge <i>Breadth</i>	Knowledge moderately broad in range
Knowledge <i>Kind</i>	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
Know-how and skill <i>Range</i>	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill <i>Selectivity</i>	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
Competence <i>Context</i>	Act within a limited range of contexts
Competence <i>Role</i>	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
Competence <i>Learning to learn</i>	Learn to learn within a managed environment
Competence <i>Insight</i>	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour



AN ROINN
OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND SKILLS