Short Course
Philosophy

Specification for Junior Cycle

September 2016

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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

This short course in philosophy is grounded in the exploration of profound, fascinating and challenging questions arising out of students' everyday experiences. As such, philosophy contributes to students' understanding of themselves, their world and their place in it. Through the exploration of the questions, students will encounter the main areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics (What is existence?), epistemology (What is knowledge?), aesthetics (What is beauty?), social and political philosophy (What is the best form of government?), ethics (What is justice?), etc. They will also encounter some of the thinkers, past and present, who have grappled with these and other big questions.

However, the emphasis of this short course is on 'doing philosophy' and on developing the skills needed for philosophical dialogue: careful listening, critical thinking, careful analysis, logic, argumentation, collaborative problem-solving, and reflection. In addition to developing thinking skills, the process of learning through dialogue helps students become more confident in expressing their opinions and respectful of different perspectives.

Philosophy can contribute to a wellbeing programme within junior cycle as it provides a democratic space where everyone's voice is heard and where students feel respected and grow in awareness of self and others.

Aim

This short course in philosophy aims to engage students in philosophical enquiry and dialogue about life's big questions and to develop critical, creative, collaborative, caring thinkers who can participate in informed discourse and act in the world in a more reflective manner.

Overview: Links

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

Philosophy and statements of learning

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

Statement	Examples of related learning in the course
SOL 5: The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision-making.	This course provides students with the opportunity to examine a range of questions from an ethical perspective; to develop clearer values and think critically about how they arrive at decisions based on those values and on clear, logical and rigorous thinking.
SOL 6: The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives.	As students engage in philosophical enquiry about some of life's big questions, they are encouraged to consider examples and perspectives from a variety of cultural, religious or geographical contexts. Through the exploration of philosophical concepts and questions students come to appreciate the diverse range of values, beliefs and traditions that have shaped the world around them and also grasp the universality of questions about morality and belief systems.
SOL 18: The student observes and evaluates empirical events and processes and draws valid deductions and conclusions.	Philosophy encourages the use of careful and logical reasoning as students analyse and evaluate propositions and arguments, identify shortcomings in arguments including common logical fallacies, draw conclusions and arrive at a considered position.

Philosophy 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 philosophy. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

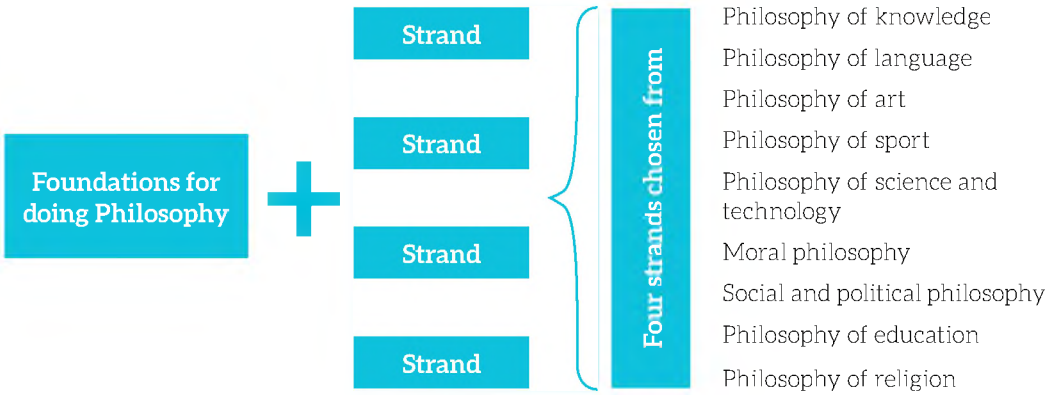
Table 2: Links between junior cycle philosophy and key skills

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Exploring options and alternatives	Students choose appropriate problem-solving techniques as they attempt to solve problems through argument. To do this they will seek out different viewpoints and perspectives, imagine different scenarios and outcomes, and be prepared to change their mind.
Being literate	Expressing ideas clearly and accurately	Philosophy encourages the precise use of language and careful reasoning in both oral and written communication.
Being numerate	Developing a positive disposition towards investigating, reasoning and problem-solving	This short course gives students the tools to practise thinking routines. It shifts the emphasis of their work from finding the 'right' answer to an appreciation of how their problem-solving processes work.
Communicating	Discussing and debating	Students gain confidence as they participate in class discussion and respond to opposite positions constructively, with reasoned arguments.
Managing information and thinking	Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating information and data	Students gather and evaluate ideas from a range of sources and learn how to use data to support their arguments and make coherent judgments. They are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and review it in light of new ideas encountered.
Managing myself	Knowing myself	Through participation in classroom activities, including class debates and discussions, students come to recognise their personal strengths and grow in awareness of the influences shaping their beliefs and assumptions.
Staying well	Being positive about learning	This course is rooted in students' own questions and the process of democratic deliberation allows them to exercise their voice and find meaning and enjoyment in learning. Being listened to and respected within a community of enquiry creates a positive classroom culture.
Working with others	Respecting differences	This course encourages students to consider different points of view and to appreciate diversity as a source of enriched learning. It challenges students beyond 'black and white' thinking.

Overview: Course

The specification for this junior cycle short course in philosophy is built around ten strands:

Strand 1:



Foundations for doing philosophy is a foundational strand, aimed at introducing students to philosophy and building the listening, collaboration and thinking skills which are essential for students' successful engagement with other strands. Teachers may choose to teach strand 1 as a discrete strand, at the beginning of the course, or it may be integrated across the strands. The foundational skills which are the focus of strand 1 will be applied and developed throughout the short course.

Along with strand 1, teachers choose any four of the following:

Strand 2: Philosophy of knowledge
Strand 3: Philosophy of language
Strand 4: Philosophy of art
Strand 5: Philosophy of sport
Strand 6: Philosophy of science and technology
Strand 7: Moral philosophy
Strand 8: Social and political philosophy
Strand 9: Philosophy of education
Strand 10: Philosophy of religion

Strands 2 to 10 are presented as optional and teachers can select four strands, depending on the topics which are of interest to the teacher and students. These strands do not need to be taught in any particular sequence.

Teachers can also identify and develop their own topics for philosophical enquiry using the approach set out in Appendix 2. This could replace one of the four strands.

The Classroom-Based Assessment outlined in the assessment section of this specification reflects the learning students undertake in this 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 on the NCCA website.

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

Teaching and learning in the philosophy short course

Central to teaching philosophy is the idea that students should be exposed to diverse and sometimes competing ideas about life's big questions. As a consequence, discussion, deliberation and debate are important learning methodologies. The teacher and students work together as a community of enquiry to tease out questions and problems. Examples of questions might be: 'What is real?' 'Is killing ever justified?' 'Is everyone born equal?' The aim of the enquiry is to gain deeper understanding and clarity through thoughtful and collaborative dialogue.

Developing skills in 'doing philosophy' signals an active, shared pursuit of knowledge. It requires a democratic classroom where all voices in the classroom are heard and where all, including the teacher voice, is viewed as partial and needing to be questioned as part of open discourse. It also requires teachers and students becoming more fallible, as not knowing and changing one's mind is appreciated as part of the learning and nature of philosophical enquiry. The quality of the answer is located in the process of searching for solutions rather than in the answer itself. In fact, arriving at definitive answers is unlikely: instead the student may find him/herself in a 'higher state of confusion' and may even learn to value the intellectual discomfort that the 'grey area' may bring.

The skills needed for participation in a community of enquiry need to be taught. Students must learn how to show respect for the views of others through thoughtful and courteous listening, how to critique arguments and respond to arguments constructively, how to manage personal feelings and impulsivity, etc. Everyone learns to takes it in turn to pose questions, express opinions, put forth arguments, provide examples and make counter-arguments. The aim is to develop deeper understanding of and clarity about the question, not showmanship or winning the argument.

Facilitation of philosophical enquiry within the classroom requires critical and creative pedagogy that values the active role of learners in the production of meaning and as such reaches far beyond the mechanical application of any one teaching method. A wide range of participatory and enquiry-focused teaching and learning activities are appropriate. Teachers might use photos, film clips, literature, music, drama, or art as a stimulus for raising questions. They may use thought experiments, problem-based learning, argument mapping, concept mapping, thinking diaries, questioning techniques and other teaching and learning strategies to support the development of students' skills in philosophical thinking. The use of a philosophy journal (either in electronic or hard copy) could be encouraged as a way of charting the progress of philosophical enquiry and big questions students have grappled with. Specifically, it could show evidence of different perspectives considered, personal conclusions students have come to, further questions prompted by the learning and their reflections on the learning.

Many of the suggested methodologies contained in the key skills teaching toolkits will be very helpful in this context and can be downloaded at http://www.juniorcycle.ie/Planning/Key-Skills .

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 philosophy. 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: Foundations for doing philosophy

Learning outcomes

Students learn about	Students should be able to
Introducing philosophy	1.1. explain what philosophy is 1.2. trace the origins of philosophy and name some of its big thinkers from classical times to the modern day 1.3. identify questions that are common (shared by everybody), central (help us understand ourselves and our world) and contestable (the subject of argument and competing understandings) 1.4. identify 'What are my big questions?' and 'How can I grapple with these questions?' 1.5. agree as a class some 'big questions' which they would like to explore as part of this course
Building a community of enquiry	Participate in discussion by being able to: 1.6. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to other points of view 1.7. seek out different ideas and information in order to reach a more informed position 1.8. ask relevant and probing questions at the right time, for the right reason 1.9. use the language of reasoning when engaging in discussion 1.10. present a coherent argument and be able to justify it (e.g. provide examples, counter-examples, define meanings, find criteria, build on others' ideas, see connections) 1.11. map out an argument or set of arguments (e.g. showing premise, evidence, conclusion) 1.12. express emotion in appropriate ways
Developing tools for thinking	1.13. help others to feel included in the group 1.14. reflect on how they have participated in the learning 1.15. think about their thinking 1.16. explain the difference between an argument, an explanation and an anecdote 1.17. when listening to someone or reading a text, be able to judge whether the speaker or writer is making a valid and sound argument 1.18. identify different types of reasoning (e.g. deductive and inductive) 1.19. identify some common weaknesses in reasoning (e.g. fallacies related to relevance, an appeal to pity or emotion, an appeal to authority, using a straw man, argumentum ad hominem, etc.) and be able to identify examples of some of these fallacies in everyday life

Key concepts

Community of enquiry, questioning, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaborative thinking, caring thinking, reason, concept, values, argument, logic, premise, evidence, conclusion, assumptions, example, criteria, category, alternative, opinion, fact, cognitive bias, perception, cause, effect, strength, weakness, fallacy.

Suggested resources

Law, S. (2013). *The great philosophers*. London: Quercus.

Robinson, D. & Groves, J. (2013). *Introducing philosophy: A graphic guide*. London: Penguin.

Warburton, N. (2011). *A little history of philosophy*. Yale University Press.

Strand 2: Philosophy of knowledge

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

2.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other
2.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories
2.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position
2.4. create arguments (oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view
2.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative and caring community of enquiry
2.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Mind/body relationship, knowledge/perception, reality, truth, illusion, idea, senses, imagination, experience, beliefs, memories, language, emotion, self, artificial intelligence, brain-enhancing technologies, gender, culture, beauty, scepticism, relativism.

Guiding questions

- When are we justified in saying we know something?
- What does it mean to say you know something/someone?
- Can anyone else know what it means to be me?
- Can you know something by instinct or by appearances?
- Do emotions help or hinder knowledge?
- Is the mind separate to the brain?
- What is the relationship between our minds and our bodies?
- Can animals reason?
- Do men and women reason and know differently?
- Are there limits to what we can know?
- If you use brain-enhancing technologies before an exam is it cheating?
- How do I know the world isn't virtual?
- Does Google own knowledge?

Suggested resources

Law S. (2000). *The philosophy files: What's it all about?* Orion Children's Books.

Law S. (2003). *'What is knowledge?' in The philosophy gym.* St Martin's Press.

Tittle P. (2004). *What if...:Collected thought experiments in philosophy.* Pearson.

Belenky, M. et al., (1986). *Women's Ways of Knowing.* New York: Basic Books.

Strand 3: Philosophy of language

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

3.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

3.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

3.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

3.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

3.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative, and caring community of enquiry

3.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Meaning, knowledge/knowing, language, understanding, descriptive, prescriptive, emotive, persuasive, inference, non-verbal communication, reality, truth, lie, propaganda, myth, stories, manipulation, gender, culture.

Guiding questions

- Where does language come from?
- How can we know what words mean?
- What is the relationship between language and the world?
- Does language shape our thoughts?
- Is it possible to think without words?
- What is the link between words and emotions?
- Can words have power? Who names the world?
- What is a lie?
- Why do people tell stories?
- Does a language still exist if no-one speaks it?
- Do girls/women use and understand language differently to boys/men?
- Do animals use language?

Suggested resources

'Allegory of the Cave' (Plato).

John Searle on the philosophy of language.

Noam Chomsky on mind and language.

Strand 4: Philosophy of art (including visual arts, music, poetry, film, fashion, etc.)

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

4.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

4.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

4.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

4.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical oint of view

4.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative and caring community of enquiry

4.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Beauty, value, abstract, representational, interpretation, judgement, attraction, subliminal messages, composition, atmosphere, emotion, truth, illusion, idea, communication, gender, culture.

Guiding questions

- What is and isn't a work of art?
- How can we tell and who decides?
- Why do people create art?
- What do the different arts have in common?
- Is objectivity possible in evaluating art?
- What is art for?
- Does the artist's intention matter?
- What makes something valuable?
- Is everyone capable of creating a work of art?
- What is the relationship between art and beauty, art and truth, art and morality, art and human wellbeing?

Suggested resources

'Philosophy of Art' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*.
www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy-of-art

'The Definition of Art' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/art-definition/

'Philosophy of Film' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/film/

Strand 5: Philosophy of sport

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

5.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

5.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, . including references to relevant philosophers or theories

5.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

5.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

5.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative and caring community of enquiry

5.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Games, sports, play, competition, winner/loser, judgement, fair/unfair, discipline, mind/body relationship, performance-enhancing technologies, motivation, individualism, team, leadership, gender, culture.

Guiding questions

- What does sport mean?
- What is sport for?
- Are humans naturally game-playing animals?
- Are we naturally competitive?
- What's the difference between a game and a sport?
- Should genetic advantages be taken into account in sporting competitions?
- Who does a competition bring the most pleasure to?
- What does it mean to be a sports leader?
- Can a loser be a winner at the same time?
- Is it ever okay to break the rules in order to win? Are performance-enhancing drugs ever justified?
- Should some sports be banned? Are some sports immoral?
- Is academic achievement more highly valued than sporting ability?

Suggested resources

British Philosophy of Sport Association website:
http://philosophyofsport.org.uk/resources/philosophy-sport/

Syed, M. (2011). *Bounce: Mozart, Federer, Picasso, Beckham and the science of success*. Harper Collins. (Extracts downloadable online.)

Strand 6: Philosophy of science and technology

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

6.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

6.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

6.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

6.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

6.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative and caring community of enquiry

6.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Knowledge, progress, method, observation, hypothesis, experimentation, verification, interpretation, cause/effect, consent, responsibility, rights, duties, ethics, instrumentalism, big pharma, biotechnology, endangered species.

Guiding questions

- What is science?
- How is scientific knowledge different from other kinds of knowledge?
- What are the assumptions of science?
- Is there such a thing as scientific method?
- Can everything be explained by science?
- What is the relationship between what we believe and what we see?
- Are science and morality compatible?
- Should we use animals in scientific experiments? What about using humans?
- Should there be limits to the use of biotechnology? How should limits be set?
- Does technology always advance human wellbeing? When is it harmful?
- Can science and technology provide a solution to all our problems?
- Will technology be able to save our fragile earth?

Suggested resources

Aristotle: as a founder of philosophy and science; René Descartes: new scientific approach; Karl Popper: falsifiability; Edmund Gettier: believing and knowing;

Sir Isaac Newton: empiricism. These and other ideas are summarised in the 'Philosophy of Science' article in *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*.

Strand 7: Moral philosophy

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

7.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

7.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

7.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

7.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

7.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative, and caring community of enquiry

7.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Moral/immoral, ethics, good, bad, right/wrong, truth, objectivism, absolutism, relativism, duty, responsibility, intention, consequence, free will, authority, justice, law, human nature, reward, punishment, guilt, utilitarianism, hedonism, environmental ethics, business ethics, feminist ethics, distribution of wealth.

Guiding questions

- What is goodness?
- Is happiness the highest good?
- What is a good life?
- How do I know what the right action is?
- Are there absolute rights and wrongs?
- Why should I be good/moral?
- Can you be a good person and do bad things?
- Is it ever okay to take a life?
- Is it ethical to purchase human organs?
- Do animals have rights? Do humans have a duty to protect nature?
- Are the consequences of actions all that matter?
- Does the end justify the means?
- Is there ever a 'just war'?

Suggested resources

BBC website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/

Immanuel Kant: universal duty; Jeremy Bentham & John Stuart Mill: utilitarianism.

Robert Nozick's thought experiment - *The Experience Machine.*

Law, S. (2000). 'Where do right and wrong come from?' File 6 in *The Philosophy Files.*

Singer, P. & R. (2005). *The moral of the story: An anthology of ethics through literature. Blackwell.*

Strand 8: Social and political philosophy

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

8.1. listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

8.2. seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

8.3. analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

8.4. create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

8.5. contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative, and caring community of enquiry.

8.6. reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Human nature, the role of government, authority, freedom, justice, crime and punishment, protection of human rights, democracy, dictatorship, anarchy, socialism, communism.

Guiding questions

- Do humans need to be part of a society to flourish?
- What is the purpose of government?
- What is freedom? Are we really free?
- What limits, if any, should be put on the freedom of individual citizens?
- What is equality? Does treating everyone equally mean treating them the same? Should the state intervene to rectify inequalities?
- What is justice? Should we keep the law/rules if they are unfair?
- What is the purpose of prisons?
- What gives people the right to rule?
- Do our public representatives really represent all of the people?
- Why are there more male politicians than female?
- Does power always corrupt?
- Are women and men equal in today's society?

Suggested resources

Excerpts from Plato's Republic; John Rawls: A Theory of Justice; Thomas Hobbs: Leviathan; John Locke: Two Treatises of Government; Simone De Beauvoir: The Second Sex.

The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu/.

Strand 9: Philosophy of education

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

9.1 listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

9.2 seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

9.3 analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

9.4 create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

9.5 contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative, and caring community of enquiry

9.6 reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Education, learning, training, equality, intelligence, skills, human development, justice, equality, the arts and sciences.

Guiding questions

- What is school for?
- What would fairness and equality in education look like?
- Is intelligence innate?
- Is there a difference between education and training?
- Does everyone need to go to school to be educated?
- What do tests and exams measure?
- What does it mean to have a good education?
- Does learning stop after formal education?
- Are the arts superior to the sciences? (or vice versa?)
- What is the most important thing you need to learn for life?

Suggested resources

Excerpts from Plato's *Republic*; Rousseau: *Emile*; CP Snow: *The Two Cultures*; John Henry Newman: *The Idea of a University*; John Dewey: *Democracy and Education* and *My Pedagogic Creed*; Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy :

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/education-philosophy/ .

Strand 10: Philosophy of religion

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

10.1 listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other

10.2 seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories

10.3 analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position

10.4 create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view

10.5 contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative, and caring community of enquiry

10.6 reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

God, faith, belief, values, good/evil, suffering, existence and meaning, origin of life, after-life, morality, truth, wisdom, atheism, agnosticism, humanism.

Guiding questions

- Does God exist?
- How do we know?
- If God is male, is the male God?
- Why does an all-powerful God let good people suffer?
- What happens when we die?
- If there's no after-life, then why should we live a good life?
- Does a person need religion to live a moral life?
- Has religion lost its power in the world?
- Would the world be more peaceful without religion?
- Is religion 'the opium of the people'?
- What is religious experience?
- Can belief exist without understanding?

Suggested resources

Extracts from Aquinas, Anselm, David Hume, Karl Marx, Richard Dawkins.

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 questioning, discussing, arguing, explaining, listening, collaborating and presenting. In these contexts, students with their teachers and peers reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning, based on feedback they give and receive. Ongoing assessment can support the student as they develop their skills in philosophy and in preparing for the Classroom-Based Assessment related to this short course.

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 provides 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: Philosophical enquiry

Students will complete a philosophical enquiry as their Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA).

Students are given an opportunity to choose a philosophical question that is of personal interest to them from one of the strands that they have studied, and carry out an enquiry on this question over time leading to a presentation. This Classroom-Based Assessment provides opportunities for the students to show evidence of their skills of 'doing philosophy', particularly their skills in asking questions, researching different perspectives, discussing, comparing, explaining, summarising, making connections, making distinctions, solving problems and drawing conclusions. They will also be expected to refer to other thinkers who they have found interesting in deliberating on this question.

Students can choose to present their philosophical enquiry in written, oral or digital format. This activity also offers students opportunities to collaborate with classmates as they pursue their enquiry and prepare for their presentation.

A particular purpose of the Classroom-based Assessment will be to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the activity and at the end of the process. The Classroom-Based Assessment for the philosophy short course can be completed in second or third year.

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 philosophical enquiry.

More detailed material on assessment and reporting in this 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 this short course. The guidelines will include, for example, the suggested steps involved in undertaking a philosophical enquiry, the length and formats for students' presentations 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 *Breadth*	Knowledge moderately broad in range
Knowledge *Kind*	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
Know-how and skill *Range*	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill *Selectivity*	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
Competence *Context*	Act within a limited range of contexts
Competence *Role*	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
Competence *Learning to learn*	Learn to learn within a managed environment
Competence *Insight*	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.

Appendix 2: Planning template

Teachers can develop their own strand on a topic of interest to them and their students using this planning template.

Strand title:

Learning outcomes

Students should be able to

- listen carefully, critically and respectfully to each other
- seek out different viewpoints and perspectives on the questions under discussion, including references to relevant philosophers or theories
- analyse and compare ideas and be able to build on others' ideas to form a personal position
- create arguments (both oral and written) that communicate a clear and logical point of view
- contribute to creating a critical, creative, collaborative and caring community of enquiry
- reflect on how learning is developing their thinking and collaborative skills

Key concepts

Guiding questions

Relevant philosophers

Stimulus materials and teaching resources

NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

AN ROINN
OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Specification for **Junior Cycle**

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