

Coláiste Choilm Tullamore



Assessment Policy

Assessment Policy Statement

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement. This Assessment Policy outlines the importance of assessment and the key role students, parents and teaching staff play in supporting this policy document.

Aims of the Policy

This Assessment Policy aims to:

1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments.
2. List the different types of assessments.
3. Detail the annual schedule of assessments.
4. Detail of the expected, progressive content of assessments per year group.
5. Detail the reporting procedures post assessments.

Rationale - Why Assess?

The term "Assessment" refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and learning needs. Assessment is part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

- to monitor a student's progress and to provide the teacher with information about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and to adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.
- to provide the student and his parents/guardians with information regarding his progress.
- to establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects
- to help students to choose appropriate levels at Junior and Senior Cycles.
- to assess a student's eligibility for additional support and services and to inform consultations with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist where necessary.
- to assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention as per the continuum of support framework.
- to teach students to assess their own work.

Types of Assessment

Assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle subjects

A new dual approach to assessment has been introduced that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle. This new approach measures and reports achievement at the end of those three years. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment. This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

All assessment for certification purposes remains external (State Examinations Commission).

1. Formative Assessment (Assessment for Learning):

Formative assessment is ongoing and involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding on the next steps to ensure successful outcomes. It involves a shift from focusing mainly on summative judgements to engaging in ongoing activities that can be used to support the next stages of learning. A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students and students' feedback to teachers. Through a range of assessment for learning strategies the teacher helps the student to identify what has been achieved and where there is room for further learning and development.

2. Classroom-Based Assessments in subjects and Short Courses

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They will be used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses.

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, one in second year and one in third year. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level.

3. Summative Assessment (Assessment of Learning):

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit. It aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner. All students undertake in-house 'Progress Examinations' during November.

The minimum time for a test at November or Summer should be 1 hour.

Exams should be progressive in nature.

Progressive exams, also known as incremental or cumulative assessments, offer several benefits in educational settings. Advantages of progressive exams are:

- **Continuous Learning:** Progressive exams promote a continuous learning process by assessing students' understanding and knowledge at various stages throughout a course or academic year. This helps students stay engaged and reinforces their understanding of the material over time.
- **Timely Feedback:** With progressive exams, students receive feedback on their performance at regular intervals. This timely feedback allows them to identify areas of weakness and address them before the final exam. It contributes to a more effective learning experience and enables students to make necessary adjustments in their study habits.
- **Reduced Exam Anxiety:** Since progressive exams break down the assessment into smaller, manageable sections, students may experience less anxiety compared to a single, high-stakes exam. The cumulative nature of these assessments also means that students are not solely judged on one final exam, which can alleviate stress.
- **Encourages Regular Study Habits:** Knowing that their understanding will be evaluated periodically, students are motivated to maintain consistent study habits throughout the course. This helps prevent procrastination and encourages a more disciplined approach to learning.
- **Identifying Learning Gaps:** Progressive exams help educators identify learning gaps early in the course. This information allows them to adapt their teaching strategies, provide additional support where needed, and tailor instruction to address specific challenges that students may be facing.
- **Promotes Active Participation:** Regular assessments encourage active participation in class discussions and activities, as students are aware that their understanding will be evaluated periodically. This engagement contributes to a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.
- **Enhances Long-Term Retention:** The spaced repetition of key concepts in progressive exams contributes to better long-term retention of information. By revisiting and reinforcing previously learned material, students are more likely to retain knowledge beyond the exam period.
- **Customization of Learning Paths:** Progressive exams allow for the customization of learning paths based on individual student performance. Educators can tailor their instructional approach to address the specific needs and strengths of each student, fostering a more personalized learning experience.

- **Preparation for Real-World Challenges:** In many professional settings, individuals are required to continuously update their skills and knowledge. Progressive exams mimic this real-world scenario, preparing students for a lifetime of learning and adaptation to new information and challenges.
- **Fair Assessment:** By distributing the assessment across multiple exams, educators can more accurately gauge a student's overall understanding and competence.

In summary, progressive exams offer a holistic approach to assessment, promoting continuous learning, providing timely feedback, and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of students' abilities and knowledge.

Year	November	Summer
1 st Year	All units of learning (UOL) assessed.	All units of learning assessed.
2 nd Year	All of 2 nd year and some UOL from 1 st year.	All of 2 nd year and different UOL from 1 st year.
3 rd Year	All of 3 rd year and different UOL from 1 st year and some from 2 nd year.	
5 th Year	All units of learning from September.	All UOL covered in 5 th year.
6 th Year	All UOL from September and some from 5 th year.	

Vary 1st year Units of Learning in 2nd and 3rd year exams to ensure all topics are assessed before mock examinations in 3rd year. Progress/Summer Exam results should reflect results achieved by students in the mocks/Junior Cert exams.

- The total number of days required for Leaving Certificate mock examinations will be kept under review.

- Marked scripts will be handed back to students in all cases.
- All Summative Assessments are coordinated by the Examinations Committee. The formality of November, Summer and Mock examinations is highly regarded by students, staff and parents.
- For in-house examinations a common assessment takes place in all subjects in first year, through second and third year. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.
- While the setting and marking of tests is onerous, the practice of Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate students sitting both November and Mock examinations in February will continue.

Monthly/End of Topic/Unit Assessments - These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly basis or at the end of each unit of learning. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents, on the level of each student's attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

Transition Years:

As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years.

Portfolio assessments take place in May.

Transition Year assessments involves the following: external certification, portfolio work, oral presentation and interview.

Schedule of Assessments

As indicated by Circular Letter 0024/2016 - There is a need to avoid 'over-assessment' and the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments across the full range of subjects. In this context, the Classroom-Based Assessments will substitute other assessments currently undertaken in the school such as in-house examinations, etc. as appropriate.

Acknowledging the DES's directive to avoid 'over-assessing', subject departments and management, in consideration of scheduled DES dates, will review the need for in-house examinations going forward.

State Examinations:

The school will support students in preparation for the State Examinations. We will ensure that students are fully informed of the practices and procedures necessary for these examinations. The Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations begin the first Wednesday after the June Bank Holiday Monday each year. The exact timetable of examinations is usually available from the previous January.

Reporting Procedures

- As the Progress Examinations are held in November, there is adequate time for correction of these tests before Christmas. An agreed date will be set for the input of these results to VSware.
- Reports are made available to parents in December and in June through VSware. In the case of mock examinations, reports are available to parents as soon as possible following the examinations.
- Subject Departments or individuals are free to incorporate results of continuous assessment with the results of the formal November and/or Summer tests.
- There are many different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to students and parents (Non Standardised Reports).
- Assessment for Learning — teachers may give constructive feedback (both verbal and written) to students as part of the homework correction.
- Direct Contact - the teacher may decide as they see fit to contact the parent/guardian directly with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student.
- Parents are welcome to arrange a meeting by appointment.
- Signature of Parent on Assessment — the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Parents may access their child's report cards through the VSWare system.
- Parent Teacher Meetings — there are Parent Teacher Meetings for all year groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings it will be possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians of individual students that generate an accurate picture of the student's progress.

Continuous Professional Development:

Staff CPD is an integral component of the ethos and philosophy of Coláiste Choilm. Teaching & learning courses support formative assessment and this is embedded through initiatives such as Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century (TL21).

In line with the demands of the syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers set regular homework, comment on the merits of work and make suggestions for improvement. Positive comments, student peer assessment and 'comment only feedback' are encouraged when suitable. Assessment work may be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of the individual.

Identification of Educational Needs. As outlined in the Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2017) the first step in the continuum of support framework is the identification of needs. The following identification process is employed.

- All incoming first year students complete the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) 7 to 8 months prior to starting secondary school. Differential Aptitude Tests (DATS) are administered to all Third-year students.
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator and Principal visit the feeder schools to get a greater insight into the strengths and needs of incoming students and to ease the transition process.
- Educational Passports from primary schools are forwarded to the school and copies of any relevant psychological reports are sought from parents/guardians.
- Where a special educational need is identified, input from support services/agencies such as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), and Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) will be sought prior to the student starting school and case meetings conducted. The information gathered on each student is compiled and all teaching staff have access to it at their discretion.

The Special Education Needs (SEN) department analyse this data and identify those students who will require additional diagnostic testing. The SEN Coordinator administers attainment tests to identify the nature of their academic needs. Students who attain scores below the 10th percentile in numeracy and/or literacy are prioritised for support as well as students with documented needs; social, emotional and behavioural (school SEN policy; 2018 and Circular 0014/2017).

- Class tutors, subject teachers, year heads and the pastoral care team collaborate with the SEN department throughout the year in identifying any students who may have transient and/or emergent needs who require support.
- Support plans are devised with input from parents, the student themselves, outside professionals and relevant SEN teachers and are reviewed each term.

Ratification of policy:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7th April 2025.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)