

# NUACHT

Issue No 2 – November 2019

**BALLOT SPECIAL**

## Ballot on SLAR meetings

### Vote YES

A ballot on the timing of Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings takes place in November.

**This ballot arises because some schools have consistently proposed that SLAR meetings be held outside normal school tuition hours.** This is at variance with the terms of Circular Letter 0015/2017 issued by the Department of Education and Skills, the Appendix to the Junior Cycle Reform Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation, and a statement of clarification provided to the ASTI by the Department of Education and Skills in December 2015.

*“The 40 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to Junior Cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate SLAR meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers’ bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting.”*

Appendix to the Junior Cycle Reform Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation, July 2015 and Department of Education and Skills’ Circular 0015/2017

*“The Department confirms that any attempt to impose the organisation of SLAR meetings entirely outside school hours would contravene the agreement. The intention is that SLAR meetings will be scheduled to commence within the timetable, involving the inclusion of a normal timetabled period. However, given the required duration [approximately two hours per meeting], flexibility to run beyond the normal school day for some of the duration of the meeting is required.”*

Extract from Department of Education and Skills letter to ASTI, December 2015

In May 2018, the ASTI Central Executive Council (CEC) passed a motion stating that the ASTI issue a directive to members to comply with the ASTI’s position that *all SLAR meetings must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run over.* (cont’d on page 2).

The ASTI is urging members to vote YES in this ballot.

#### Ballot arrangements

Ballot material will arrive in schools from mid-November. The ASTI is instructing School Stewards to distribute and collect ballot material between November 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. The closing date for the return of completed ballot papers is 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. Post can take a number of days. Please post early to ensure your vote is counted.

  
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**Stand up for teaching**

Stand up for teaching and adhere to the agreement. Vote YES to authorise the ASTI to issue a directive on the scheduling of SLAR meetings.

It is vital that all members who are entitled to vote, participate in the ballot.

**In May 2018, the ASTI Central Executive Council (CEC) passed the following motion:**

*That CEC adopt the view that the current arrangement for SLAR meetings, where a portion of all these meetings take place outside of school time, contravenes section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform. Therefore CEC adopt the view that section 9.7 means that all SLAR meetings must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run over, and issue a directive to members to comply.*

In passing the motion, CEC acknowledged that a ballot of members would be necessary to give effect to the motion and enable the necessary directive to ASTI members to be issued.

**Exhausting other avenues**

Standing Committee decided to hold the ballot in reserve while the ASTI explored other avenues for a resolution. Standing Committee also issued a Junior Cycle Implementation Declaration on SLARs (see below).

**Talks**

The ASTI raised the scheduling of SLAR meetings at the Department of Educations and Skills' Junior Cycle Implementation Body. We are participating in a subcommittee which was established to resolve the matter. Unfortunately, no acceptable proposals have emerged to date.

**JUNIOR CYCLE  
SUBJECT LEARNING  
AND ASSESSMENT  
REVIEW  
MEETINGS**



The Appendix to the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (July 2015) and Circular Letter 0015/2017 both state:

**“The 40 minute professional time period provided within timetable is available to teachers on the basis that they will use this time flexibly including bundling time periods and carrying forward time to facilitate professional collaboration. Teachers may also use the time periods for individual planning, feedback or reporting activities relating to Junior Cycle. In particular, time periods will need to be bundled to facilitate SLAR meetings. Since professional collaboration meetings can only be held when the relevant subject teachers can be present, a limited number of meetings may need to draw on teachers’ bundled time to run beyond normal school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting”**

A further clarification relating to SLAR meetings was provided by the Department of Education and Skills to ASTI in December 2015. It stated as follows:

**“The Department confirms that any attempt to impose the organisation of SLAR meetings entirely outside school hours would contravene the agreement. The intention is that SLAR meetings will be scheduled to commence within the timetable, involving the inclusion of a normal timetabled period. However, given the required duration [approximately two hours per meeting], flexibility to run beyond the normal school day for some of the duration of the meeting is required.”**

In the context of the above, the ASTI is issuing the following Implementation Declaration:

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### Why ASTI is urging a YES vote

The ballot on SLAR meetings is about teachers’ terms and conditions. A strong YES vote will send a message to the Department of Education and Skills that unilateral changes to agreed work arrangements, leading to a deterioration in teachers’ terms and conditions, will not be tolerated.

### Why is this ballot being held?

This ballot arises because in some schools attempts are being made to schedule SLAR meetings contrary to Section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation on Junior Cycle Reform. The ballot seeks to copper-fasten the details for ASTI members on the conduct of SLARs and put an end to the situation whereby in some schools teachers are being put under pressure by school managements to attend SLAR meetings which are in breach of the agreed arrangements.

### What happens if this ballot is passed?

The ASTI will issue a Directive to members to **only attend SLAR meetings which are in compliance with the agreed arrangements.** In following this directive ASTI members will have the protection of their union and industrial relations legislation.

### If the ballot is passed, and a Directive is issued, is this a breach of the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA)?

The Directive issued will instruct members to comply with the Department of Education and Skills’ own agreement/ Circular letters in relation to the scheduling of SLARs. The ASTI holds the view that this is in conformity with the terms of the PSSA.

### Guidance for School Stewards

Ballot material and instructions for conducting a ballot in a school have been sent to School Stewards. In addition, an instructional video for School Stewards is available on the ASTI website [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

### ASTI Implementation Declaration on SLAR meetings

**Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings should be scheduled within a school’s timetable. A limited number of meetings may run beyond school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting.**

Moreover, the APPENDIX TO JOINT STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES AND IMPLEMENTATION also provides as follows:

5.5. It is accepted that there will be timetabling implications for schools arising from the commitment to support professional collaboration among teachers and implications for leadership within schools arising from the significant changes that will be taking place in teaching, learning and assessment at Junior Cycle.

5.6. It is agreed that the reforms will not impose additional workload and time demands on teachers. It is also acknowledged that teachers’ professional practice will adapt and develop significantly as a result of these reforms.



A strong YES vote sends the message that a unilateral change to agreed work arrangements is not acceptable.


  
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**BALLOT PAPER**

**Do you vote in favour of authorising ASTI Standing Committee, in the context of section 9.7 of the Appendix to Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation of Junior Cycle Reform, to direct ASTI members to attend SLAR meetings on the basis that they must be scheduled to start and end within normal school tuition hours, and only a limited number may run beyond school tuition hours for some of the duration of the meeting?**

Please mark X in the appropriate box

**YES** 
  
**NO**

Please read instructions on reverse of this ballot paper.

**Please ensure your ballot paper reaches  
ASTI Head Office by 5.30 p.m.  
on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

**Vote YES**