

Consultation on Junior Cycle reform

Make your voice heard now

The recent announcement on Junior Cycle reform by the Minister for Education and Skills has angered ASTI members. Teachers, who are the practitioners, were not consulted.

The Minister's plans - which are contained in the document *A Framework for Junior Cycle* - differ significantly from proposals put forward by the NCCA in November 2011 - (see page 3).

The ASTI is undertaking a comprehensive consultation with its members on the Minister's reform plans over the coming weeks. It is vital the views of teachers are communicated to the Minister and to the partners in education (including parents) before it is too late.

We are asking all ASTI members to become fully engaged in this consultation process. The Minister's reform plans have significant implications for teachers, schools and students.

As a member of the ASTI and teacher practitioner we are asking you to:

- Read through the information contained in this *Nuacht* on the Minister's Junior Cycle reform plans.
- Download and read the Minister's document *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (available on the ASTI webpage 'Consultation on Junior Cycle Reform' - www.asti.ie - and at www.ncca.ie).
- Consider the questions on page 4 of this *Nuacht*.
- Attend your school's ASTI Consultation Meeting on Junior Cycle Reform, organised by your ASTI School Steward.
- Express your views on the Minister's *A Framework for Junior Cycle*.

"OK, so I've expressed my views to my school steward – what happens now?"

Your ASTI School Steward will fill out the ASTI's Junior Cycle Reform Feedback Form and return it to ASTI Head Office.

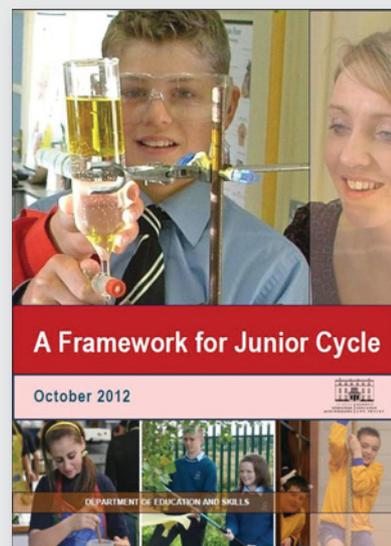
School Stewards and ASTI members are also being asked to attend their November branch meeting where the issue will be discussed. Branches will also feed the views of schools and branch members back to ASTI Head Office.

A special meeting of the ASTI Central Executive Council will be held in January 2013 to discuss teachers' views on the Minister's *A Framework for Junior Cycle*.

Feedback from schools and branches will form the basis of ASTI policy on the Minister's Junior Cycle reform plans.

A Special Convention on April 5th 2013 will formally adopt ASTI policy on the Framework for Junior Cycle.

This policy will be communicated to the Minister and to the partners in education. It will be used to advocate for Junior Cycle reform that is educationally sound and workable.

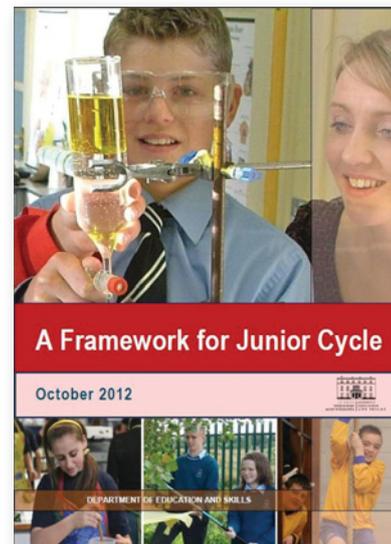


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A Framework for Junior Cycle – key points

- The current Junior Certificate, as a State Certificate, will be awarded for the last time in 2016.
- From 2017 onwards, each school will award its own certificate at the end of Junior Cycle.
- The Framework for Junior Cycle will be phased in, beginning with a new English curriculum and optional short courses for first year students entering in 2014/15.
- From 2014/15 onwards first year students will take a maximum of 10 subjects for Junior Cycle certification.
- Schools have the option of providing short courses for incoming students from 2014/15. Students can substitute two short courses for one full subject for certification purposes. A maximum of four short courses may be taken for certification.
- The first revised subject to be introduced under the Framework is English. Other revised subjects will be phased in up until 2017/18. Assessment in subjects will involve school components in second and third year (40% of marks), and a final assessment at the end of third year (60% of marks).
- The State Exams Commission (SEC) will set the third year final assessment papers/assignments in all subjects for an initial period. The SEC will administer and mark final assessment papers/assignments in English, Irish and maths for an initial period. Administration & marking of other subjects will be school based.
- After 2017 the SEC's involvement in setting and marking papers will be phased out and eventually the setting and marking of all exam papers will be school based.
- For all short courses and Priority Learning Units (for SEN students) assessment will be school based.
- As part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, from 2014, towards the end of second year, all students will sit standardised tests in English and Maths (and in Irish in Irish-medium schools). From 2016 students will also sit standardised tests in Science.
- A Junior Cycle Achievement Profile will be awarded to students by their schools in the autumn after the end of Junior Cycle. This profile will consist of two parts: 1) the school certificate containing the grades awarded in years two and three of Junior Cycle (including in final assessments) and the results of standardised tests and 2) a report to parents on other aspects of students' learning experiences such as attendance, teamwork and behaviour.



This summary does not cover all the important and detailed information all teachers need to know.

It is vital that all members read *A Framework for Junior Cycle* published by the Department of Education and Skills in October 2012, and available on the ASTI website - www.asti.ie

Key differences between NCCA proposals and Minister's plans

The Minister's plans for Junior Cycle reform differ significantly from proposals put forward by the NCCA in November 2011, which included externally set and externally marked exams and a national State Certificate.

| Minister's decision, October 2012 | Differences to NCCA proposals, November 2011 |
|--|--|
| The new Junior Cycle certificate will be a school certificate, equivalent to Level 3 of National Qualifications Framework. | The NCCA had proposed that the new Junior Certificate be a national qualification awarded by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) equivalent to Level 3 of National Qualifications Framework. |
| There will be terminal assessment in all subjects, initially set by the SEC but administered and marked in the school, except in English, Irish and Maths which will be set, administered and marked by the State Examinations Commission for an initial period.* The SEC will only set papers in all subjects for a limited period. Eventually the SEC will have no role in setting or marking any of the papers for Junior Cycle. | The NCCA had proposed terminal assessment in all subjects to be set, administered and marked by the State Examinations Commission. |
| Terminal assessments will be worth 60% of overall grade. They will be in the form of written papers or assignments at end of Year 3. The paper or assignment will be administered by the school at the end of May (or for an initial period by the SEC in June for English, Irish and Maths).* | The NCCA had proposed all terminal assessments to be set and administered by State Examinations Commission in June |
| 40% of overall grade will be awarded by teacher for school-based assessment tasks completed in Years 2 and 3. Grades awarded by teacher subjected to internal moderation by teachers. No external moderation. | The NCCA had proposed that 40% of overall grades be provisionally awarded by teacher for school-based assessment tasks completed in Years 2 and 3. The NCCA proposed provisional grades awarded by teachers would be subject to internal moderation by teachers and external moderation on a sample basis by State Examinations Commission. |
| Final composite grade to be determined and awarded by school. | The NCCA had proposed that the final composite grade be determined and awarded by State Examinations Commission. |
| Most students will take between 8 and a maximum of 10 subjects in the new school-based certification. Students can take a maximum of 4 short courses. Short courses are optional for schools. (2 short courses = 1 subject) | The NCCA had proposed, as required under the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, a cap of 8 subjects in the Junior Certificate examination or 7 subjects and up to 2 short courses or 6 subjects and up to 4 short courses. |

* Terminal assessments in English, Irish and Maths will continue to be externally administered and assessed by the State Examinations Commission for a number of years.

Remember

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- Download and read the Minister's document *A Framework for Junior Cycle* (available on the ASTI webpage 'Consultation on Junior Cycle Reform' - www.asti.ie - and at www.ncca.ie).
- Consider the questions opposite.
- Attend your school's ASTI Consultation Meeting on Junior Cycle Reform, organised by your ASTI School Steward.
- Attend your November Branch meeting to discuss the issue.

Over to you ...

The ASTI is looking for your views as a teacher practitioner on the Minister's Framework for Junior Cycle.

The following questions should be comprehensively discussed at your school's ASTI staff meeting on Junior Cycle reform.

1. a) What are your views on the ways the Framework for Junior Cycle might improve the learning outcomes for students in your school?

b) In what ways might the Framework for Junior Cycle disimprove the learning outcomes for students in your school?
2. What are your views on the Framework's proposals for school-based assessment?
3. What are your views on the replacement of a State Certificate at the end of Junior Cycle with a school certificate?
4. What are your views on optional short courses in the Framework?
5. What are your views on the time-frame for the introduction of the Framework?
6. What are the main issues that arise for you in relation to the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle?

School stewards have been asked to reflect the range of views expressed at school staff meetings in their feedback

Please make sure you get involved in the ASTI consultation.

We want to make sure teachers' views are heard by the Minister and the partners in education.