



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

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# Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) – A Citizenship Course

## Draft Specification for Junior Cycle Short Course

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## **Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)**

### **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 students, 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**

CSPE contributes to building the skills students will need to live responsibly in a democracy. It gives them an understanding of economic, social and political structures at local, national and global levels and gives young people the opportunity to imagine and create ways in which they can make a difference to the lives of individuals and communities. CSPE helps students to question, critique and evaluate what is happening in the world; it provides students with an understanding of their rights and social responsibilities; it fosters an awareness that we all live in an interdependent world; and most importantly, it places reflective action 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.

## **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.

<b>Links</b>	
Statements of learning (SOL)	
Statement	Examples of related learning in the course
<p>The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.</p> <p><i>SOL 7</i></p>	<p>Across all strands of the course, students learn about issues that concern them and the wider world and consider their role and responsibility in bringing about change. Student-led action based on an understanding of human rights and social responsibilities is encouraged. Students keep reflective journals to record the knowledge, skills and insights they have gained as they engage with active citizenship.</p>
<p>The student understands the origin and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him.</p> <p><i>SOL 9</i></p>	<p>Students gain an understanding of the causes and consequences of a range of global challenges and identify how different issues, people and places are connected. They also explore the role and relevance of economic and political structures to their lives and the contribution Ireland can make to creating a more just and sustainable future.</p>
<p>The student has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably.</p> <p><i>SOL 10</i></p>	<p>Students are challenged to consider their role in contributing and responding to the challenges facing the world. Strand 2 focuses on sustainable development and invites students to discuss the various sustainable living strategies they can employ in their lives.</p>

<p>Brings an idea from conception to realisation.</p> <p><i>SOL 23</i></p>	<p>In each strand students must decide on, plan and carry out two actions. The student's action record requires reflection both on how the action was conceived and how it was realised.</p>
<p>Literacy and numeracy</p>	
<p>Literacy and numeracy skills are embedded across each of the strands and in the learning outcomes.</p> <p>Students develop their oral literacy skills through the strong focus on communication, discussion and debate in each strand. They develop their reading and comprehension skills when they research, examine and explain case studies and information. The writing skills of students are developed as they source and record information on issues of concern and relevance to them, and as they write reflections on their learning. Their digital literacy skills are developed as they use digital technology for research and presentation purposes. Media literacy skills are developed when students analyse the role of the media in a democracy.</p> <p>Students develop their numeracy skills as they carry out surveys, access and interpret numerical data, examine the distribution of global resources and participate in mock elections. Students also develop an awareness of the use and misuse of data. The course helps students see trends, patterns and relationships between issues.</p>	



### Other key skills

Each key skill has a number of elements which clarify the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to that key skill. The elements and their learning outcomes are set out in detail in [Key Skills of Junior Cycle](#). There are opportunities to support all key skills in this course but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify the key skills and elements that are related to the learning activities of CSPE. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Key skill	Key skill element	Student learning activity
Being creative	Imagining	<p>Students use their imaginations to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ develop empathetic thinking by considering issues from different perspectives</li> <li>▪ take inspiration from the activists they encounter in their research and in person</li> <li>▪ imagine ways that they can make a positive difference in the world.</li> </ul>
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

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		information.
Managing myself	Being able to reflect on my own learning	Students keep a reflective 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 Being safe	Students become aware of themselves as local and global citizens with rights and responsibilities and become familiar with ideas such as 'the common good'.
Working with others	Contributing to making the world a better place	There is a strong focus on linking learning with action. Through taking action, students become more empowered and see how, by working with others, they can make a real difference.

## Course overview

**Strand 1** Rights and responsibilities (foundational strand)

**Strand 2** Global citizenship

**Strand 3** Exploring democracy

Collaborative and active learning and the development of skills in citizenship, research, reflection and action are integrated across each of the three strands. Study of strand one is essential for their successful engagement with strands two and three.

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

The course has been designed for at least 100 hours of student engagement.

## Expectations for students

With the publication of the specification online, examples of student work will be used to illustrate the expectations for students in the short course. These examples will be related directly to a learning outcome or groups of learning outcomes. They will be annotated, indicating whether the work is in line with, ahead of, or behind expectations for students.

<b>Strand 1 Rights and responsibilities</b>	
Students learn about...	Students should be able to...
Human dignity – the basis for human rights	<p>1.1 discuss what it means to be human and to live in a community</p> <p>1.2 express their views on what is needed in order for people to have a sense of human dignity</p> <p>1.3 explain the link between human dignity and human rights and responsibilities</p> <p>1.4 access and interpret numerical data showing local and global distribution of basic resources</p> <p>1.5 assemble a 'basic needs basket' representing the needs of a family living in Ireland.</p>
Human rights instruments	<p>1.6 create a timeline tracing the origin of the concept of human rights, showing key dates, events, people and documents</p> <p>1.7 communicate their understanding of how the UNDHR, UNCRC and ECHR<sup>1</sup> applies to their lives, in terms of both their rights and their responsibilities</p> <p>1.8 categorize examples of social, cultural, economic, civic, religious, environmental and political rights</p> <p>1.9 outline different perspectives in situations where there is an apparent conflict of rights or an abuse of rights</p> <p>1.10 show an appreciation of their responsibility to promote</p>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

	and defend their individual human rights and those of others.
<p><b>Human rights actions</b></p> <p>Complete <b>two</b> of the following actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ identify a human rights issue of concern and engage with an individual or group or organisation or campaign focusing on that issue</li><li>▪ devise a class charter of rights and responsibilities</li><li>▪ 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</li><li>▪ develop and conduct a survey focusing on a human rights issue(s) and publicise the survey findings</li><li>▪ use technology to communicate with a young person or a group of young people from another country about a human rights issue of mutual concern.</li></ul>	

<b>Strand 2 Global citizenship</b>	
Students learn about...	Students should be able to...
Sustainability	<p>2.1 communicate how they are connected to 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 the various sustainable living strategies they can employ in their lives</p>
Local and global development	<p>2.5 discuss positive and negative effects of development in their local area</p> <p>2.6 critique the Human Development Index (HDI) as a measure of development</p> <p>2.7 examine case studies of people living in high, medium and low development countries</p> <p>2.8 consider a range of perspectives on the future direction that development should take</p>
Affecting global change	<p>2.9 identify the main actors and institutions with power in the world today, explaining the role of each</p> <p>2.10 assess Ireland's power and influence in relation to these actors and institutions</p> <p>2.11 demonstrate belief that they can contribute in responding to the challenges currently facing the world</p>

	<p>2.12 investigate a global issue or challenge, analysing causes, consequences, impact on people’s lives and possible solutions</p>
<p><b>Global citizenship actions</b></p> <p>Complete <b>two</b> of the following actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ organise a debate about a local or global development issue of concern</li><li>▪ use digital technology to design and apply an awareness-raising tool to gain support for a local or global development issue</li><li>▪ support or start a local, national or international initiative or campaign which aims to address a local or global development issue</li><li>▪ invite a local political representative to answer questions about addressing a local or global development issue of concern</li><li>▪ lobby a local, national or international body about a development issue of concern</li></ul>	

<b>Strand 3 Exploring democracy</b>	
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>3.4 research contemporary examples of a variety of systems of government, taking particular note of the ways in which the state interacts with its citizens</p> <p>3.5 use the correct terminology in describing Irish and European democratic institutions, structures, political parties and roles</p> <p>3.6 demonstrate belief in the democratic process</p>
The law and the citizen	<p>3.7 discuss why laws are needed</p> <p>3.8 evaluate the role of the law and its enforcement on their lives</p> <p>3.9 explain the role and relevance of local, national and international courts</p> <p>3.10 describe the grounds under which discrimination is illegal in Irish law</p> <p>3.11 investigate how individuals or groups have used the law to bring about positive change in society</p>



<p>The role of the media in a democracy</p>	<p>3.12 debate the pros and cons of 'freedom of the press'</p> <p>3.13 discuss how the media's portrayal of different groups within society might influence the ability of those groups to participate in society</p> <p>3.14 examine case studies of the use of digital media in <b>one</b> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a social movement</li> <li>a political election</li> <li>a criminal investigation</li> <li>an environmental movement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Democracy actions</b></p> <p>Complete <b>two</b> of the following actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ track and present the process of a local, national or international political election or a national referendum</li> <li>▪ participate in one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a class election</li> <li>b. a mock election using the proportional representation (single transferable vote) system of voting</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ organise a guest speaker event or field trip to examine an aspect of the legal or democratic system of interest</li> <li>▪ engage in democratic action on an issue of concern using digital technology</li> </ul>	

## Assessment and certification

### Assessment and CSPE

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 reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the features of quality of particular pieces of work. In this way a sense of student agency is promoted, which is at the heart of the rationale for citizenship education. They plan the next steps in their learning, based on feedback they receive. Feedback from the teacher and their peers is also an important feature of taking action as it helps the students evaluate the progress they are making in achieving their goals and decide what changes might be needed. Ongoing assessment can support the student in their learning journey and in preparing for the assessment related to the certification of the short course.

### Assessment for certification

Assessment for certification will be school-based. There are two assessment tasks involved: a Reflective Journal and completion of two Action Records.

The tasks will be weighted as follows

<b>Reflective Journal</b>  20%	<b>Action Record</b>  1 x 30%  1 x 50%
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## **Reflective Journal**

A Reflective Journal is created by the students to help them reflect on their learning throughout the course. The journal can be in written, digital, audio or visual form.

The journal entries should include

- a summary of information they have learned
- a record of particular insights they have gained
- reflection on skills they have developed
- reflection on what they have learned from this and what it means for their own lives or for the future.

Students make entries to their journals at the end of each topic and strand. Although students are to be encouraged to make the journal their own they are advised that a teacher will periodically check to see that journal entries are being made. To facilitate the teacher in checking the journals the students are asked to highlight two or three journal entries for each strand which illustrate significant learning and which include the content listed above. These entries are checked collectively rather than one by one. Towards the end of the short course the students submit their journals to the teacher and are awarded up to 20% for the journal.

## **Action Record**

Students are required to create an Action Record for any **two** actions taken during the short course. The actions chosen should relate to two different strands of the course and be undertaken at different times in the course. The first action record is allocated 30% of the marks, the second is worth 50%. This allocation of marks recognises that students will build the skills for active citizenship throughout the course and show a greater capacity to demonstrate these and reflect on their actions as their work on the course progresses.

The action record may be produced in written, digital, visual or audio formats.

Alternatively, it may be presented via an interview or presentation. Many of the actions

may involve students working with others. This is important in CSPE where students are learning the potential power of working with others to bring about change. However, the student's individual role and contribution to the action will be the focus of assessment for certification. While the action record is assessed for certification at a particular point in time, it is developed over time and in that way can capture both the action itself and the student's reflections upon completion of the action.

Regardless of the format chosen, students should ensure that each action record communicates

- why I chose this action
- what the goals of my action were and what means I chose to achieve my goals
- how I sourced and used research
- how I worked with others in planning and carrying out the action
- how I organised and managed myself
- key moments or milestones
- any challenges or set-backs I encountered
- evidence of my individual participation in the action
- my overall reflections on what I have learned through participating in and carrying out the action

### **Rationale for the assessment tasks**

Assessment in CSPE is directly related to the aim and learning outcomes of the short course. It allows students to choose some of what they will present for assessment and the format they will present it in. It gives students opportunities to set goals, meet deadlines and take responsibility for gathering evidence of their learning. Students can use the features of quality to reflect on and make judgements about their own and others' learning. In these ways a sense of student agency and efficacy is promoted which are important characteristics of active citizenship. Students are not only learning *about* democracy, human rights and responsibility. They are exercising responsibility and decision making in the ways they are learning and being assessed. Where the

material used in the assessment tasks derives from issues of genuine interest and concern to students, assessment in CSPE can contribute to the empowerment of young people to become more active and reflective citizens.

The course also places a strong emphasis on the development of skills, particularly skills for active citizenship as well as those that build the student's capacity to reflect on their learning and their actions. Both assessment tasks, the journal and the records, underpin this emphasis on developing skills for active and reflective citizenship. In summary, the focus of assessment for certification in CSPE is on assessing the learning outcomes related to becoming an active and reflective citizen.

### **The main learning outcomes to be assessed**

Assessment draws on learning outcomes from across the course as well as literacy, numeracy and other key skills. The outcomes presented in the table below are particularly significant in the context of the journal and action record.

<b>Reflective Journal</b>	<b>Action Record</b>
1.1, 1.10, 2.4, 2.8, 2.11, 3.1	1.10, 2.1, 2.11, 2.12, 3.6

### **Features of quality**

Features of quality related to student work on the journal and action records are set out below. In general terms, these can be used by students and by teachers to support their discussions about and judgements of work generated in response to the assessment task. More specifically, the features of quality are the criteria that will be used by teachers in the process of marking and at moderation meetings, to assess and discuss the student's work on the assessment tasks.

<b>Reflective Journal</b>
<p><b>Achieved with Distinction (90-100%<sup>2</sup>)</b></p> <p>The entries show informed and well-constructed personal insights on the topics and clear evidence of a capacity to reflect on how the learning is influencing their attitudes, opinions and behaviour.</p>
<p><b>Achieved with Higher Merit (75-89%)</b></p> <p>The entries show considered and personal insights on the topics and evidence of a capacity to reflect on how the learning is influencing their attitudes, opinions and behaviour.</p>
<p><b>Achieved with Merit (55-74%)</b></p> <p>The entries demonstrate some personal insights on the topics, and not simply a summary of information or of other peoples' views. Some capacity to reflect on how the learning is influencing their attitudes, opinions and behaviour is also evident.</p>
<p><b>Achieved (40-54%)</b></p> <p>The entries provide a basic record of information and insights gained, but very limited reflection on how the learning is influencing their attitudes, opinions and behaviour.</p>
<p><b>Not achieved (0-39%)</b></p>

<sup>2 2</sup> In setting out the Features of Quality, percentage ranges are indicated for each of the grades. These would be used if a marks-based assessment process were being adopted in the assessment of short courses. An alternative is to use a criterion-referenced approach where the descriptions alone are used and the grade rather than a mark is awarded. Feedback on the merits of these two approaches will be sought during the forthcoming consultation.

The entries fail to provide a summary of information or insights gained and show little or no evidence of reflection on how the learning is influencing their attitudes, opinions and behaviour.

## Action Record

### Each record should communicate

- why I chose this action
- what the aims of my action were and what means I chose to achieve the aims
- how I sourced and used research
- how I worked with others in carrying out the action
- how I organised and managed myself
- key moments or milestones
- any challenges I encountered
- evidence of my individual participation in the action
- my overall reflections on what I have learned through planning and participating in the action

### Achieved with Distinction (90-100%)

The action record is complete and presented in a comprehensive and clear manner. It captures and conveys both the action taken and reflection upon it. The medium of communication chosen for the action record is used effectively and creatively.

### Achieved with Higher Merit (75-89%)

The action record is complete and presented in an organised and clear manner. It includes attention to and treatment of both the action taken and reflection upon it. The medium of communication chosen for the action record is used effectively and with some

creativity.

**Achieved with Merit (55-74%)**

The action record is largely complete and presented in an organised way with reasonable clarity. It includes material directly related to both the action taken and reflection upon it. The medium of communication chosen for the action record is used to reasonable effect but is not fully exploited.

**Achieved (40-54%)**

The action record is incomplete but presented in an organised manner. There is limited evidence of both the action taken and reflection upon it. The medium of communication chosen for the action record is engaged with but used ineffectively.

**Not achieved (0-39%)**

The action record is incomplete and presented in a disorganised and unclear manner. There is a lack of evidence of the action taken and reflection upon it. The medium of communication chosen for the action record is used ineffectively.



## **Resources**

This part of the specification will identify resources that will support teaching and learning in the short course.

## 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.

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