## John Scottus Secondary School

# Assessment Policy

John Scottus School offers a vision of education which gives young people the self mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them whilst at the same time fulfilling their own unique set of talents and qualities.

It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover their innate gifts, that each child can come to contribute something exceptional and that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is the development of character. Character building is described as the development of good habits such as the ability to be still and self-aware, to attend to the present moment, to participate in the spirit of enquiry and to unite with others around. These habits of attention, enquiry, stillness and unity will provide the foundations for academic excellence, a life of meaningful purpose and a life journey of Self-Discovery.

Mindfulness along with philosophy and meditation are considered the three key aspects in the journey of character building and the development of these habits. The mindful motto of the school is “Delight in the present” and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true Self it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

## 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.

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 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 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 Cycle.
* to assess a student’s eligibility for additional support and services and to inform consultations with the 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.
* 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).

### 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 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.

### 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 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.

### Assessment Task

The written Assessment Task for each subject will be specified and published by the NCCA. It will relate to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. Students must complete their second CBA in order to undertake the associated Assessment Task.

The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher in accordance with a timeframe and guidance from the NCCA. The Assessment Task will be returned to the SEC for marking and will be marked as part of the Final Examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the calculation of the grade for that subject by the SEC. The value to be assigned to the Assessment Task will be included in the assessment guidelines for each subject.

A separate Assessment Task will not be required in those practical subjects where the second CBA will continue to be assessed by the SEC

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Subjects in Junior Cycle with new specifications will be assessed through:

* Two **Classroom Based Assessments** (one in second year and one in third year) reported on to parents/guardians by the school
* An **Assessment Task** (marked by the SEC) in each subject
* A **Final Examination** set, held and marked by the SEC.

The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination will generate a final grade, certified by the SEC.

### 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.

* In late September, an assessment is administered based on the first month’s work. The assessment mark is based on class exams, continuous assessment assignments or a mixture of both.
* All students undertake in-house exams every 11 weeks in November, February and in May.
* Tests are normally 90 minutes in duration.
* Third and sixth year students undertake ‘Mock’ exams in the week before the midterm, in the second term. Examination papers are usually sourced externally.
* Subject Departments may decide to lessen the length of a mock examination by (a) cutting back on the number of questions to be answered or (b) requiring students to sit one paper where two papers are normally set.
* The total number of days required for Leaving Cert mock exams will be kept under review.
* Marked scripts will be handed back to students in all cases.
* All Summative Assessments are coordinated by the Senior Management Team. The formality of Christmas, summer and Mock examinations is highly regarded by students, staff and parents.
* Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests - These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents, on the level of each students 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 December and 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 Exams

The school will support students in preparation for the State Exams. We will ensure that students are fully informed of the practices and procedures necessary for these exams.

The Junior 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

* After each summative assessments, tests are corrected by an agreed date and entered into the student administration system.
* Reports are made available online to parents after each summative assessment through the student administration system. 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 summative assessments.
* There are many different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to students and parents.
* 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.
* Parents may access their child’s academic records online through the student administration 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.

## Homework

In line with the demands of the syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers set regular homework, the purpose of which is to reinforce the learning done in class.

Subject teachers set regular homework, the purpose of which is to reinforce the learning done in class. The amount of homework given and the form it takes varies according to the demands of the subject and the year group. As with classwork, homework is differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils where necessary. Feedback can be provided verbally or in writing, using either comments or grades, or a combination of both as appropriate. The purpose of such feedback is to help ensure that students realise where their strengths lie and where and how improvements can be made.

## Standardised Tests:

The following tests are administered to 1st Year students by the Learning Support Team & Guidance Counsellors:

* Cognitive Ability Test (CAT4) to administered to all 1st years in September of 1st year
* Online English assessments (NGRT) are administered to all first students (NGRT)
* Standardised Numeracy and Literacy assessments (DOTS) are administered the end of 2nd year.
* Differential Aptitude Tests (DATS) are administered to all Transition Year students.

When the results of the tests become available:

* Students with particular needs are identified.
* A programme is devised by the learning support coordinator/resource teacher depending on timetabling and availability of learning support staff.
* Individual Plans are drawn up by the Learning Support Team in conjunction with parents and school management.

Approved by the Board of Management, John Scottus School, Dec 2019

# Appendix 1 – Homework

Regular homework is a valuable aspect of the learning process and contributes to the development of sound study skills. It consolidates and supplements the work done in class and promotes independent learning and creativity. Homework consists of written, reading and revision work. A balanced approach is necessary between homework, extra-curricular and leisure times.

* Each student will be assigned homework each night in subject areas where it applies.
* The amount of homework given in each subject area will be decided on and agreed by the subject teachers.
* Homework will be monitored to ensure that students are not overloaded.
* A rough time guide will be suggested for each year group.
* A balance will be maintained between written/practical work and oral/learning work.
* Teachers will correct homework and give feedback to students.
* Special consideration will be given to students with special educational needs.
* The homework set will have meaning and purpose enhancing the work of the class and preparing the foundation for future learning.
* Students will be given specific training in homework /study skills.
* Students will attend the next homework detention on non-completion of homework
* Homework will form part of an on-going assessment of each student.
* Records of homework, grades and comments will be kept by each teacher.