



08.05.20

## RE: School Closure Update / End of Year Assessment for 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students / School Year 2020-2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We hope you are all well as we continue to face this national public health crisis together. We are writing to you today to update you on the situation in relation to the current school closure and to begin the process of planning for the new school year.

Following the Taoiseach's latest announcement last Friday, we now know for certain that, while our staff will once again be able to access the school building from 18<sup>th</sup> May, students will not be returning to the school building before the end of the current academic year on 29<sup>th</sup> May and that, therefore, learning and teaching will continue remotely until that time.

A summary of the remaining weeks of the school year is as follows:

### Term Three

<b>Week Beginning 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remote learning ongoing for all students.</li><li>• Students in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, TY &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> Year advised of details of end of year projects/assessments by their teachers.</li></ul>
<b>Week beginning 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remote learning ongoing for all students.</li><li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> year students advised of structure of final assessment by their teachers.</li><li>• Online Confirmation of Return.</li></ul>
<b>Week beginning 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remote learning ongoing for all students.</li><li>• Remaining 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, TY &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> year projects and assessments submitted.</li><li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> year end of term assessments take place this week</li></ul>
<b>Week beginning 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remote learning ongoing for all students.</li></ul>
<b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	Last day of remote learning for students.
<b>Early June</b>	Reports for 1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> year students issued.

### End of Year Assessments for 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students

The situation for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students has now changed following last Thursday's announcement by the Department of Education and Skills. Having originally announced that these students would be assessed in September/October, the new plan announced last week made clear that schools would be in a position to decide on assessment and reporting procedures for themselves to be completed before the end of the current school year. The DES will issue a 'completion certificate' in respect of Junior Cycle to all students that will not contain results or grades. Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement (JCPAs) will not issue to this year's cohort of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.

We have now finalised details of how our 3<sup>rd</sup> year students will be assessed and how this will be reported to you. These details are included below in a School Based Assessment Policy for Junior Cycle Students 2020 we have drawn up, in consultation with the staff, LMETB and ETBI and following the guidance issued by the DES.

We believe the DES' new plan to be a much better one for our students, who will not now have the spectre of large-scale assessments hanging over them for the summer. Although the conclusion to their Junior Cycle will be different to that of other year groups, we believe the systems we have put in place will nevertheless be able to provide as complete and fair a picture as possible of their learning over the course of the Junior Cycle programme.



## **Student/Parent/Staff Surveys**

We have begun the process of reviewing the submissions we received from students, parents and staff over the past week. Thank you to those of you who took part. Thank you as well for the very many kind and encouraging words we received from so many of you.

In general, the picture the survey responses portray is a generally positive one, in the circumstances. However, what is also clear is that the current situation is affecting all of us in very different ways. For example, 49% of parents reported that their children were adapting very well or managing comfortably with the current situation, while 31% were making fair progress and 20% are finding things extremely difficult, with students reporting broadly similar numbers in their responses (46%, 38% and 16% respectively).

At this stage, we've identified three broad trends in the responses to all three surveys:

- **Online Classes**

- Many students and parents expressed that they are finding these useful and would like more of them.
- Our teachers are working to expand the provision of online classes where possible, whether live or recorded, and we are prioritising our 6<sup>th</sup> years in this respect.

- **Workload**

- Most parents reported that their children's workload was manageable, while some parents reported that their children did not have enough school work to do, with slightly more reporting that there was too much work and that their children were struggling to manage.
- Students also reported different experiences of managing their workload. Those students who are finding things difficult to manage found that keeping track of their different subjects and the work required was challenging
- In our tutorial engagement with students going forward, we will be reminding them about the importance of routine and keeping to a schedule. We have made resources available to students to help with this.
- If you are concerned about how your child is managing their school work, please get in touch with their Caomhnóir/Moltóir or a member of the Guidance team.

- **Timetable/Schedule**

- A number of parents, students and staff reported challenges around managing the schedule of work and issues around clashes of online classes.
- Teachers will endeavour to stick to the normal school timetable where possible, as we have advised students to do since the beginning of the closure. However, this is not always possible for a variety of reasons. We will be advising students to stick to their normal timetable where there is a clash of online classes, and they can access the clashing class, recorded and stored on Teams or Schoology, when they have available time.

A number of students and parents requested that they be contacted by a member of the school's Guidance team. The members of the Guidance team will be in touch with these students over the coming days and we will continue to analyse and evaluate the responses we received to assist us in delivering the best possible educational experience for our students in the current challenging circumstances.

## **School Year 2020/2021**

### **Confirmation of Return (COR) & Student Direct Contribution**

Under normal circumstances, we would currently be in the midst of preparations for COR day. For those of you new to the school, COR day takes place once a year in May, where each student's parents are asked to confirm that the student is returning to the school in September and to make the first payment of their Student Direct Contribution for the next academic year.



As with so many other things, COR day will not be able to take place as normal, however we are working on an online alternative and we will communicate details to you early next week. The information we gather through this process is critical for us to be able to plan effectively for the new school year.

Our Student Direct Contributions for each year group have been passed by our Board of Management and approved by the board of LMETB and we will pass on details of how and when payment can be made early next week.

We are acutely aware that many of our families will be experiencing challenging financial circumstances due to the ongoing crisis. If you feel you will have trouble paying the Student Direct Contribution for your child/children for next year, please make contact with the school in confidence as soon as possible.

### **Uniforms**

Our school uniform supplier, [schooluniformsdirect.ie](http://schooluniformsdirect.ie), have like all businesses been adapting to the current circumstances and have set up a new 'Pay a Deposit' scheme to allow staged payments for uniforms. [Visit their website](#) for more information.

### **Communication**

Please continue to direct your queries through the main office – 01-8254102 / [ratoathcollege@lmetb.ie](mailto:ratoathcollege@lmetb.ie) – where they can be directed to the right person as necessary. The [special page on our school website](#) continues to be updated with new information as we receive it.

Yours faithfully,

  
Seamus Meehan  
**Principal**

  
Colm Connolly  
**Deputy Principal**

  
Donna Kelly  
**Deputy Principal**

  
John McCarthy  
**Deputy Principal**



# School Based Assessment Policy for Junior Cycle Students 2020

## BACKGROUND

Further to the Minister for Education & Skills, Mr Joe McHugh TD's announcement on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and subsequently on 29<sup>th</sup> April,

- *All third year Junior Cycle students to be awarded certificates for the completion of Junior Cycle by the Department of Education and Skills.*
- *Schools given autonomy to assess students and all students to receive a report on achievement.*

*Schools are also being given autonomy to decide whether to run school-based assessments and what form they take. Options to consider include school-designed examinations, tasks, projects, assignments, essay style questions, presentations, or other tasks agreed at a local level. Guidance for schools on reporting to students and parents, developed with the advice of the advisory group of stakeholders, will be published by the Department.*

## INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the approach that Ratoath College will take in the assessment of Junior Cycle students, 2020. The DES Guidelines for Schools, *Assessment and Reporting on Students' Learning at Junior Cycle, May 2020* has informed the recommended approach outlined.

## OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

The guidelines provide for:

1. A whole school approach to the assessment of Junior Cycle students, 2020.
2. Inclusivity and equity of access by all students.
3. Transparency.
4. Completion of the assessment process by May 29<sup>th</sup>.

## ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

Ratoath College's assessment procedure for Junior Cycle students 2020 provide for the inclusion of the following components:

- Recognition of Prior Learning
- May 2020 Assessment
- Reporting of Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs)

Junior Cycle School Report 2020 will include:	
1. A Grade/Grade Descriptor for each subject based on:	
Recognition of Prior Learning Component – weighted at 90%	May 2020 Assessment – weighted at 10%
2. Grade Descriptors of completed Classroom Based Assessments	
3. Teacher & Caomhnóir Comments	

Where students are engaged in a **Junior Cycle** Subject a Grade Descriptor will be awarded.

Where students are engaged in a **Junior Cert** Subject a traditional grade will be awarded.



All components will be completed and marked by May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020. An assessment report will issue electronically the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

## BREAKDOWN of ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

### 1. A Grade/Grade Descriptor for each subject

#### Recognition of Prior Learning

The recognition of Prior Learning is an important part of our assessment process. In line with the overarching principle of flexibility, the following approach will apply:

The final Grade/Grade Descriptor will be weighted at 90% awarded for learning from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year (up to and including mock exams).

This element of the final grade/grade descriptor is calculated by a company that specialises in predictive analytics for secondary schools in Ireland. These grades are calculated using a student's previous results and are based on an algorithm that has been built and tested using over 10,000 previous Junior Certificate results. These results are unbiased and the best estimate available for what a student would have achieved in the Junior Cycle exams and a reflection of their learning achievements over the past 3 years. The most influential results will be 3<sup>rd</sup> year results, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> year results.

This decision was informed by the DES Guidelines (issued April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

*To ensure equity, greater weighting should be given to work that was completed by students in advance of the closure of schools on 12 March 2020.*

Recognition of Prior Learning Component:	
Total Weighting	90%
Elements of Prior Learning Recognised	Christmas Assessment – 2 <sup>nd</sup> year Summer Assessment – 2 <sup>nd</sup> year Mini-mock Assessment – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Mock Assessment – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year <i>Where a student was absent or is missing one or more of these elements, assessment data from 1<sup>st</sup> year may be used.</i>

#### May 2020 Assessment

Teachers will issue an assessment activity via Schoology to be completed during the week of 18<sup>th</sup> May according to the timetable below.

Students will be advised of the format and duration of each subject assessment in advance by their teachers via Schoology.

Assessments will be designed to take no longer than 1 hour to complete

Students will complete these assessments at home and follow a timetable (see below). Students will be expected to stick to this timetable and to submit their completed assessments as instructed by their teachers in each subject before the deadline for each subject.



While it will not be possible for all state exam style Reasonable Accommodations (RACE) to be put into effect for these assessments, our Learning Support team will be in touch with the students concerned to assist them in advance of the assessments taking place.

Guidance for completing these assessments for parents and students is included below.

### **Arrangements for Subjects with Practical Components**

Students of Materials Technology Wood, Metalwork and Home Economics **will** complete an assessment in May.

Students of Visual Art and Technical Graphics **will not** complete an assessment in May.

For **Materials Technology Wood, Metalwork and Home Economics** the teachers of these departments will collectively assess the work completed to date by students on their projects/practical work and assign a grade to this work. These grades will then form part of the Grade awarded on each student's report alongside the Recognition of the Prior Learning and May 2020 Assessment components.

In **Visual Art**, CBAs are a much more significant element of the students' learning than other subjects so there is considerably less assessment data available to establish a fair and accurate Recognition of Prior Learning component to the grade in comparison to all other subjects. Therefore, the teachers of the Art department will collectively assess the work completed to date by students on their final projects and assign a grade to this work, which will be reported alongside students' CBA grade descriptors.

For **Technical Graphics**, given the nature of the Junior Cert exam and the equipment and setting required for it, it would not be appropriate or fair to students for an assessment to take place now at home. As a result, each student's grade for Technical Graphics will be based 100% on the Recognition of Prior Learning component.

### **2. Grade Descriptors of Completed Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs)**

Where complete, the final report will include the Grade Descriptors awarded for CBAs in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The subjects concerned here are English, Science, French/Italian, Business Studies and Visual Art.

### **3. Teacher & Caomhnóir Comments**

As with normal school reports, each subject report will include a teacher comment and the report will include an overall comment from each student's Caomhnóir.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS on MAY 2020 ASSESSMENT**

Once complete, a full list of the details of the assessments to take place in each subject will be communicated to parents/guardians.



## TIMETABLE FOR MAY 2020 ASSESSMENTS

DATE / DAY	SUBJECT	TIME
Monday May 18 <sup>th</sup>	Science	09.30-10.30
	English	11.30-12.30
	Maths	14.30-15.30
Tuesday May 19 <sup>th</sup>	French / Italian	09.30-10.30
	History	11.30-12.30
	Music / Metalwork	14.30-15.30
Wednesday May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Home Economics	09.30-10.30
	Irish	11.30-12.30
	Materials Technology Wood	14.30-15.30
Thursday May 21 <sup>st</sup>	Classics	09.30-10.30
	Business Studies	11.30-12.30
Friday May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Geography	09.30-10.30

### Please Note:

- Insofar as possible, students should complete the assessment at the times scheduled in this timetable for each subject and submit their completed assessment within 30 minutes of the end time for each subject.
- Students are free to use whatever resources they wish to help during their assessments, but they must take no longer than 1 hour to complete the assessment.



## GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS FOR MAY 2020 ASSESSMENTS

- Your young person needs your support during this challenging time, particularly in terms of engaging with assessment.
- Your young person's wellbeing is paramount at this time. Ensure he/she is eating healthily, taking time for exercise/activities and striking a balance between schoolwork and downtime.
- Assure your young person that assessments are an opportunity to celebrate their learning.
- Be familiar with each subject department's plan for assessment.
- Check in regularly to see if your young person is managing his/her timetable.
- Ensure your young person has the materials they require for engaging in assessments.
- Display relevant information somewhere prominent to help your young person remain focused for the remainder of the term
- If your young person misses a deadline submission of an assessment for a genuine reason (illness, broadband issues, etc.) please contact the subject teacher who will endeavour to ensure every student has a fair chance to complete the work.
- It is important for parents/guardians to communicate with the school in the event your young person does not engage with an assessment. Measures can be taken to encourage engagement.
- Highlight the importance of engaging with assessment at this point in their education. While it may not take the form they had originally anticipated, it is a milestone in their education, and they will want to do their best.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your young person's engagement or progress, please contact the subject teacher who will be delighted to advise and support you.

**We value your support to date and requests your assistance in maintaining the integrity of the May 2020 Assessment, by ensuring that the instructions issued with each assessment are followed.**



## GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS FOR MAY 2020 ASSESSMENTS

- Assessments are an opportunity to celebrate your learning.
- Engage with your teachers and your classes for the remainder of the term.
- Organise a workspace that will help you to concentrate on the task in hand.
- Be aware of your assessment timetable stick to it, this will make managing your workload much easier.
- Communicate with your teachers via Schoology if you are unclear about arrangements.
- While the format of the assessment may differ from what you expected, it is still important, and you should give it your very best shot.
- Organise the materials/books/technology you need for your assessments in advance. Do not leave it until the last minute.
- Approach your assessments as you would in school
  - ~ Follow school rules (social media, eating, chatting etc.)
  - ~ Stick to allocated timeframes

**Respect the assessment process – it is ‘your own’ work that is being assessed, not ‘work belonging to somebody else’**