

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE ENGLISH

DRAFT SYLLABUS
FOR CONSULTATION

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English

Introduction

The central aim of teaching English at junior cycle is to reinforce and continue the work of the primary school in nurturing the intellectual, imaginative and emotional growth of each student by developing his/her personal proficiency in the arts and skills of language. The preparation of this syllabus has been guided by the principles underpinning the Junior Certificate Programme. This programme articulates the general aim of education as contributing towards the development of all aspects of the individual: the aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual domains. A further and overarching aim of education at junior cycle is to contribute to that development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure.

The Junior Certificate English syllabus has been designed to enable students at all levels of ability to develop their personal proficiency in language. This involves the enhancement of skills in three dynamically related elements: personal literacy, social literacy and cultural literacy. Although these three elements must be separated for the full delineation of their role in the curriculum, they form an organic wholeness of experience in the living context of English teaching. The interdependence of these elements is an essential condition for the successful teaching of English in the junior cycle.

In regard to each of the literacy elements (personal, social and cultural) the planning and delivery of a programme in English should be designed to foster growth in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The development of skills in speaking and listening should play as important a role as reading and

writing skills in the English programme. Fostering an awareness in the student of the interdependence of these skills, and of their central role in the learning and thinking process, is an integral element of personal growth and contributes significantly to the acquisition of skills needed for life-long learning.

Rationale

The Junior Certificate English syllabus builds on the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills and competencies acquired through English at primary level and thereby provides learners with opportunities to achieve many of the intended outcomes of the junior cycle programme. In nurturing the intellectual, imaginative and emotional growth of each student by developing his/her proficiency in the arts and skills of language, English seeks to develop personal and social confidence.

Through imaginative encounter with a wide variety of literary and media texts, the student of English grows in awareness of a range of sensuous, imagistic, affective and intellectual responses while extending his/her awareness of the richness of life's cultural framework.

As language is the chief means by which we think, the vehicle through which knowledge is acquired and organised and our principal means of communication, it follows that growth in and through language will extend and deepen the range and quality of the young person's educational experience and prepare him/her for the requirements of further programmes of study, of employment or of life outside full-time education.

Aims of the syllabus

Junior Certificate English aims to

- enable all students to gain pleasure and fulfilment from language activities
- foster the confidence of the students to think, reflect, respond and communicate
- enable students to develop their personal language base
- enable students to achieve a greater competence in using language appropriately in a range of social contexts
- develop students' awareness of the cultural richness and diversity of English
- enable, through language development, full and effective participation in society in a variety of roles
- develop students' critical consciousness in respect of all language use.

Objectives of the syllabus

The objectives of Junior Certificate English are to

- explore, order, express and symbolise a wide range of intellectual, imaginative, affective and sensuous experiences
- enable students to speak and write about their experience in a variety of forms
- encourage students to read and listen to accounts of other students' experiences and to respond positively and creatively to them
- encourage the use of a wide variety of reading and listening skills
- promote in students a sense of audience and language appropriateness
- develop a competence in the following conventions
 - spelling
 - punctuation procedures
 - sentence structures
 - paragraph organisation
- provide opportunities for engagement with a wide variety of literary and media genres for aesthetic pleasure, and give shape to their responses in a creative manner
- encourage students to become aware of their own sensuous, imagistic, affective and intellectual responses, and of the pattern of words, forms, sounds and images which occasion these responses
- make students aware of the necessary disciplines of re-reading, reviewing and reflecting
- allow students to interpret orally and attempt performances and productions
- provide opportunities for students to play and experiment with language so that they will discover the innate power of words to create and suggest meaning and energise thought
- enable students to write within the discipline of literary forms, such as, simple verse forms, dialogue plays, stories for radio, scripts for television and autobiographical episodes
- develop the critical consciousness of students with respect to all language use
- promote in students an awareness of the concept of style and the effects of different styles.

The objectives of the syllabus are the same for all learners irrespective of whether they are following programmes at Foundation, Ordinary or Higher levels. Differentiation in this context is largely a matter of degree of achievement and levels of mastery of the skills and concepts delineated above.

At the centre of the syllabus, then, is a series of skills, concepts and attitudes which give positive direction to the teaching of English in junior cycle. Two organisational principles underpin the implementation of the syllabus in the classroom:

- teachers are free to choose their own texts and materials in order to achieve the objectives of the programme and to ensure that learners are enabled to achieve the learning outcomes set out in the topics and learning outcomes section of the syllabus. In choosing, teachers are expected to select materials from a wide range of literary genres along with other print and media material
- to ensure an organic wholeness in language experience for students, a programme which integrates language and literature should be planned in a series of broadly outlined syllabus units. A syllabus unit can be defined as a selection of related literary texts, cultural materials and linguistic assignments which provide the substance, purpose and focus to work in the English programme for a period of time.

Syllabus overview

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
Personal literacy	Social literacy	Cultural literacy
<p>This section focuses on the living language base from which a gradual and integrated growth can take place in a student's oracy and literacy skills.</p>	<p>This dimension of the course stresses that it is mainly through language that the person is equipped to participate fully in society in a variety of roles. The student should be introduced to the range of linguistic skills demanded by society and be encouraged to use them accurately.</p>	<p>In the context of the development of his/her cultural literacy the student should be introduced to the skills of reading, viewing and listening to a range of literary and media genres for aesthetic pleasure.</p>
<p>The student should encounter a wide and varied language programme relating to their lived experience. The student should be given frequent opportunities to speak and write about his/her experience in a variety of forms and to read and listen to accounts of other students' experiences, and to respond positively and creatively to them.</p>	<p>In this context, particular attention should be paid to developing a sense of audience and language appropriateness. Emphasis should be placed on fostering the student's competence in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling • punctuation procedures • sentence structure • paragraph organisation. 	<p>As in the other elements of the course, the student should encounter a wide variety of texts and should experience those texts in a variety of contexts. That is to say, a literary text encountered for the value of its own unique experience can also be an occasion for language learning in the personal and social domains.</p>

This table is presented primarily as a guide to planning an appropriate course in English at junior cycle. It outlines the intended focus of attention in the three interrelated elements that constitute the course: personal literacy, social literacy and cultural literacy. Although these elements are

presented separately for the purposes of this overview, in the living context of English teaching they form an organic wholeness of experience. The interdependence of these elements is the essential foundation for the successful teaching of English in the junior cycle.

The organising principle that underpins course planning is the syllabus unit. A syllabus unit can be defined as a selection of related literary texts, cultural materials and linguistic assignments which provide the substance, purpose and focus to work in the English programme for a period of time. The duration of a unit is variable; as a general guideline a unit might last a full term or half term, but longer and shorter units are possible.

When planning a three-year programme, a teacher should ensure that

- units in the programme are integrated clearly, building on previous units and preparing for future units
- students encounter different types of unit ranging over a variety of literary genres: novels, plays, poetry, prose, short stories and other materials
- the three areas of personal literacy, social literacy and cultural literacy are constantly encountered and explored in the four modes of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Differentiation

Students learn at different rates and in different ways. Differentiation in teaching and learning and in the related assessment arrangements is essential in order to meet the needs of all students. In junior cycle syllabuses, differentiation is primarily addressed in three areas: the content and learning outcomes of the syllabus; the process of teaching and learning; the assessment arrangements associated with examinations. For exceptionally able students, differentiation may mean extending and/or enriching some of the topics or learning outcomes. This should supplement, but not replace the core of work being undertaken. For students with general learning difficulties, this may mean teaching at a different pace, having varied teaching methodologies or having a variety of ways of assessing students.

By involving students in planning their own

learning, and by establishing classroom routines that encourage students to act as independent learners, teachers can provide many opportunities for differentiated learning. In this way, the learning outcomes in the syllabus can be achieved to different extents by individual students in the same class. The demand on each student can vary depending on the level of understanding that the student brings to the situation. In some cases learning outcomes are made more demanding by involving more factors and building on more extensive background knowledge. The extent to which a learning outcome is achieved will depend on the level at which the student engages with it.

Each syllabus provides opportunities for students to learn in ways that most directly meet their needs, interests, and learning styles. As a result, a wide range of teaching and learning activities is appropriate. Schools have a responsibility to provide a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum for all students. There is a range of materials available to support schools in meeting this responsibility. These include further information on extending and enriching the curriculum for exceptionally able students, as well as guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities. Differentiation at the point of assessment is described more fully in the next section.

Assessment

General principles

Assessment in education involves gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways, such as to test and certify achievement, to determine the appropriate route for students to take through a differentiated curriculum or to identify specific areas of difficulty (or strength) for a given student. While different techniques may be employed for formative, diagnostic and certification purposes, assessment of any kind should improve learning by exerting a positive

influence on the curriculum at all levels. It must, therefore, reflect the full range of curriculum goals.

Assessment should be used as a continuous part of the teaching-learning process and involve learners, wherever possible, as well as teachers, in identifying next steps. In this context, the most valuable assessment takes place at the site of learning. Assessment should also provide an effective basis for communication with parents in a way that helps them to support their children's learning.

Assessment must be valid, reliable and equitable. These aspects of assessment are particularly relevant for national assessment for certification purposes.

Assessment for certification

The assessment of English in the Junior Certificate examination will be based on the aims of the syllabus, the objectives of the syllabus, and the learning outcomes associated with each of the domains of literacy—Personal, Social and Cultural literacy—as outlined in the topics and learning outcomes section of the syllabus.

Assessment procedures will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability in the following areas:

- written composition skills in a variety of contexts- choice of appropriate language and register to suit specific contexts of point-of-view, audience and purpose
- language awareness skills- students' awareness of the selectivity of all language use in establishing specific meaning; competence in the use of conventions of spelling, sentence structure, punctuation and paragraphing
- reading and comprehension skills of different kinds- literal, factual, narrative, selective, structural, inferential, evaluative and appreciative
- oral skills in a wide variety of personal and social contexts- overall coherence, richness of vocabulary, variety of idiom, structure of

presentation, awareness of audience and register in both formal and informal contexts

- aural skills in a variety of modes- ability to locate information and evidence, to follow a line of thought and display sensitivity to tone and suggestion
- recall, discussion and creative use of knowledge of texts and materials encountered in their English programme
- aesthetic response to unseen texts, pictures, patterns and shapes, and sounds. Different modes of response will be expected—engagement, perception, interpretation and evaluation
- knowledge of fundamental literary concepts and forms- hero, heroine, villain, character, point-of-view, contrast, tension, shape, climax, mood, tone, atmosphere, theme, imagery, rhythm, texture, lyric/poem, story/narrative, drama, theatre, satire, comedy, tragedy, romance, realism, melodrama. This does not imply the need for students to know strict definitions of the above but rather to be able to use the terms meaningfully in discussing literary experiences and in exploring their own responses.

Modes of assessment

Since the programme in junior cycle English is an integrated course, stressing the interdependence of all forms of language activity, the assessment procedures as far as possible will also emphasise this interdependence.

Assessment of Junior Certificate English will be by a terminal examination paper at three levels, Foundation, Ordinary and Higher. Oral/aural components may be introduced.

The terminal written examinations are marked out of a total of 360 marks. Provision exists for an allocation of 40 marks to an assessment of oral proficiency. The marks awarded for this assessment are added to those secured in the examination paper/s and the combined marks determine the candidate's grade in the subject.

Differentiation: three levels of assessment and certification

English will be assessed at **Higher, Ordinary** and **Foundation** levels in the Junior Certificate examination. Students will be assessed in their ability

- to understand and convey information
- to comprehend facts, ideas and opinions, and to order and present them with clarity and accuracy
- to analyse, evaluate and select what is relevant for a given purpose
- to describe and reflect on experience and express what is felt and what is imagined
- to recognise clear meanings and explicit attitudes and the more obvious, implicit meanings and attitudes
- to show a sense of audience and an awareness of appropriate uses of language
- to write in paragraphs, using sentences of varied kinds and exercising care over spelling and punctuation
- to show and express responses to a variety of literary genres
- to show understanding of how language works in literature.

Students at Foundation level, Ordinary level and Higher level will be required to demonstrate a graduated degree of proficiency in all of the above skills. At Higher level, students will be required to show deeper insights into and greater understanding of a wider variety of materials, texts, concepts and issues.

Format of the examination papers

At all three levels, every effort will be made to invite the student into tasks that are personally meaningful and interesting. An attempt will be made to create an experiential context for all

written work so that the student feels there is a definite purpose to his/her reading and writing.

The examination papers will present a range of unseen material to which the students will be invited to respond in a variety of ways.

Opportunities will also be provided for the students to display their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of texts and materials encountered in their own English programmes.

Foundation level

There will be a single examination paper of 2½ hours duration. Candidates will be required to answer on the following:

Section 1 – Reading [60 marks]

Section 2 – Personal Writing [60 marks]

Section 3 – Functional Writing [60 marks]

Candidates will be required to answer on *three* of the following:

Section 4 – Fiction [60 marks]

Section 5 – Drama [60 marks]

Section 6 – Poetry [60 marks]

Section 7 – Media Studies [60 marks]

The total number of marks awarded in the examination will be 360.

Ordinary level

There will be a single examination paper of 2½ hours duration. Candidates will be required to answer on the following:

Section 1 – Reading [60 marks]

Section 2 – Personal Writing [60 marks]

Section 3 – Functional Writing [60 marks]

Section 4 – A question from *one* of the following areas: Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Media Studies [60 marks]

Candidates will be required to answer *two* questions from the three remaining areas not set under Section 4 above. Therefore, if Section 4 examines fiction, candidates will be required to answer *two* questions from the following:

Section 5 – Drama [60 marks]

Section 6 – Poetry [60 marks]

Section 7 – Media Studies [60 marks]

The total number of marks awarded in the examination will be 360.

Higher level

There will be two papers of 2½ hours duration.

Paper 1

Candidates will be required to answer on the following

Section 1 – Reading [40 marks]

Section 2 – Personal Writing [70 marks]

Section 3 – Media Studies [40 marks]

Section 4 – Functional Writing [30 marks]

Paper 2

Candidates will be required to answer on the following

Section 1 – Drama [60 marks]

Section 2 – Poetry [60 marks]

Section 3 – Fiction [60 marks]

The total number of marks awarded in the examination will be 360.

Given the principle of choice, which places the teacher and learners at the centre of the development of a programme of appropriate study, it is not possible to provide an overview of differentiation by reference to course content other than to state that at Foundation, Ordinary and Higher levels students might encounter six substantive units in their three year programme. At Higher level, some acquaintance with pre-contemporary literature (pre-1900) and the study of one unit based on a Shakespeare text would normally be expected. Differentiated learning goals may be considered, also, by reference to the following:

- awareness in the delivery of the programme of study of a variety of teaching and learning styles
- awareness of the mixture of abilities of the students in any given class group
- recognition and validation of the achievements of learners with special educational needs
- awareness of differing degrees of achievement of the stipulated learning outcomes
- the availability of summative assessment at three levels, Foundation, Ordinary and Higher levels
- the nature and function of formative assessment in giving appropriate feedback to learners.

Topics and learning outcomes

Section 1: Personal literacy

Section 2: Social literacy

Section 3: Cultural literacy

Section 1: Personal literacy		
Topic	Description of topic	Learning outcomes <i>Students should be able to</i>
1.2 Personal literacy contd.	Reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engage in private, independent reading of fictional and non-fictional prose - write of experience with increasing efficiency and in a reflective and insightful manner
Third Year 1.3 Personal literacy	<p>Speaking and listening</p> <p>Reading and writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talk and listen in a wide range of contexts both formal and informal - engage in extended independent reading of fictional and non-fictional prose - write effectively about personal experience in a variety of forms and with a sense of appropriate register

Section 2: Social literacy		
Topic	Description of topic	Learning outcomes <i>Students should be able to</i>
2.1 Social literacy contd.	Reading and writing contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - read silently for a variety of purposes from comprehending to affective and imaginative response - use a range of reference resources - view media programmes and advertisements attending to the suggestive power of the words, and images - show understanding of the forms and structures of sentences and paragraphs and the basic punctuation conventions - show language awareness in relation to nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs - employ a range of spelling patterns - write with a basic sense of register and audience - compose short notes, captions, headlines and titles - describe (in a variety of forms) places, events and people - write a letter requesting and/or giving information - compose a fictional narrative
Second year 2.2 Social literacy	Speaking and listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be more incisive in their awareness of register, audience and purpose - tell a story to a group/class, record and dramatise narrative - engage in reasoned debate on an agreed topic and ask and respond to impromptu questions - comment on, explore, interpret and evaluate media experiences - discuss and re-create orally, language strategies encountered in the mass-media

Section 2: Social literacy		
Topic	Description of topic	Learning outcomes <i>Students should be able to</i>
2.2 Social literacy contd.	Reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - show awareness of more complex spelling patterns and be aware of strategies for punctuation procedure - read independently for a more sustained period of time for specific purposes such as information and evidence - report to class on material read - read newspapers, journals and magazines attending to viewpoint, assumptions, accuracy of reporting, bias and style of reporting; examine illustrations and photographs - view television programmes attending to implicit values and assumptions - write and re-write as part of the development of the craft of writing - write in a range of formal contexts—invitations, application forms, letters of condolence, inquiry, gratitude and complaint - devise advertisement brochures for a range of purposes and items - write descriptive essay on a chosen topic - write an argument
Third year 2.3 Social literacy	Speaking and listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop the forms and structures of sentences and paragraphs in the context of more extended composition - demonstrate language awareness in respect of prefixes, suffixes, root-words, pronouns and prepositions - develop vocabulary to discuss language use—grammatical terminology, phrase, connotation, cliché, synonym, register and audience - identify manipulative language techniques - recognise appropriate and inappropriate uses of style and register - develop awareness of tone, irony and suggestion

Section 2: Social literacy		
Topic	Description of topic	Learning outcomes <i>Students should be able to</i>
2.3 Social literacy contd.	Reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify types of logical order—chronological, spatial and order of importance - identify a writer’s purpose in a given passage—to inform, entertain, persuade, inspire - draw conclusions, predict outcomes and suggest implications - distinguish between fact and opinion - identify in material encountered forms of stereotyping—age, nationality, occupation, race, religion, sex etc. - write more extended compositions in a wide range of contexts - show clear awareness of variety of audience, purpose and register - write an argumentative essay

Section 3: Cultural literacy		
Topic	Description of topic	Learning outcomes <i>Students should be able to</i>
3.1 Cultural literacy contd.	Reading and writing contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - write in simple verse form - review literature read privately or in class - review television material, films and videos
Second year 3.2 Cultural literacy	<p>Speaking and listening</p> <p>Reading and writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand terms such as contrast, narrative voice - show understanding of character development in a narrative - show awareness of the significance of beginnings and endings in aesthetic texts - show awareness of mood, atmosphere, tone, imagery and setting - show sensitivity to word choice and patterns in literature - show awareness of the following genres—romance, short story, novel, play and poem - read widely in a range of literary genre - compose intervention scenarios such as interviewing characters from texts, and writing alternative scenes and endings - write in literary forms about a range of experiences - write commentaries and evaluate the significance of a range of literary experiences - re-read, review and reflect on all or part of a literary text - display a knowledge of fundamental literary concepts such as hero, heroine, villain and character
Third year 3.3 Cultural literacy	Speaking and listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - show understanding of plot, comedy, tragedy, satire, pathos, melodrama and theatre - demonstrate understanding of the lyrical and narrative elements of text

Statement of links

Junior cycle education seeks to reinforce and further develop in the learner the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills acquired at primary level. It should also extend and deepen the range and quality of the learner's educational experience by creating connections both within the junior cycle programme itself, and with the senior cycle.

This syllabus reflects these aspirations by including a statement describing some of the points of connection between these components of the young person's educational experience. This should inform the teacher's planning in that it describes how the study of Junior Certificate English

- builds on the learning at primary level
- supports the different areas of experience that comprise the wider educational context at junior cycle
- links with other junior cycle subjects
- supports progression to senior cycle.

Progression from the Primary School Curriculum

The syllabus for Junior Certificate English seeks to build on the aims of the English curriculum at primary level, which is concerned with the development of the child through language. The curriculum is structured in four strands:

- receptiveness to language
- competence and confidence in using language
- developing cognitive abilities through language
- emotional and imaginative development through language.

English in the primary school seeks to offer children a total language experience, one in which oral language, reading and writing are fully integrated. Listening and speaking are the basis on which reading and writing skills are fostered.

Growth in reading proficiency occurs in and through reading of a wide variety of texts for a variety of purposes. The ability to write clearly and expressively is developed in and through the writing process itself where 'children are given the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes, for different audiences and in a range of genres.'

Connections to the junior cycle areas of experience

The outcomes of the junior cycle are mediated through a curriculum structured around eight areas of experience. Identified as the framework for the curriculum at junior cycle, these areas are:

- Language, literature and communication
- Mathematical studies
- Science and technology
- Social, political and environmental education
- Arts education
- Physical education
- Religious and moral education
- Guidance, counselling and pastoral care.

There are forms of knowledge, skills, aesthetic responses and values particular to each area, but areas of experience also share elements in common. It is the combination of experiences across the areas that contributes to the holistic development of the student and supports the integration of learning. Growth in language plays a key role in furthering this aim.

Although the contribution of English to the language, literature and communication area of experience will be central, the subject also has the potential to contribute to a significant degree in the following areas:

- Arts education
- Social, political and environmental education
- Religious and moral education.

Links with other junior cycle subjects

Although the central focus of teaching English is on the enhancement of the learner's competence in personal, social and cultural literacy, many cross-curricular links are discernible.

- The development of personal and social literacy links with the aims of Civic, Social and Political Education which seeks to develop the autonomous potential of pupils as socially literate, independent and self-confident young people. Cross-curricular links can also be established through the design of units in the English classroom, which are sympathetic to the key concepts of CSPE, e.g. Rights and Responsibilities, or Human Dignity.
- Respect for, and integrated growth in, each student's linguistic competence and the community characteristics of his/her language finds echoes in Environmental and Social Studies, the aims of which include promotion of understanding of oneself as an individual and as a member of both local and wider communities.
- The emphasis on listening and speaking in the three literacy domains links with the importance attaching to these skills in the communicative approach to language learning in Modern Languages.
- Diversification and enrichment of the learner's personal linguistic base links with Social, Personal and Health Education which aims to enable students to develop skills for self-fulfillment and living in communities, and which seeks to promote self-esteem and self-confidence, and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Progression to senior cycle

The Leaving Certificate English syllabus builds on the skills and concepts that have been nurtured through the study of English at junior cycle, and students will be encouraged to develop a more sophisticated range of skills and concepts. These will enable them to interpret, compose, discriminate, and evaluate a range of material so that they become independent learners who can operate in the world beyond the school in a range of contexts. The syllabus requires that students' growth in language be fostered through an organic experience in which the principle of integrating the teaching of language and literature is central.

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