

Appendix A - CEIST certification within the context of the Framework for Junior Cycle and the Junior Cycle RE Specification

This appendix shows the ways in which this certification is connected to both the Junior Cycle Framework and the Specification for Junior Cycle Religious Education.

Introduction - The Framework for Junior Cycle

In guidance provided by the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Bishops' Conference following the publication of the Junior Cycle Specification in 2019, three different approaches to Junior Cycle RE are outlined:

- 1) The first is by using the NCCA RE Specification with a view to students undertaking the classroom-based assessments and presenting for the final assessment at the end of third year. In this way, learning in RE will be certified as part of each student's Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).
- 2) Schools and students may decide to complete the two Classroom-based Assessments through their work with the Specification for RE but not to participate in the state-certified examination at the end of third year. In this approach, students will still be recognised for their work in RE, through CEIST certification, part of their JCPA under 'Other Areas of Learning'.
- 3) Schools and students may decide to follow the Specification without completing the CBAs or participating in the state-certified examination.

The Council documents goes on to say that "any other approach to RE at Junior Cycle should attend to the Junior Cycle framework's eight principles, twenty-four statements of learning and eight key skills". This is important guidance to offer to CEIST schools. Catholic schools using approaches to RE not based on the Specification should be aware that the Council for Catechetics encourages that they attend to the broader thinking found within the Junior Cycle Framework.

In addition, the document reminds schools that RE is understood as one expression, among many, of the school's ethos and faith life. Because of this, there is always a provision of 2 hours for RE at both Junior and Senior Cycle and, in line with guidance provided by the Framework for Junior Cycle, existing subjects, including RE, are not reduced to short courses.

While the Irish Episcopal Council directs that all Catholic schools provide two hours timetabled Religious Education for all students each week, the content is, to a large extent, at the discretion of individual schools\teachers.

This initiative from CEIST for Junior Cycle Religious Education Certification can be offered to students who complete the CEIST certification programme as outlined and who either

- follow the Specification for JC RE but do not sit the terminal examination in Junior Cycle RE, or
- who follow a different programme for RE that attends more broadly to the Junior Cycle Framework's principles, statements of learning and key skills.

In both cases, what is suggested is not intended to replace current programmes in use in schools, but rather to supplement the work already being done by providing another important focus to the work. In doing so, it seeks to bolster further engagement in RE in CEIST schools as well as acknowledging and affirming the work being done by students and teachers.

A. CEIST Certification for students following the Subject Specification for Religious Education but not doing RE as an Examination Subject.

In terms of this first group, those who follow the specification but do not sit the exam. Clearly, there are elements of the Specification that are of particular interest to CEIST schools. This is not to suggest that other elements are not important. CEIST acknowledges that the best and most effective way of ensuring good learning for students in RE who are working with the Specification is to treat it as a whole, in terms of both methodology and content. Indeed, for any one aspect of any Strand, connections should be made to the other two strands of the Specification. In addition, the three cross-cutting elements of enquiry, exploration and reflection and action, should underpin all learning.



However, to be awarded certification from CEIST the learning outcomes of the three strands of the Specification listed below must be attended to in a particular way. It is clear that there are links with and between the learning outcomes from each of the three strands.

Below are the Learning Outcomes relevant to each strand that have most explicit connection to the suggested project titles. Teachers will see clear connections between learning outcomes from the three strands and the projects and will be best placed to share these links with their own students.

Strand 1: Expressing beliefs

1.2 investigate two communities of faith that have a significant presence in their locality/region (the communities of faith chosen must be associated with two of the five major world religions studied in the specification)

1.3 engage with members of a faith community associated with one of the five major world religions studied in the specification and show an appreciation of how the religious beliefs of the community influence the day-to-day life of its members

1.8 describe the role of prayer in the lives of people of faith

1.11 research religious or other organisations, working at a national or international level to promote justice, peace and reconciliation and consider how their work is an expression of their founding vision

Strand 2: Exploring Questions

2.3 explore how different narratives/stories, religious and non-religious, express an understanding of creation/the natural world, and consider their meaning and relevance for today

2.7 explore how the religious teachings of a major world religion address an issue of concern for the world today

2.8 present stories of individuals or of groups in the history of two major world religions that have had a positive impact on the lives of people because of their commitment to living out their beliefs.

Strand 3: Living our Values

3.3 examine a moral code in two of the five major world religions and discuss how each code could influence moral decision-making for believers

3.7 research the understanding of compassion, justice, peace and reconciliation found in two major world religions and ways in which these understandings can be seen in action

3.8 explain how an understanding of care for the earth found in a major world religion promotes the wellbeing of all people and the planet and discuss its relevance for today.

B. CEIST certification for students who follow a different programme for RE that attends more broadly to the JC Framework's principles, statements of learning and key skills

In terms of this first group, those who students who attend more broadly to the JC Framework's principles, statements of learning and key skills.

At the heart of the Junior Cycle lies the need to provide students with quality learning opportunities that strike a balance between gaining knowledge and developing a wide range of skills, attitudes and thinking abilities. (*Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*). In Catholic schools, equally essential are opportunities for personal reflection that allows for the deepening of faith and opportunities for the expression of that faith through prayer, liturgy and service.

This kind of learning in the Junior Cycle is informed by:

- Eight principles that inform the planning for, as well as the development and the implementation of, Junior Cycle programmes in all schools.
- Twenty-four statements of learning that are central to planning for the students' experience of and the evaluation of the school's Junior Cycle programme.
- Eight key skills that are required for successful learning by all students.

RE teachers will see the ways in which RE gives rich expression to these principles, key skills and learning outcomes. Through RE, schools provide spaces for students to be creative, to engage with their own learning and to learn to learn. Perhaps even more obviously, through RE, students are encouraged to take time to consider their own and others' wellbeing, in particular their spiritual and emotional wellbeing. There are also significant opportunities within RE for students to learn about other faith traditions. Through RE, schools can foster an education for all students that is inclusive.

RE engages with these twenty-four statements of learning in a diversity of ways; for example, RE helps students to communicate effectively using a variety of means (SOL 1). RE can also, of course, help students develop an essential awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision-making (SOL 5). RE will help students appreciate and respect how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which they live (SOL 6). RE helps form students as active citizens, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts (SOL 7) and through this develops the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably (SOL 10). RE also helps students take action to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and the wellbeing of others (SOL 11).

RE also fosters all eight key skills in a variety of important ways. Through RE, students develop skills around staying well and managing themselves. They also learn how to manage information and thinking. RE improves literacy and numeracy and encourages creativity. Through project work, group work and other classroom-based activities, students learn important communication skills and learn how to work well with others.



In CEIST schools, by attending to these principals, key skills and statements of learning, RE can also find creative, inclusive and engaging ways to attend to the faith lives of students. This CEIST initiative for JC RE provides schools with an additional and hopefully helpful focus to what is already provided for in terms of the school's JC RE programme.