***A New Junior Cycle – A Quick Guide (TUI, November 2011)***

***What changes are being proposed for the Junior Cycle?***

* A new junior cycle will be introduced in all schools on a phased basis from 2014.
* The new junior cycle will be underpinned by a number of principles.

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| ***KEY PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW JUNIOR CYCLE***  Quality Inclusive education Wellbeing  Engagement, relevance and enjoyment Continuity  Creativity and innovation Lifelong learning Choice and flexibility |

* The duration of junior cycle will be three years.
* Twenty four (24) statements of learning will reflect what students should learn during the three years of study across the entire curriculum.
* Curriculum components will comprise of: **Subjects, Short Courses, Priority Learning Units (Plus) and Key Skills.**

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| **SUBJECTS**  All current subjects will be retained.  Schools will have choices around which subjects to offer.  Schools/students will have choices about which subjects will be included for  qualification purposes.  Students will be able to take some subjects that will not form part of their  final qualification.    Curriculum specifications for each subject will be provided by the NCCA.    The syllabus for each subject will be outcomes-based and, in most cases,  designed at a common level.  Most subjects will be less extensive and detailed than at present.  The time allocation will be 240 hours for English, Irish and Mathematics and 200  hours for all other subjects.  Subjects will be assessed for qualification purposes through an externally marked  terminal exam and a school based portfolio which will vary across subjects.    A maximum of eight subjects (8) will be used to obtain a National Certificate of  Junior Cycle Education (Level 3, see note below). Fewer may be used if  combined with short courses. |

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| **SHORT COURSES**  Short Courses will be about half the size of subjects (100 hours).  They will be based on a particular focus or area of competence.  The NCCA will produce specifications for six courses.  Schools will be able to develop their own courses using a template designed by the NCCA.  Schools will be able to develop short courses by themselves or in cooperation with others.  Short courses will be outcomes-based and assessed at school level within agreed national guidelines.  Up to 25% of the National Certificate of Junior Cycle Education (Level 3, see note below) can be made up of short courses. |

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| **PRIORITY LEARNING UNITS (PLUs)**    PLUs will address special learning needs.  They will include areas such as communication and literacy, numeracy, personal care, living in a community, preparing for working life.  The NCCA will provide specifications for each PLU and a toolkit for their use.    The time to be allocated to each PLU will be around 250 hours.    Students will be able to combine PLUs with two short courses to obtain a National Certificate of Junior Cycle Education (Level 2, see note below). |

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| **KEY SKILLS**  Six key skills will be embedded throughout the curriculum.  Key skills include - managing myself, staying well, communicating, being creative, working with others, managing information and thinking.  A range of design tools and materials will be available to support teachers. |

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| **LITERACY and NUMERACY**  Literacy and numeracy skills will be integrated throughout the curriculum.  The new specifications for subjects and short courses will provide space and opportunity for engagement with literacy and numeracy. |

* + - Specifications for subjects, short courses and PLUs will encompass on-going classroom assessment and assessment for national qualifications.
    - Two national qualifications will be available.

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| **QUALIFICATIONS**  A National Certificate of Junior Cycle Education (Level 3).  A National Certificate of Junior Cycle Education (Level 2).    Level 2 and Level 3 relate to levels of learning as set out in the National Framework of Qualifications which has ten levels (see [www.nqf.ie](http://www.nqf.ie) or [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie)). The current junior certificate is placed at Level 3 on the framework. The new Level 2 qualification is intended to meet the needs of those who have special learning needs, for whom a qualification at Level 3 may prove too challenging. |

* Assessment arrangements will involve a number of elements.

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| ***NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF JUNIOR CYCLE EDUCATION (LEVEL 3)***  Students will present evidence of learning in:  Eight subjects **or** seven subjects and two short courses  **or** six subjects and four short courses.  Evidence of learning must be presented in the subjects English, Irish (except where exemptions apply) and Mathematics.  Grading will be on the basis of four or five grading points e.g. not achieved, pass, merit, distinction.  ***Subjects*** will have two assessment components:   1. A *terminal examination* with a weighting of 60%, set and marked   externally by the State Examinations Commission (SEC)   1. A *portfolio* with a weighting of 40%, this will vary across   subjects. Schools will review and verify marks internally. Results will be provisional and externally moderation on a sample basis by the SEC.  The NCCA/SEC will specify assessment arrangements and provide sample assessment materials.  ***Short courses*** will have a single assessment component a *portfolio* based on school work which will vary across courses. This will be underpinned by national guidelines and marked internally by the school. It will not be subject to external moderation. The school will issue results to the SEC for inclusion on the certificate.  The awarding for the Level 3 award body will be the SEC. |

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| ***NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF JUNIOR CYCLE EDUCATION (LEVEL 2)***  Students will present evidence of learning in all PLUs and two short courses.  Grading will be on the basis of Successful or Referral.  PLUs will have a single assessment component – a *portfolio* based on school work. This will be underpinned by national guidelines and marked internally by the school. It will not be subject to external moderation.  Short courses will be assessed as in table above but grading will be determined by the school or other source of short course.    The awarding body for the Level 2 award has yet to be decided. |

***What next?***

* Following representation from TUI, NCCA Council and others, the Minister has indicated that the decision to limit the number of subjects to be taken in the Junior Certificate Examinations by students entering the junior cycle from 2012 will rest with schools.

* Mr. Ruairi Quinn, Minister for Education and Skills, has formally accepted the proposals and indicated that further national discussions will commence on the strategy, arrangements and resources required to ensure effective implementation. These discussions will involve all the key stakeholders including the teacher unions.
* This short document prepared by TUI is only a quick reference guide to the core proposals. The full details and proposals are set out in *Towards A Framework For Junior Cycle.* This is available at [www.tui.ie](http://www.tui.ie) and [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) where other support materials (e.g. short videos, submissions) can also be sourced.
* TUI will continue to engage in discussions and make strong representations in relation to the measures required to implement the proposed changes. In particular it will focus on the measures and resources necessary to protect against the lowering of standards, further inequities emerging in the education system and increased workload.
* Further updates will be posted on this website as appropriate.

***What should TUI members do?***

Feedback from members and branches will be an important feature of on-going discussion by the TUI Executive and TUI participation in national discussions.

* TUI advises all workplace committees and branches to consider the proposals for a new junior cycle in detail as soon as possible, with particular reference to the resources and supports required for implementation.
* The first meeting of the TUI Second Level Advisory Group (set for 30th November) will consider this development in some detail.

***For more details of the proposals for a new junior cycle see:***

*Development of a new junior cycle - Background Note (TUI, November 2011)* at [www.tui.ie](http://www.tui.ie)

[*Towards A Framework For Junior Cycle*](file:///C:\Users\cgriffin\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\09PJ2BUG\Towards%20A%20Framework%20For%20Junior%20Cycle.pdf) at [**www.tui.ie**](http://www.tui.ie) or [**www.ncca.ie**](http://www.ncca.ie/) where a range of support material and documentation is available.

[Letter to Department of Education and Skills from NCCA](file:///C:\Users\cgriffin\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\09PJ2BUG\NCCA%20Letter%20Towards%20a%20Framework%20for%20Junior%20Cycle.pdf) – [**www.tui.ie**](http://www.tui.ie)

**For further clarification contact the Education and Research Officer at head office by phone 01 4922588 or email at** [**bjudge@tui.ie**](mailto:bjudge@tui.ie)**.**