



JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

2000

CIVIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

1. Introduction

A total of 58,796 students sat the Junior Certificate Civic, Social and Political Education Examination 2000. As Civic, Social and Political Education became a mandatory subject in 1997 this was the first national examination of its kind in Ireland. In 1999 the examination was taken on a voluntary basis.

Assessment for Civic, Social and Political Education is carried out in two modes

1. A written terminal examination paper that accounts for 40% of the final grade, i.e. 120 out of 300 marks. This is a Common Level paper, the only one at Junior Certificate level.
2. A Report on an Action Project (RAP) or a Course-Work Assessment Booklet (CWAB), submitted in May, which accounts for 60% of the final grade, i.e. 180 out of 300 marks.

2. Performance of Candidates

The final breakdown of grades is set out below:

YEAR		A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
2000	No. of Candidates	14861	19736	13980	7360	2048	732	79	58796
	% of Candidates	25.3	33.6	23.8	12.5	3.5	1.2	0.1	100.0
1999	No. of Candidates	2052	5215	5033	3185	784	344	50	16663
	% of Candidates	12.3	31.3	30.2	19.1	4.7	2.1	0.3	100.0

Differences between this year and last year's results

- Overall honour's rate was 9.4% higher this year
- Overall % less than "D" was 2.2% lower than last year
- Percentage of candidates gaining "A" grades were 13% higher than last year

Comment on Improved Results

- The experience gained from last years optional trial run was of benefit to this year's candidates
- Following last year's examination a detailed report was issued on the examination
- Last year, the performance of many candidates was limited by their failure to follow instructions in presenting the Report On Action Project
- This year, a pro-forma book was introduced to guide candidates in writing up their Report On Action Projects

Comment on the relatively high % of "A" grades

- This is the only subject Junior Certificate Examination where all candidates have a common examination paper and are corrected in accordance with a common marking scheme

- Sixty % of the total marks are accounted for by a project that is written during the school year with the guidance of the teacher

3. Analysis of Paper

The written paper accounts for 40% of the final grade awarded to students - 120 marks out of 300 marks. Comments on the students' answers follow.

Section 1

This section of the paper was well answered.

Section One examines basic knowledge and information that the student should have encountered while studying CSPE. The questions are short and this year required the student to tick the correct answer, match titles of organizations to descriptions of the work they do and insert missing words into sentences. Candidates had to answer all three questions in this section.

Question 1.

Well answered

Students had no difficulty in identifying **Mary Robinson** and **Mary McAleese** as Irish Presidents. There were no common mistakes.

Question 2

Well answered; most students answered three out of the four questions correctly. Parts (a), (b) and (d) were almost always correct.

Question 3

Only specifically correct answers were accepted here. Students who knew the correct answers scored well, those who were guessing did not. That said, most candidates at least passed this question, though few achieved full marks.

The parts of the question that posed most difficulty were (a) (d) and (h).

Section 2

Section Two provides the student with stimulus-based questions addressing one or more of the seven course concepts. A stimulus such as a photograph, cartoon, diagram etc. is presented at the head of each question. The questions initially are based directly on the stimulus and become broader as the student progresses through the question demanding greater knowledge and understanding of the topic being examined. Candidates are asked to answer three of the four questions presented. Most students did not attempt a fourth question. Question 4 was the least popular question in this section.

Question 1: A Petition

This question was divided into four parts, (a), (b), (c) and (d).

(a) This part was answered correctly by all students.

(b) Most students answered this correctly. A small number of students misread the question and incorrectly wrote the address of ***Concern***, thus losing 2 marks

- a. Students scored well in this question. Some students had difficulty in coming up with a ***Third Reason***.
- b. It was the most difficult part of the question, and students lost marks because they could not give ***Two Ways*** as the question demanded.

Question 2: Stopping Crime

This question was also divided into four parts.

(a) Students had no difficulty with this question

(b) Students answered this question well

(c) Some students seemed to misread the question and did not address the actions of the ***local community*** as specified by the question. In general, students did not ***describe*** but rather stated an action that could be taken.

(d) Very well answered by most students who seemed to have no difficulty in expressing the dilemmas they might face if they had to report a crime.

Question 3: Dump Protest

There were six parts to this question.

(a) Students had no difficulty with this part.

(b) Generally answered well, some seemed to find the wording ***other approach*** difficult and some answers were incorrect as a result.

- (c) Students answered this question well
- (d) The significance of Leinster House was apparent to most candidates; generally well answered.
- (e) Well answered overall. Students who made a reasonable attempt at a suggestion did well. The Marking Scheme allowed for broad scope in accepting what *young people* could do.
- (f) Quite well answered although some students had difficulty in describing a ***Second Difficulty*** and repetition was a common mistake here.

Question 4: Conflict and Peace

This was the least popular question in this section. Those who answered it had considerable difficulty and this is reflected in the marks for this question in comparison to the other questions in the section. Candidates found it difficult to switch from ***Northern Ireland*** to ***World Conflict*** in mid-question.

- (a) Some students did not seem to understand the concept of ***symbol***. Many candidates interpreted the words written on the wall as the symbol. Many of those who did identify the symbol had difficulty in explaining why it was used.
- (b) Many of the students who attempted this question were able to answer this part. The Marking Scheme also allowed for both very broad and very narrow definitions here.
- (c) Candidates interpreted ***areas of conflict*** very broadly and the Marking Scheme allowed for this broad interpretation.
- (d) Many students did not have the necessary knowledge to answer this part and did not score well here.
- (f) Similarly, students seemed to find this question difficult. In most cases it was hard to know whether the student was answering the should or the should not part of the question.

Section 3

Section Three is composed of open-ended or essay type questions. These questions allow students to address, in some depth, particular issues related to the course, at local, national and international levels. They also provide students with the opportunity to use the learning they have gained from undertaking Action Projects. Students are asked to do one of the four questions presented.

Question 1: Bullying

Bullying was the focus of this question and it was by far the most popular choice in Section 3. This is a topic covered in most schools today and has an immediate relevance to young people. The question was divided into four parts.

(a) All students who attempted this part of the question did well.

(b) Many of the candidates had undertaken a survey-type Action Project themselves. This was of considerable help to them in answering this part of the question.

(c) This part of the question was well answered.

Question 2: Campaign for Community Centre and Play Area

This question was also answered well. There were four parts to the question.

(a) Candidates provided a wide range of arguments for a possible campaign leaflet.

(b) The posters presented varied considerably. Those who focused on encouraging ***local people to attend a public meeting***, as the question asked, did best. Other candidates lost sight of this focus and lost marks as a result. Some students misread the instruction to ***Draw an outline of a poster...*** They simply described it and so lost marks.

(c) This part was well answered. Some students repeated the arguments of part (a) within the letter they wrote, but were not penalized for this. Almost all students used the required letter format.

Question 3: Visit of local T.D.

This was not a popular question but those candidates who chose to do it, scored very well. Many of the candidates' answers gave the impression that they had been involved in a guest-speaker Action Project as part of their CSPE Course.

(a) In this part, the sub-headings seemed to help the candidates. Many candidates used them by way of "hints" and did well as a result.

(b) Candidates who structured their answers around the sub-headings fared well.

(c) The question allowed for a wide range of possible questions to be asked of the politician. Provided they fell within this range, the candidates' responses were accepted.

Question 4: Speaker from an Organisation

This was the least popular question in the Section. Many candidates who attempted it scored poorly.

(a) In this part candidates frequently failed to focus on their ***chosen organization*** and the type of work it does. The speech lacked a focus and it was often difficult to find a relevant statement. This was a common mistake and candidates lost marks as a result. Clearly writing a speech was a difficult medium for students especially for those with poor writing skills. The more literate/articulate student did best here.

(b) Some candidates answered well but generally they failed to address the given question and seemed to find the concept of *judging* difficult.

(c) Some students failed to provide enough elements to their proposed Action Project while others seemed to misread the question. Some answers were very short. Many candidates failed to focus on ***Action Projects that YOU could do*** As a result many of the Action Projects suggested were not Action Projects at all but suggestions of campaigns that the various bodies could organize for themselves.

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4. General Comments on Examination Paper

The paper was generally well answered by students. It offered a wide range of choices and allowed students to make suggestions, express opinions and explore various subject areas at local, national and global level. Students did well because they were familiar with the issues presented. Candidates' answers showed a good grasp of current issues such as world debt, crime, dumps, local community development, Northern Ireland, peace and conflict.

The vast majority of candidates passed the written examination. As was the case last year many students depended on the Examination Paper for vital grade marks rather than having the Examination Paper marks to enhance the grade achieved on the second component of the examination.

Some candidates only presented an examination paper and these failed the exam, as they would have had to achieve a 100% score on the paper in order to reach a grade D overall.

5.

6. **The Course-work Assessment Book and Report On Action**

Project

Candidates must submit either a Course-work Assessment Book (CWAB) or Report on an Action Project (RAP) as part of their final assessment. This accounts for up to 60% of the total marks. These elements of the assessment are designed to assess students' active involvement in the course.

The Course-work Assessment Book (CWAB) questions students on a number of areas related to two modules of work that they have completed as part of the Civic, Social and Political Education Course. The Action Project is the central component and is a compulsory part of each of these modules.

In a Report on an Action Project a candidate presents a detailed description of an Action Project that s/he has undertaken. This report must be written and presented in accordance with the format and procedures outlined in the official CSPE *Guidelines* on Action Projects and their Assessment produced by the Department of Education and Science.

6. General Comments

A detailed and comprehensive guide to Course-work Assessment Books and Report On Action Projects and their assessment is available in the official CSPE *Guidelines* produced by the Department of Education and Science. Copies of these *Guidelines* were sent to every school in the country in 1998. Attention was also drawn to these by the Support Service at cluster in-service days and during school visits. These *Guidelines* clearly outline what candidates should include and what they should avoid when completing these particular elements of the examination. The marking schemes for the Course-work Assessment Book and the Report On Action Project are based on the official *Guidelines*. Failure to follow the *Guidelines* accounted for the reduced marks which were awarded to some candidates for their particular Course-work Assessment Book or Report On Action Project.

There were some excellent examples of Course-work Assessment Books and Report On Action Projects presented by candidates. Along with the written paper they gave an excellent insight into the candidate's understanding of the subject, the skills they had developed and the obvious enjoyment that they got from the course.

It would appear that a small but significant number of candidates were quite unaware of the criteria for an Action Project. Candidates who submitted inappropriate Action Projects were awarded significantly reduced marks. Other candidates lost marks by not using the headings/questions in the pro-forma answer books to structure their answers.

The Department of Education and Science originally produced a pro-forma answer book for the Course-work Assessment Book in 1999 and following on from last years' CSPE Examination a similar pro-forma answer book for the Report On Action Project has been produced for the examination in 2000. The intention behind this latter booklet is that it would enable students to present their Reports following the correct order/layout and procedure. From the year 2001 **all** candidates presenting a RAP **must** do so on the Pro-forma Booklet as has been the case.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Action Projects

Teachers of CSPE and their students should clearly understand that the Action Project/s referred to in either the CWAB or RAP...

- *should be based on one or more of the course concepts*
- *should have a genuine action component*
- *...with the human rights and/or social responsibilities perspective of civic, social and political education.*
- *and need not necessarily have a successful outcome.*

A number of candidates presented Reports on Action Projects or referred to Action Projects within the Course-work Assessment Book that did not meet the criteria outlined above and these were therefore considered inappropriate.

Inappropriate action projects generally fell into one of two categories: 1) those related to Social, Personal and Health Education issues and 2) those based on pure research, often of an historical, sporting or environmental nature. Action Projects based on topics such as Smoking, Drinking, Drugs and other Social, Personal and Health Education issues are only acceptable if these issues are addressed in relation to the criteria outlined above. For example, pages consisting of lists of different types of drugs and their side effects do not meet the required criteria for an Action Project and are inappropriate. If an Action Project related to drugs examines what a community can do to combat drugs misuse and/or what laws the government could introduce to address the area and/or the role of the police in drug related crime then it would meet the criteria and would be considered appropriate provided it meets the other criteria outlined above.

In relation to the second category, those based on pure research, it needs to be clearly stated that Action Projects are not the traditional project which most students and teachers are familiar with, i.e. a scrap book in which students either rewrite or place information primarily taken from printed materials or downloaded from the Internet on a particular topic.

The major lessons to be learnt about Report On Action Projects and Course-work Assessment Books from this year's examination are:

- teachers and students who followed carefully the official *Guidelines* on Action Projects and their Assessment issued by the Department of Education and Science scored high marks, in particular those who used the Pro-forma booklet for the RAP presented their work following the correct order for reporting.
- students who were involved in a genuine Action Project scored high marks, no matter how simple or complicated this Action Project was
- students who slavishly followed a text-book did not score well. Either because they did not do an Action Project or they touched on topics that are not related to the course (which have been incorrectly included in some text-books).

7. Report On Action Project

Over 95% of candidates presented a Report on an Action Project for assessment. The variety of Action Projects undertaken was impressive. They ranged from painting a local Millennium Wall mural - including getting the planning permission for same - to surveying knowledge about the Euro, to visiting a local dump, attending a Dail session or meeting with various representatives from a wide range of local and national organizations.

The majority of the Reports were written on Action Projects appropriate to the CSPE course but a significant number were totally inappropriate. As already stated previously in this report, these inappropriate Action Projects often addressed social, personal and health education issues such as drugs, alcohol, smoking and nutrition. These topics are not part of the CSPE Syllabus. Other reports presented very limited research-based projects, often pulling together and regurgitating existing materials on topics such as the history of a city or town, biographies of famous people, and descriptions of such topics as the ozone layer, rain forests etc. Clearly these students did not understand the concept of an **Action** Project.

The official *Guidelines* outline in great detail the different sections of the RAP. They also indicate what a candidate is expected to write or record in each of these sections. Careful attention to the *Guidelines* is important. Those who used the pro-forma booklet this year generally presented a report that followed the prescribed outline. Here candidates did not misplace answers or omit vital sections. Those candidates who opted to produce their own Reports (an option which will not be available in the future) often did not follow the correct

procedure and candidates lost marks as a result of presenting incomplete or incorrect reports.

Section by Section Account

Title

Most candidates gave appropriate titles to their Report on Action Projects. Those who lost marks here did so generally because they failed to indicate, in the title, the nature of the action in the Action Project undertaken. Some titles were much too broad.

Introduction

Candidates are required to provide three reasons as to why they had chosen this particular Action Project. In their answer they are expected to provide a clear statement of relevance of the Action Project to the CSPE course. The majority of candidates did well in this section. Marks were lost primarily in relation to the statement of relevance.

Activities Undertaken

In effect there are three parts to this section of the RAP.

- Part one asks the candidate to list and briefly describe the different activities undertaken during the course of the Action Project. Most candidates did this. Where a class Action Project was divided into different tasks and distributed amongst different groups in the class, a number of candidates failed to briefly describe what the other groups had done.

- Part two asks the candidate to describe in detail one particular task s/he had done. Some of the answers to this part of the Report were poor. With such answers the main problem was that the accounts provided were too short, were incomplete or did not focus on a detailed account of ONE task but rather gave an account of a number of small tasks. (*see Guidelines page 66*).

- Part three asks the candidate to identify and describe particular skills (2) and explain how they were applied to the particular task the candidate had undertaken. Explicit reference to skills is required here. Some students did not link the skills to the activity described in part two.

Summary of the Action Project

In this section, candidates are asked to **outline what they found out about the subject of the Action Project**. Those candidates who paid close attention to the detail of the *Guidelines* did well. A lot of candidates actually found it difficult to summarise what they had found out.

Conclusion

In this section candidates are asked to **reflect on the whole action project experience**. This section of the Report clearly displays a candidate's experience of undertaking an Action Project. Those who had genuinely taken an active part in the Action Project and who reflected on this experience and the learning, did very well. Others found it difficult to reflect.

8. Course-work Assessment Book

The Course Work Assessment Book contains two sections on separate course work

modules. A module, which includes an Action Project, is a significant piece of work (12 - 15 classes) centring round a concept, unit or theme.

Module topics presented this year included Human Rights, Environmental issues, Local Community themes and Racism.

Less than 5% of candidates presented this format for assessment.

Students of all abilities scored very well, if the CWAB format was followed. It was generally felt that students scored easily when they understood the nature of a module and followed the official *Guidelines*. The biggest problems encountered by examiners were those of repetition and the failure to complete the section dealing with the Action Project. **The official *Guidelines* point out that the same activity or skill may not be used to answer several sections of the CWAB and that the module must have an Action Project component.** Some students, however, based their module solely on an Action Project which they had undertaken. An Action Project is part of the module. It is not the module in itself.

Section by Section Account

Title

Most titles were appropriate to the module. When problems arose, they related to titles which were not relevant to the actual modules, or which were too narrow for work spanning 12-15 weeks.

What my Course Work module was about

This section requires students to mention three different components of the module and to name the Action Project undertaken. Too often, however, students only wrote about one component and did not refer at all to the Action project.

Things I have done - One Class

This section was usually well answered. Some candidates, however, named a topic, that was too broad to have been covered in one class. Other candidates had difficulty describing what had actually happened in class, and merely repeated the topic. For example: the topic was a debate about the death penalty; the description said, "we debated whether the death penalty was right or wrong."

Things I have done - Action Project

Some Action Projects were irrelevant to that module. At times, candidates were uncertain as to why they had undertaken the action. Others repeated material already used in the previous section. ***NOTE Candidates had to complete all four parts of this section to receive marks***

Things I have learned from this Course Work Module

This section was well answered, though at times candidates ran into problems by repeating information already given. Candidates named the three skills, but often had difficulty saying how they had applied one of them.

Something I have to say

It is important to state the actual issue. Candidates who failed to do so, lost all the section marks. Others lost marks if the issue was not appropriate to the module.

Despite these reservations, however, candidates seemed to like the freedom to give their opinions and usually scored well in this section.

9. Recommendations for Teachers and Students

Appropriate Action Projects

Ensure that the Action Projects for both Report On Action Project or Course-work Assessment Books are appropriate. An appendix to the November circular on CSPE has given an explanation of Action Projects. The *Guidelines* on CSPE provides a more complete description of Action Projects. Both documents have been sent to all schools. Extra copies of the *Guidelines* may be purchased from Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

Use Pro-forma Answer Books for Report On Action Projects and Course-work Assessment Books

All candidates are obliged to submit their Course-work Assessment or their Report On Action Project on the pro-forma answer books supplied by the Department of Education and Science.

Respond to the Headings/Questions in the Pro-forma Answer Books

Candidates should take care to respond to the headings/questions provided in the pro-forma answer books. Candidates should also be careful to relate the answers in the pro-forma answer books to the appropriate question.

Report on Action Project

*Each candidate to submit only **one** Report on Action Project*

Candidates should submit only **one** Report on Action Project. In the event of more than one project being submitted, examiners will choose one at random to correct.

Responding to the heading Activities Undertaken

In responding to the heading *Activities Undertaken* in the pro-forma answer book, candidates note that there are **three** distinct sub-headings to which they must respond. In part *A* candidates are requested to *list and briefly describe activities undertaken as part of the Action Project*. In part *B*, a candidate is asked to *provide a detailed account of any particular task/activity that s/he undertook as part of the Action project*. In part *C* a candidate is expected to *describe how s/he applied particular skills in undertaking the task referred to in B*.

Distinguish between the headings Summary and Conclusion

In writing under the heading *Summary*, candidates should outline *what they found out about the subject of the Action Project*. In writing the *Conclusion*, candidates should give their *reflections on the whole Action Project experience and explain what aspects of the experience caused them to arrive at these reflections*.

Course-work Assessment Book

Action Project Component essential in each Module

Each module must have an Action Project component. The Action Project is part of the module and its relationship to the module should be evident. There should be a distinctive Action Project for each module.

In describing the Action project within each module a response to each of the four headings is compulsory

Under the heading *Things I have done* candidates have to respond to each of the **four** sub-headings in describing their Action Projects.

*Do not repeat **Skills** in the two Modules*

When writing under the heading *Things I have learned from this course-work module*, candidates should not repeat in the second module skills they have already mentioned in the first module.