



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

S92 /16

**JUNIOR CYCLE ENGLISH ASSESSMENT TASK
COMPLETION: MONDAY 5TH TO FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2016**

**TO THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT/AUTHORITIES OF SECOND-LEVEL
SCHOOLS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES ETBs**

Following SEC Circular S70/2016, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) is now providing the following information and materials to facilitate the completion of the Assessment Task (Task/AT) in Junior Cycle English by candidates in your school:

1. A matrix of 2017 Junior Certificate examination numbers (if applicable)
2. Details of online resources for the Task, Stimulus Materials and instructions
3. A supply of AT Booklets
4. Approval Forms for School Confirmation of the Tasks for completion by the class-teacher(s) and the Principal
5. A tamper-evident packet to facilitate secure storage and retention of the completed AT Booklets
6. Completing the Assessment Task with students with special educational needs
7. Exception Sheet to record additional candidates not on matrix provided.

1. Matrix of Junior Certificate Examination Numbers

SEC Circular S70/2016 related to the early issue of 2017 Junior Certificate examination numbers to facilitate the completion of the AT. In line with this circular, Junior Certificate examination numbers are now provided to any school which returned their 2017 Junior Certificate examination candidate data through the PPOD System to the Department of

Education & Skills by 28th October 2016. Please check this data carefully and contact the Entries Section on 090-6442702 in the event of any query.

Any school that did not meet the PPOD deadline of 28th October has not been provided with examination numbers at this time. These schools will be issued with their Junior Certificate examination numbers in February. Schools that do not have their examination numbers at the time of completion of the AT will need to record sufficient identification details with each AT Booklet to enable them to correctly record the examination number on the Booklet when they receive the examination numbers from the SEC in the normal way in February 2017. The SEC will not accept AT Booklets from schools for marking without the examination number. The identifying information used by schools should not be returned to the SEC as to do so would compromise the anonymity of the examining process.

2. Details of online resources for the Task, Stimulus Materials and Instructions

The NCCA document *Junior Cycle English Assessment Task December 2016* contains instructions for the completion of the AT including the stimulus materials and Section B writing prompts. Copies are provided of a one page Cover Note setting out how to access the relevant resources and these should be provided to teachers teaching the new Junior Cycle English specification to third year students. The website address for accessing assessment resources is <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/English>.

3. Assessment Task Booklets

A supply of AT Booklets is provided to meet the needs of all candidates in your school. These official bar-coded AT Booklets must be used by all candidates completing the task in handwriting. The specimen version of the AT Booklet (available on the websites of the SEC, JCT and NCCA) is for familiarisation purposes only and will not be accepted for marking by the SEC. An Electronic version of the Booklet, for use by students with special educational needs, are available. See Section 6 below.

1. The Task should be completed in schools between the 5th and the 9th of December in line with the relevant instructions.
2. In line with *Junior Cycle English – Guidelines for the Classroom Based Assessment and the Assessment Task* (NCCA, December 2015), where an individual student is absent for the completion of all or part of the Task, schools should make local arrangements in the school to allow the student to complete the Task as close as possible to the timeframe scheduled for completion.
3. Care should be taken to correctly record the examination number provided by the SEC in the space provided.
4. Care should also be taken to ensure that there is no writing or other marks in or on any of the barcodes in the booklet.
5. Students should be instructed to complete the AT booklet using **blue or black pen only**. The booklet must **not** be completed using pencils, coloured pens or gel pens.

4. Approval Forms for School Confirmation of the Assessment Task

Responsibility for ensuring that the AT has been completed by each individual student in accordance with the instructions and that the completed Booklet is submitted to the SEC for marking rests with the school. The class-teacher(s) and the Principal are also required to confirm that the work presented was completed under the supervision of the class teacher in class-time and is the candidate's own individual work.

The SEC will not routinely follow up the absence of an AT with a school. Final examination grades which do not include the marks from the AT will be flagged by the SEC on the statements of provisional results in September. The presence of such an indicator will allow schools to engage with the SEC on any missing ATs at that time. The records provided to the SEC by the school when submitting the AT booklets will be of particular importance in seeking to resolve issues later.

The Approval Process:

1. The total number of candidates recorded on the Approval Form matches the total number of candidates registered by the school to take Junior Cycle English in 2017 as detailed on the matrix of examination numbers (if such has been provided to the school).
2. The Approval Form should be completed when the Assessment Tasks have been completed and collected for secure storage for the full student cohort in the school. This should be by the 9th of December or as soon as practicable thereafter.
3. Each class-teacher should complete the form as indicated and record the total number of completed AT Booklets from the class being submitted for marking. This may be different to the total number of students in the class.
4. When the form has been completed by all of the class-teachers, the form should be completed and counter-approved by the Principal indicating the total number of completed AT Booklets from the school being submitted for marking. This may be different to the total number of candidates entered for Junior Cycle English in the school.
5. Any differences between the number of AT booklets being submitted for marking and the total number of registered candidates must be reconciled. In order to do this any candidate not listed on the matrix but for whom an AT booklet is being submitted for marking (e.g. a student recently transferred into the school) must be added on the enclosed 'Exception sheet' by the school authority. Arrangements must also be made to enter the candidate through the normal Examination Entries process in due course. Similarly, if a student leaves the school before completing the AT, the school authority should record this on the Approval Form and notify the Entries Section in the normal way.
6. Details of any candidates who have not completed the AT Booklet should be recorded on the Approval Form as indicated.

Full compliance with these procedures will assist the SEC in processing the JC English examination results for the candidates in your school.

5. Tamper-Evident Packet

A tamper-evident clear plastic packet is provided to facilitate secure storage and retention of the completed AT Booklets in the school. Class-teachers should arrange to collect completed AT Booklets at the end of Class Period 2 as detailed in the *Junior Cycle English Assessment Task December 2016* instructions. At that point, arrangements should be made for the secure custody of the AT Booklets pending the completion of the approval process. As set out at 4.3 above, the Approval Form should be completed only when all of the Assessment Tasks have been completed and collected for secure storage for the full student cohort in the school. This should be on or by the 9th of December or as soon as practicable thereafter if the school needs to facilitate absent students – see 3.2 above.

Following the completion of the Approval Form, the Principal should oversee the placing of the form and all of the AT Booklets in the clear plastic packet making sure that the Approval Form is visible. At that point the packet should be sealed and stored in a secure place, under the custody of the school authority, until further notice. The SEC will provide instructions to schools at a later stage in respect of the arrangements for the return of the AT Booklets to the SEC.

6. Completing the Assessment Task by students with special educational needs

In line with the Diversity and Accessibility statement in the Framework for Junior Cycle, the greater degree of flexibility afforded by the Framework allows schools to ensure that, within the school's programme, there is sufficient flexibility to cater for the individual learning needs of all students, including those with special educational needs.

With the exception of the Spelling/Grammar waiver, the SEC's Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE Scheme) does not apply to the Assessment Task for Junior Cycle English, which is undertaken as part of normal classroom activity. Nonetheless, appropriate arrangements should be made at local level to facilitate students with special educational needs in accessing the Task. Schools will be aware of a student's normal way of working when making such access arrangements. If the student's special needs mean that they exclusively use a word processor or a lap-top in class (as opposed to for homework) or that they have access to reading assistance or other supports in their day-to-day teaching and learning activities then a similar provision seems in order, provided such support was warranted in the first instance and already in place for normal class activities, and does not undermine the validity of the test instrument.

School authorities will need to be sure that any arrangements that they make are merely enabling the student to access the assessment, rather than providing them with assistance in the responses, as the process needs to be fair to all of the students in the class. Schools must also be sure that the support arrangements are actually required by the student to access the task and are not just their preferred way of working. It would not be appropriate, for example, to allow a student who uses a word-processor by choice in the classroom but who is capable of writing, to use the word-processor for the Task.

Any logistical issues arising from the provision of access arrangements are matters to be resolved at school level, as is the case for all classroom activities linked to the state examinations.

Any student ultimately deemed eligible for a Spelling/Grammar waiver under the RACE Scheme will have the waiver applied to the AT as well as the final written examinations in language subjects.

The SEC is making available, on request, an e-version of the AT Booklet to facilitate students with special educational needs using word processors, laptops or other assistive technology. Any such requests should be made immediately by e-mail to race@examinations.ie or by phoning the Reasonable Accommodations Section at 090- 644 27782/3.

Please ensure that this important information and documentation is brought to the immediate attention of teachers teaching the new Junior Cycle English specification to third year students and any other interested personnel. The information in this circular should also be brought to the notice of students, parents and guardians.

Andrea Feeney
Director
State Examinations Commission.
November 2016.