



## Policy on subject options

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### 1. Introduction

St. Joseph's Community College seeks to create an inclusive school community where values, attitudes and behaviours consistent with its Christian ethos are fostered. In partnership with parents and the wider community, it respects individual self-worth and aims to provide a safe environment in which each student may achieve his/her full potential inclusive of spiritual and academic.

### 2. Background

This document outlines the rationale and procedure for student subject choice and junior and senior cycle

### 3. Support services

Saint Joseph's Community College recognises the importance of subject selection and supports students and parents in this process. This includes:

1. Guidance Councillor
2. Subject Teachers
3. Principal and Deputy Principal

### 4. Guidance

A comprehensive career guidance and counselling service is available to all students at St. Joseph's Community College, Charlestown. The career guidance counsellor helps students with study skills, subject choices, courses and college information and with wider educational and personal matters. Senior students have one class of career guidance each week. Junior cycle pupils receive information as the need arises e.g. third years are taken for in the spring for an advisory session on subject and programme choices.

A dedicated section on the school's website ([www.sjcc.ie](http://www.sjcc.ie)) provides support information and relevant websites for students to conduct independent research on third level courses, further education training and subject selection. Students are encouraged to use this information.

### 5. Subject choice at Junior Cycle

Junior cycle students have the option of choosing two subjects at Junior Cycle in addition to the core subjects studied as part of the curriculum offered in St Joseph's Community College. Subject selection is made within the following two lines:

**Line 1** Home Economics or Materials Technology (Wood)

**Line 2** Art or Music or Technical Graphics

All First year students have the opportunity to sample these subjects. The length of subject sampling varies between lines. The current rotation is as follows:

1. **Line 1** students sample both subjects for a 4 week block, with students making their selection at the end of week 8. The students are divided between the subjects according to their preference and assigned to their subject.
2. **Line 2** students sample each subject for an 8 week block, with students making their selection at the end of week 24. Students are then divided between their subjects according to their preference and assigned to their subject.

Subject selection is influenced by the following:

- a. Individual preference for the subject
- b. Ability
- c. Feedback from class teacher in the form of verbal, formal and continuous assessment.
- d. Input from Guidance Councillor

Please note that practical subjects are limited to a maximum number of students per class. In the event where the demand for a particular subject exceeds the necessary provision the following will factored into consideration:

1. Students' progress in the subject during the sampling process including the following but not limited to:
  - a. Academic progress including the examination of grades awarded for work during the sampling phase.
  - b. Competency and ability within the subject (as determined by the subject teacher)
2. The subject teachers evaluate the students suitability based on the above and will make a recommendation to the student.

## **6. Class sizes**

The maximum class size will not exceed 30 pupils in academic subjects. In practical classes, the maximum number will not exceed 24 pupils however the maximum number of students for Home economics is 20

## **7. Subject choice at senior cycle**

Students will be required to select four subjects at senior cycle. The process of subject selection for Fifth Year students will commence in April prior to the commencement of that year.

## **8. Rationale**

Subject choice selection for senior cycle is an important process and students and parents are asked to give careful consideration to the choices they will make. St Joseph's Community College will make every effort to meet the requirements of subject choice as determined by students and their parents/ guardians in a particular year. This however is influenced by the following factors:

1. the school's ability to offer a subject in a given year
2. the availability of teaching staff qualified to teach a particular subject
3. the demand for a subject relative to the cohort in a given year

## **9. Process**

Students participating in the Transition Year programme will have completed the necessary research and availed of supporting information through the Year through their Career Guidance classes.

- a. Parents will be invited to a Parents Information/ Fifth Year subject choice meeting, containing a presentation by the school's guidance councillor.
- b. Subsequent to this meeting, students will receive a Fifth Year subject choice form<sup>1</sup>. Students will be asked to indicate their top six subject preferences.
- c. Completed subject preference forms will be returned to the school by the specified date and the process will then begin of drafting lines onto which different subjects will appear. this is a detailed process and insofar as possible, Saint Joseph's Community College will aim to facilitate students' top preferences.
- d. In the event whereby it will be impossible to draft subject lines based upon preference selection, the school will then draft subject lines. For example, this process will be necessary when the lines drafted, based upon the preferences of the students, fail to provide a suitable list of subject groupings as part of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). These will be brought to the attention of the students and subsequently will be asked to select 1 subject from each line. These completed forms will be returned by the student to the school by the specified date.
- e. It is expected that the process of timetabling will continue during the summer months and in this event, students will be informed on their return to school at the start of Fifth Year.

## **10. Pupils' Advisory Session.**

The Guidance Counsellor organises a session with current third years about subject and programme choices for senior cycle and their implications for third level and further study. Pupils are advised on matriculation, minimum entry requirements, course requirements and the points system etc. This takes place the same week as the parents' advisory session.

## **11. When a student doesn't return a subject preference form:**

When a student fails to return his/ her preference form by the specified deadline then the process of subject line formulation will continue without his/ her preferences accounted for. He/ she will then select a subject from each of the four lines generated.

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<sup>1</sup> It may be the case that student preferences will be completed online. In this event, the same procedure and criteria will apply.

## 12. Change of subject

There may be some scope for change of subject at the start of the school year. Subject changes, if any, must be completed within the first two weeks of the start of the school year. It is expected that the student will initially discuss this matter with their parent/ guardian. The process of subject change is as follows:

- a. The student will arrange a meeting with the guidance councillor to discuss his/ her possible change of subject. Should the guidance councillor support the subject change then the following stages apply:
  - a. The student will discuss the change with both subject teachers (teacher of current subject and teacher of new subject).
  - b. If both teachers are in agreement with the change, they will then complete the online subject transfer form (accessible by the teaching staff of St Joseph's Community College only) which is submitted to the Deputy Principal.
  - c. it will be the responsibility of the student to collect a *change of subject* slip from The Deputy Principal **or** the school's office. This will state the proposed subject change and must be signed by student and their parent/ guardian. This is to be returned to the Deputy Principal/ school's office by the next school day.
  - d. The Deputy Principal will make the necessary adjustments to the class lists and the student will then be part of the new class on a date specified by both teachers.

In the situation whereby any teaching staff member involved in the change process feels it necessary to discuss this matter with the parent/ guardian concerned.

## 13. Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

LCVP is compulsory in Fifth Year and optional in Sixth Year. Students will participate in a work experience for a period of 1 week (5 school days), at a time arranged during Fifth Year. at the end of this year, students will make the decision to continue with the subject into Sixth Year. LCVP teachers will discuss this with their students and in turn, will formulate a list of students continuing with the subject in Sixth Year. The Guidance Councillor will support the students in making an informed decision if necessary.

## 14. Student change of subject level

Change of subject level is a matter warranting careful consideration. For subjects where classes are divided according to subject level and a student wishes to change level, the following procedure will apply:

- a. the student will first discuss their consideration with their subject teacher. He/ she will provide feedback to the student regarding their progress and ability within the subject.
- b. If necessary, the student may need to discuss the consideration with the guidance councillor.

- c. If there is agreement at (a) and (b) above that it is in the students best interests to change level then the student will speak to the teacher of the class that he/ she is proposing to transfer to.
- d. If the teacher agrees to the transfer he/ she will complete the change of subject level form and submit this to the Deputy Principal. The form will also specify a date from which the change will take place and the class lists will be amended accordingly.
- e. Please note that class sizes are permitted to a maximum number. In the event where a class has reached maximum capacity:
  - a. The student may decide to remain studying that subject at the current level
  - b. The student may change level but continue to remain in that class. Work and progress will be assessed by the class teacher.

### **15. Students studying subjects outside of school**

The school will not be in a position to accommodate students studying additional subjects outside of the curriculum provided. Students are expected to engage in all core and optional subjects as provided in Saint Joseph's Community College. Students studying subjects outside of school should first satisfy themselves that they meet the criteria for assessment as determined by the State Examinations Commission e.g. subjects containing a practical/ coursework element. The student must specify any additional subjects in their application for state examinations.

### **16. Subject options in Transition Year**

Depending upon the curriculum delivered as part of the Transition Year Programme, students' will have the option of sampling subjects that appear on the same line e.g. Art and Music. In this situation, students will study one subject for half of the school year before rotating to the alternative subject. Students will be divided by the class teachers where one class is established in Transition Year.

### **17. Implementation and Review**

The date from which the Policy will apply is 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016, which is the date of adoption by the Board of Management, Saint Joseph's Community College. The Policy will be reviewed and evaluated from time to time as deemed necessary by the Board of Management.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Clodagh Geraghty*  
**Chairperson of BOM**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*John Bones*  
**Secretary of BOM**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_