

2.8 As TY subjects and modules are much less tied to specific textbooks than subjects at Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate level, subject teachers at TY usually avail of a broad range of resources: books, packs, videos, visiting speakers, places to visit and so on. A listing of the main resources can be especially useful when, for example, there is a change of teacher during the course of a subject or module.

2.9 The TY Guidelines state that: *'An interdisciplinary approach would help to create that unified perspective which is lacking in the traditional, compartmentalised teaching of individual subjects.'* Modules such as *Shaping Space, In Search of Europe* and *Family Awareness* connect many subjects. When designing other subjects or modules, cross-curricular themes, specific co-operative ventures or specific links with other modules should be established.

2.10 On-going internal evaluation is central to the success of a TY programme. As with assessment, evaluation of an individual subject or module should be seen within the wider context of a coherent, whole-school approach. The purpose of such feedback is to improve the subject/module as well as the overall Transition Year within the school. Regular evaluation and a constantly evolving programme are the hallmarks of a vibrant TYP.



Part 3 Organisational details

This section might include:

- 3.1 Names of coordinators and core team members
- 3.2 Names of students, including class groupings
- 3.3 List of subjects and modules, core and optional, including the weekly timetable
- 3.4 Main calendar features
- 3.5 Assessment and certification details
- 3.6 Finances
- 3.7 Evaluation
- 3.8 Other relevant material

3.1 Where specific co-ordination responsibilities e.g. for work experience, assessment, attendance, have been clarified or allocated to individual core-team members, these details might be included.

3.4 Fixing dates for items such as work experience placements, trips, modules change-over, assessments, exhibitions, presentation/graduation evening can build into a useful calendar. This ensures that 'interruptions' to the regular weekly timetable are flagged well in advance. Furthermore, calendar items which cannot be planned for in advance can be fitted into the overall schedule in a more balanced way.

3.5 Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Assessment and certification within Transition Year is school-based. Perhaps because of this - in a system that is dominated by national certification - some people mistakenly think that *'there is no assessment in TY.'* Assessment in Transition Year should be diagnostic - so as to provide accurate information with regard to student strengths and weaknesses, and formative, so as to facilitate improved student performance through feedback, guidance and affirmation. Arrangements within individual subjects and modules should be consistent with the overall framework of assessment within Transition Year.

Among items which might be included are:

- role of on-going assessment
- written assessments
- practical assessment
- oral assessments
- aural assessment
- assessment of project work
- use of portfolios/folders
- student logs or diaries
- rating scales
- assessment of work experience
- exhibitions of work
- student participation in the process
- form and frequency of reporting to parents

The school policy on certification should also be set out clearly in the written programme. While most schools issue

general TY certificates, some state 'participation', while others highlight achievement at a particular level e.g. pass, merit, distinction. Where achievement can be at a particular level, the criteria (on-going grades, end-of year tests, attendance records, participation ratings, etc.) should be clear.

A formal presentation of TY certificates or portfolios within the school can be a very affirming experience for students, parents and teachers and can be an important annual event within the school.

3.6 Issues to do with finances can provide schools with practical opportunities to dialogue with parents about the overall TY programme. Advance warning to parents and students of any special costs related to trips or special modules such as ECDL can avoid confusion later on.

3.7. In addition to the school policy on evaluation being stated in the introduction, forms and instruments used in the regular internal evaluation of TY can also be included. Especially relevant are questionnaires or other forms used to elicit students' and parents' responses to the TY programme.

3.8 Other relevant material might include sample letters to parents about trips, documents relating to work experience, etc

Support For Schools

The Department of Education Resource Folder *Transition Year Programme - Resource Materials* includes ideas, suggestions and practical tools for planning, assessment and evaluation of programmes. *Transition News* carries additional material. Many schools have availed of Support when designing and evaluating their TY programmes. Such Support can be Organised by Contacting Blackrock Education Centre, Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

Tel: 01-2365023, Fax: 2365070.

Email: ty@blackrockec.ie

“ Curriculum content is a matter for selection and adaptation by the individual school having regard to these guidelines, the requirements of pupils and the views of parents. ”

Transition Year Programme - Guidelines for Schools

“ All aspects of Curriculum and Organisation should be clearly documented and approved by the school management and staff and by the Board of Management. ”

Transition Year Programme- Guidelines for Schools,

This document has been produced jointly by the Transition Year Curriculum Support Service and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science.



Some reasons for writing the programme

- Documenting a programme which is school designed and school specific is both professionally responsible and practically useful.
- It provides a coherent overview of the TY programme for teachers, students and parents.
- It provides a clear focus and context for individual teachers delivering the programme.
- It facilitates communication, including interdisciplinary co-operation, between teachers.
- It aids students and parents in forming realistic expectations of the year.
- It provides a reference for internal evaluation.
- It facilitates external monitoring of the school's programme by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science.
- Written programmes are the foundations on which on-going successful teaching and learning in TY is built.

Part 1 General Introduction to the School's TY programme

The introduction should relate the individual school's programme to the national guidelines for TYP and to the school's overall mission.

There should be a clear statement of the aims of the school's Transition Year programme. In addition to being inspired by the *Guidelines* and the school's own ethos and mission, the aims should explicitly take account of the needs of students and parents as well as the resources available to the school.

The statement about the overall aims of the TY programme should be the result of a process of consultation with all the partners in the school community. In particular, this process should involve the active participation of all the teachers involved in the programme. While each school's aims will be school-specific, extracts from two examples may offer some guidance:

- 1... *aims to give students opportunities to discover and develop their own individual gifts and strengths.. to become more independent.... to experience a year where the emphasis will be on individual responsibility and the nurturing of thinking, caring, articulate and self-confident people.*
- 2... *aims to provide students with the skills and supports necessary to.... discover their individual talents, aptitudes and abilities.... understand their own educational needs.... develop those skills and competences necessary to cope successfully with their particular stage of development....*

The introduction to the written programme should clearly state the overall school policy on assessment in TY. (see 3.5)

The general introduction should outline how the school will evaluate the TY programme. (see 3.7)

Part 2 Programmes for individual subjects and modules

Context

In a climate dominated by centrally planned syllabi and regulated by externally set and marked examinations, it is essential that all the players involved in teaching and coordinating the TYP are transparent about their goals and the means by which they aim to achieve these goals. Without such transparency, the TYP runs the risk of being undervalued or cynically dismissed as a 'free year'. Aware of such dangers, schools combat them by

- information evenings for parents,
- regular reporting
- public displays of students' work and achievements.

This approach alone can, however, leave a critical audience with the impression that the TYP consists of a number of enjoyable and stimulating experiences for students without any serious or worthwhile educational achievements and that it is lacking in cohesiveness. A transparent programme, using an agreed format, helps the reader appreciate and understand that the TYP is a well thought out, coherent programme with worthwhile educational goals.

A well written module or subject programme helps teachers analyse their subject in terms of its contribution to the overall aims of TY and, indeed, to the mission of the school. The process of planning a TY programme encourages teachers to rethink their subjects, their teaching styles and to focus on students' needs.

Whatever combination of subjects and modules is offered to students, a common framework should be adopted for describing each one in the written programme. Unlike most discrete subjects on the Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate curriculum, the Transition Year programme is unique to each school and each subject or module should be devised by a subject department or a small team of teachers. The use of a common format also facilitates interdisciplinary learning, a feature encouraged by the Guidelines and characterised by a relative lack of success (see Evaluation by Inspectorate p.21)

Format **A suggested format for each subject/module is as follows:**

- 2.1 Title of subject or module
- 2.2 Approximate duration of module
- 2.3 Aims
- 2.4 Objectives
- 2.5 Teaching and Learning Strategies
- 2.6 Content
- 2.7 Assessment
- 2.8 Resources
- 2.9 Links with other subjects
- 2.10 Evaluation

Explanations

- 2.2 Approximate duration in terms of class periods, hours, weeks.
- 2.3 The Aims are a general statement of intent. The aims should make it clear why the subject is being taught and how it contributes to the overall aims of the TY programme. Aims should reflect the nature of the subject/module as well as the interests of students and teachers. Clearly stated aims provide a framework for the organisation of other elements in the subject/module.

Some examples illustrate these points:

The principal aims of the modern language programme are:

- a) *to build on and develop the student's communicative competence in the relevant language;*
- b) *to facilitate the acquisition of the four skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening;*
- c) *to give the student an appreciation of the richness, uniqueness and diversity of the cultures of countries in which the target language is spoken;*
- d) *to encourage independent study and decision-making skills in learning;*
- e) *to endeavour to do the above in such a way as to 'engage the heart' of the learner.*

- 2.4 While aims identify goals, objectives state the steps on the way to achieving these goals. Aims are aspirational, objectives are measurable. Therefore, the objectives need to be precise and stated in the form of learning outcomes. It can be useful to sort objectives into three categories: Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (ASK).

Some specific examples of stated objectives are:

On conclusion of this module the student should be able to: Open, operate, save and close a word processing package.

In stating learning outcomes precisely, active verbs can be especially useful e.g.

Students will be able to:

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| <i>define</i> | <i>the meaning of terms such as democracy, responsibility, government, participation.</i> |
| <i>identify</i> | <i>at least six common species of tree in the locality</i> |
| <i>list</i> | <i>the important dates in the evolution of the European Union</i> |
| <i>name</i> | <i>the main features of a typical modern house</i> |
| <i>outline</i> | <i>how Dáil Éireann works</i> |
| <i>distinguish</i> | <i>between different genres of film</i> |
| <i>experience</i> | <i>the joy of giving</i> |
| <i>make</i> | <i>an oral presentation of three minutes in the target language</i> |
| <i>explain</i> | <i>how technology has made an impact on people's lives</i> |
| <i>interpret</i> | <i>a piece of music</i> |
| <i>order food</i> | <i>in a restaurant in the target language</i> |
| <i>co-operate</i> | <i>with other members of a small group in completing a task</i> |
| <i>predict</i> | <i>the consequences of abusing alcohol</i> |
| <i>express</i> | <i>and defend a point of view</i> |
| <i>summarise</i> | <i>the main features of a novel which they have read</i> |
| <i>analyse</i> | <i>a sample of river water</i> |
| <i>calculate</i> | <i>the cost of a typical weekly household budget</i> |
| <i>compile</i> | <i>a CV</i> |
| <i>appreciate</i> | <i>the planning involved in urban development</i> |
| <i>understand</i> | <i>and use time</i> |
| <i>design</i> | <i>and make 3D maths models</i> |
| <i>evaluate</i> | <i>his/her own learning strengths and weaknesses</i> |
| <i>imagine</i> | <i>and articulate his/her ideal school</i> |
| <i>organise</i> | <i>a work experience placement</i> |
| <i>become</i> | <i>aware of the practical difficulties faced by elderly people</i> |
| <i>select</i> | <i>three preferred poems</i> |
| <i>solve</i> | <i>problems using calculators.</i> |

It is important to be realistic. Precise learning outcomes should also be achievable by the majority of students in a TY class.

- 2.5 The Guidelines state that the use of a wide range of teaching and learning methodologies should be a key feature of a TY programme. In writing the individual programme for a subject or module, it is very useful to highlight the particular strategies most likely to be used. This helps keep the focus on active learning by students. It also draws attention to the extensive repertoire of strategies open to teachers in every subject area. It can be especially useful when planning for mixed ability classes.

Some examples include:

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| • <i>negotiated learning</i> | • <i>classroom discussion</i> |
| • <i>formal input by teacher</i> | • <i>research</i> |
| • <i>debates</i> | • <i>pair work</i> |
| • <i>practical work</i> | • <i>demonstrations</i> |
| • <i>group work</i> | • <i>role-play</i> |
| • <i>interviews</i> | • <i>simulations</i> |
| • <i>project work</i> | • <i>use of audio tapes</i> |
| • <i>use of video tapes</i> | • <i>visualisation</i> |
| • <i>visiting speakers</i> | • <i>study visits</i> |
| • <i>computer-based learning</i> | • <i>field trips</i> |
| • <i>oral presentations by students</i> | |
| • <i>drama in education exercises</i> | |

- 2.6 Many written programmes tend to be clearest when listing content. This section need not be too extensive. Precise descriptors e.g. the development of the European Union, give a sharper focus than more general terms e.g. Modern Europe.

- 2.7 Arrangements for assessment within individual subjects and modules need to be part of a wider, coherent school policy and practice on assessment in TY. (See also 3.4). While the school may have an overall policy on, for example, portfolios or project work, individual subjects/modules will vary in their use of written, oral, practical and aural assessments. A clear procedure on assessment within a subject or module ensures that both teacher and student know from the outset how the stated learning objectives will be assessed. Often the clearly defined objective will suggest the appropriate form of assessment e.g. if an objective is 'that students will be able to make a three minute oral presentation'.... on a topic or in a target language, then students should be asked to do this as part of their assessment. Particular instruments of assessment to be used in a subject or module might be included.