

What every parents needs to know about Transition Year

What is Transition Year?

A one year programme taken after the Junior Certificate and before the Leaving Certificate Programme.

What's the purpose of the Transition Year Programme?

To promote maturity:

- Maturity in studies by making students more self-directed learners through the development of general, technical and academic skills
- Maturity in relation to work and careers by developing work-related skills
- Personal maturity by providing opportunities to develop communication skills, self-confidence and a sense of responsibility
- Social maturity by developing greater 'people' skills and more awareness of the world outside school

Who decides on the Transition Year Programme?

Each school devises its own TY programme. The teaching staff draws up a programme in the light of the Transition Year Guidelines and the Resource Material published by the Department of Education and Science. They also consider students' needs, parents' views, employers and the wider interests of the local community. Each year the programme should be evaluated, with inputs from all these parties, and revised by the teaching staff.

What subjects are studied?

This varies from school to school but in every school students follow a timetable as they do in other years. Most programmes work towards getting a balance between some continuation of essential core subjects, a tasting and sampling of other subjects, a variety of distinctive courses designed to broaden students' horizons and some modules and activities specifically aimed at promoting the maturity that is central to the whole Transition Year ideal.

Even if all these programmes are different, surely there are some features common to the programme in a lot of schools?

Many schools offer modules, short courses on particular topics. Most schools offer a work experience programme. Mini-company, where students set up and operate a real business, is a popular way of learning. The use of visiting speakers as well as trips beyond the classroom

are features of many programmes. Project work, where students undertake independent research, usually more extensive than traditional 'homework', is also common to many programmes.

What about exams?

Assessment is a key part of any worthwhile learning programme. Transition Year is an opportunity to move beyond the narrow focus of end-of-year, written exams. The emphasis is on varied and on-going assessment with students themselves becoming involved in diagnosing their own learning strengths and weaknesses. Project work, portfolio work and exhibitions of students' work are also encouraged. Each individual school makes its own arrangements for reporting to parents and for the certifications of students who complete a TY programme.

Can the Transition Year be part of a three-year Leaving Certificate programme?

The Transition Year programme is a school-designed, distinctive programme and should not constitute year one of a three-year Leaving Certificate. TY is part of the Senior Cycle experience and lays a solid foundation for Leaving Certificate studies.

TY programmes should challenge students intellectually, give them an orientation to the world of work and cater for the development of their personal and social awareness. The exploration of any Leaving Certificate material should be in a way that is original and stimulating and significantly different from the approach taken during a two-year Leaving Certificate programme.

Is Transition Year available to all students?

Currently over 27,000 young people are following a Transition Year programme in approx. 540 schools. Some schools offer TYP to all students who have finished the Junior Certificate. In other schools students may have to apply for a limited number of places.

Is Transition Year suited to all students?

With its emphasis on development and maturity, all young people can benefit from the programme. Transition Year, in particular, can allow for the development of an individual's multiple intelligences-linguistic, logico-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. The Transition Year programme can also develop key skills for the 21st century such as the *three Ts: thinking, teamwork and technology*.

How are parents involved?

Parents' understanding of and support for student learning in TY is a key factor in a successful Transition Year experience. Most schools arrange sessions for parents of 3rd year students to discuss the Transition Year programme. Parents should attend and contribute. Some parents make their particular expertise available to the school during the TYP. Parents should be involved also in the school's evaluation of its programme. Parents should encourage their sons to avail of the numerous opportunities offered by this unique programme.