



Finn Valley College

Programme, Class Group & Subject Choice System

Finn Valley College is committed to providing a curriculum that is student-centred and that is responsive to the needs of our students. In doing so the school will provide students with learning experiences and learning opportunities that will lead to the development of the student, that are better suited to the aptitudes, interests and ability levels of each individual student and which will in turn lead to improved learning outcomes for our students. In order to achieve this a structured and progressive subject choice procedure has been devised and implemented.

Principles

The main principle underpinning the Subject Choice system in Finn Valley College is the provision of a dynamic and evolving curriculum and timetable that responds to the needs of the students. In developing the timetable and the programmes on offer the school is mindful of the different abilities and aptitudes of the students in its care. The school offers a range of programmes at both junior and senior cycle that caters for all students.

Junior Cycle Programmes

At Junior Cycle the school offers the traditional Junior Certificate and also offers the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP).

Junior Certificate Programme

The Junior Certificate timetable is structured and offered in a manner that maximises student choice allowing more academic students to target more literacy-rich subjects while more practically orientated students can choose more vocational subjects. Students can choose a mix of these optional subjects. Students participating in the traditional Junior Certificate are placed in mixed ability classes in First Year following a six week Induction and taster programme.

Current optional Subject Choices in Finn Valley College	
Art	History
Technical Graphics	Geography
Metalwork	Business
Materials Technology - Wood	Home Economics

First Year Subject Taster Programme

Students in the Junior Certificate programme participate in the school's taster programme during their six week Induction programme. This allows the students to gauge their ability and interest levels in a particular subject before making a choice. At the end of the module the students do common class-based tests, which will form/be the main factor in determining which programme they will follow. The Subject Choice process is outlined below.

Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP)

Students who are assigned to the JCSP programme (in consultation with their parents) all follow a common curriculum. Typically, these students will not study a modern language and they will study an extra practical subject. These subjects are chosen to form a continuum with the subjects offered in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. JCSP students are not required to do either Business or History. In deciding whether the student might be better suited to the JCSP programme a wide set of indicative markers are used including the following:

- National school reports
- Psychological assessments
- SEN / LS / SNA access
- Ability to access the curriculum
- Literacy test results
- Numeracy test results
- Taster programme Results/Report
- Teacher Recommendations
- Mid-term report or Christmas report

First Year Class group & Subject Choice System

Key stages in the Subject Choice Process

1. The Guidance counsellor meets with the class groups towards the end of the six week taster programme to discuss the choices the students will have to make.
2. The students are presented with a small booklet of information on each subject based on an NCCA template. This is also accompanied by a letter to parents outlining the subject choice selection and requesting them to engage and support their child through the process.
3. The Guidance counsellor explains the different programmes available and the different mixes of subjects that student might wish to consider (Academic; Practical or Academic/Practical mix).
4. The Guidance counsellor organises for a teacher from each subject area in the options to deliver a small talk to the students.
5. The students also complete a series of common class-based tests to discern their ability and aptitude in each subject.
6. The students are divided into class groupings and subject areas according to their choices.
7. If there is an over-subscription for a particular subject the Guidance counsellor will discuss the subject choices made by the student in the first instance to ascertain the reason for choosing and their suitability.
8. The Guidance counsellor may discuss the ability, work ethic and conduct displayed by the student in a particular subject with the subject teacher.
9. Throughout the process there is consultation with the parent and the student.

10. If at the end of the consultation with the students there is still an over-subscription a random selection or lottery may take place to decide the final subject groupings.

Senior Cycle Programmes

At Senior Cycle the school offers the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

This programme suits the more academically able student. Students who enrol in this programme must choose to study four optional subjects in addition to the four core subjects of English, Irish, Maths and Link Modules. Students select four from an initial menu of 12 subjects which is subsequently narrowed down to 8 / 9 subjects. This process is outlined below.

Leaving Certificate Applied

This programme favours those students who may struggle with the more academic LCVP programme, those who would be better suited to a modular system of continuous assessment instead of a terminal exam-based system and those who intend going into more vocational careers after leaving school. Students in the LCA programme study a common course and therefore there is no subject choice process. The subject specialisms and electives chosen by the school forms a continuum with the JCSP subject selection making it a seamless progression for this student.

Third Year Class group & Subject Choice System

Key stages in the Subject Choice Process

1. The Guidance counsellor links in with the students over a six week period to help them consider best their particular aptitudes and interest areas. A careers inventory test is conducted to help guide students towards the correct programme, subjects and, ultimately, career path.
2. A Careers Fair is organised so that the students may engage with the process in a more proactive manner. Each student is required to get information on at least three career areas from stands at the Careers Fair and to find out what subjects they would require or would be beneficial to them to pursue this career.
3. The Guidance counsellor explains in detail the different programmes on offer at Senior Cycle and explains the structure of each, the type of learning which occurs in each, the type of assessment in each, the progression routes for each and any other associated issues or matters that may be deemed appropriate.
4. The Guidance counsellor presents the students with the Subject Information Booklet and reads through the booklet to support those students with literacy difficulties. The Booklet contains information on the programmes, each subject and the process involved in the subject choice system.
5. The initial focus is ensuring that the students choose the most suitable programme and the Guidance counsellor explains each programme in detail to each class group.

6. Having selected the appropriate programme the Guidance counsellor explains the subject choice system for those opting for the LCVP programme. Emphasis is placed on choosing subjects for the right reasons, in keeping options as open as possible and in matching subjects with interests and abilities.
7. The students make an initial selection of six subjects in order of preference to determine which eight or nine subjects will run. The school is committed to ensuring that students can continue a modern European language and Science subject to LCVP level and may run it as an extra subject if it is not selected by the students.
8. The Careers teacher collates the information and the initial menu of 12 subjects is reduced to 8/9 subjects.
9. Next, students rank these 8/9 subjects in order of preference, selecting the four subjects that they finally want to study so as to determine what bands might be created.
10. The students are presented with three possible banding options where each option is cross referenced with their four selections to ensure that students are getting the closest match possible to their choices. The banding option which provides the best choices for students in relation to their preferences is chosen.
11. A Parent Information evening is arranged to inform parents of the programmes, subject choice system and subject choices available to the students for the current year.
12. The students make their final selection of their choices.
13. If the Guidance counsellor/class teacher/subject teacher feels that a student has opted for the wrong programme or subject(s) then individual appointments are held with the student and there is consultation with student and parent.
14. A Teacher Recommendation form may also be issued to teachers if a student is unsure of which programme to choose or if it is felt that the student is choosing the wrong programme.
15. If there is an over-subscription for a particular subject the procedure outlined in the Subject Information Booklet is applied.
16. When all steps have been completed students and parents sign off on final programme and subject choices.