

O'Carolan College – Policy Document



Transition Year Policy

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the students, staff, parents/guardians of O'Carolan College.

This is version 1 of this policy which was most recently ratified by the Board of Management on 13/11/2025. The original policy with first ratified by the Board of Management on 13/11/2025.

O'Carolan College offers Transition Year (TY) as an optional one-year programme, post Junior Cycle. We envisage that TY, through teamwork and communal learning, will enrich both our school and the wider community.

Aims of the Transition Year Programme

Transition Year offers time, space and autonomy to create enjoyable and meaningful educational experiences that support students in senior cycle. It can be a bridge to opening up a broader range of possibilities and pathways. The programme enables young people to develop a greater capacity to respond to uncertainty, manage complexity, nurture personal interests and become agents of positive, ethical change in society. Our Transition year programme aims to:

- nurture the development of the student as a whole person by building on their previous experiences, through a curriculum designed by the school that is aligned to the TY Programme Statement
- create space and opportunities for meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences through which the key competencies of the student can be developed in the classroom and school, in the home and in their role as local, national and global citizens
- expand the student's experience and awareness of diverse future pathways and nurture the student's capacity to sustain their growth and development through a process of lifelong learning
- evolve continuously to support the learning and development of the student through a reflection and renewal process involving students, teachers, school leaders, parents and community partners

Who is Transition Year for?

- Students who are self-motivated, positive, open minded and willing to work hard.
- Students who wish to try a range of new experiences and who are willing to push themselves outside their usual comfort zone.
- Students who wish to access a range of subjects that will help them when choosing senior cycle subjects and considering a career.
Students who want an opportunity to discover their own individual talents, aptitudes and abilities.
- Students who wish to further develop skills to enable them to deal with the self-reliant learning of third level education.
- Students seeking the challenge of work experience in areas of interest to them.
- Students who are leaders or wish to develop their leadership skills through a range of programmes on offer as part of our TY curriculum.
- Students who have an understanding of their own educational needs and who wish to enrich their school experience through the challenges and successes unique to TY.

The Transition Year Programme

The TY programme is described through Student Dimensions and Curriculum Dimensions. The four Student Dimensions are the foundation for the TY programme. The four Curriculum Dimensions provide the scaffolding to realise the ambition of the Student Dimensions.

Our Transition Year programme is designed so that every aspect of the curriculum serves to develop the student in harmony with the Student Dimensions.

Student Dimensions

The four Student Dimensions are the key foundations upon which TY programmes are designed. They describe how students can develop in TY and the experiences that can support this development.

Student Dimension	Description
Personal Growth	Students mature socially and emotionally over the course of the year, developing in areas that include health and wellbeing, autonomy, identity, empathy and leadership.
Being a Learner	Building on their previous experiences, students begin to develop as senior cycle students, embracing opportunities and strategies for learning that work best for the student now and into the future.
Civic and Community Engagement	Students make a positive difference in their schools, communities and society. They learn to act on their responsibilities and exercise their rights as local, national and global citizens in ethical and sustainable ways.
Career Exploration	Students explore diverse future pathways in a guided and coordinated manner, gaining first-hand workplace experience, and developing career- related competencies.

Each of the four Student Dimensions contain a set of Developmental Indicators and related student experiences.

Developmental Indicators are intended to guide the student and set out the parameters for the learning and development of the student during TY.

Student experiences are intended to provide a variety of possible opportunities and contexts to support student learning and development consistent with the developmental indicators.

While the developmental indicators set out the parameters for learning and development, students will develop in different ways and to varying degrees across each of the indicators. In this sense they also serve as reflective guidance for students.

Further details on both the Developmental Indicator and the student experiences can be found on the NCCA website. (www.curriculumonline.ie)

The Transition Year Programme in O'Carolan College has a number of key strands:

- Academic Core – maintains academic standards in core subject areas.
- TY Modules – allows students to focus on areas of special interest specific to TY.
- Subject sampling – allows students to experience a broad range of option subjects from the established Leaving Certificate course.
- Work Experience
- Workshops, speakers, school trips, learning modules and accredited courses.

All students study Gaelige, English, Maths and a modern foreign language, along with a selection of TY specific subjects. This selection varies from year to year depending on demand, available resources and timetabling constraints. All students will also have the opportunity to sample the range of subjects on offer in O'Carolan College for the established Leaving Certificate.

All TY students are encouraged to participate in the Gaisce Awards Programme and apply themselves to leadership positions in the school. Throughout the year there are various guest speakers, workshops and modules, together with a broad range of related out of school trips and activities.

Students complete 1 days work experience each week during the year. Students are responsible for sourcing their own work experience placement. Placements are monitored and employers are required to submit feedback to the school.

Students who have completed the transition year program in our school commonly report the following benefits:

- I developed my self-confidence and responsibility and improved my communication and decisionmaking skills.
- I developed my leadership skills and my ability to work as part of a team through a range of activities and programmes.

- It provided more focus on the career's areas of interest to me through the work experience programme.
- It assisted me in choosing my Senior Cycle Optional subjects
- It provided an extra year to mature and develop.
I experienced learning and teaching in new ways, with lots of trips and educational activities throughout the year
- I achieved other certifications which have added value to my CV.

Assessment

Assessment in TY is multifaceted. There are three main elements to reporting in TY;

- Student's TY portfolio
- Student reflection
- Traditional school reporting

The student's TY portfolio

An individual student portfolio, digital and/or physical, can be a powerful tool for capturing the uniqueness of the student experience in TY. The purpose of a portfolio is to give students the opportunity to apply reflective and critical thinking to their experiences across the four Student Dimensions. In this way, they can evaluate their own experiences and generate a more personalised profile of themselves as a learner and as a maturing young adult.

Students can showcase learning and achievements, and review their developmental goals from the start, middle and end of the year. The integration of the student's use of a portfolio into teaching and assessment practice, and the inclusion of a reflective practice component, are intended to support students in the creation of their portfolio.

Some of the essential elements of a TY portfolio include:

- goal setting and ongoing review of goals
- a chronological review of student experiences and learning over the year • overall progress across each of the four Student Dimensions
- critical reflections on key learning and achievement.

Student reflection

The TY portfolio and the school report are further enhanced by a student reflection towards the end of the programme. This is the opportunity for students to speak to their experiences and is based on their critical reflections on key learning and achievements in their portfolio.

The student reflection is a form of assessment and can also be a significant learning experience for the student. It affords the opportunity to assess how students have developed across all four Student Dimensions.

School reports

In school-based subjects, both continuous assessments and key assignments are employed by teachers as assessment methods. Assessment in Transition Year can include :

- Work produced (homework assignments, projects, presentations etc)

- Active participation in all aspects of the course.
- Skills used in various modules and core subjects.
- Class tests-given by individual teachers.
- Work experience report from employer/co-operating teacher.
- Key assignments in each module

The school issues two reports, one at Christmas and one in June.

Cost & Budgeting

Student Direct Costs for TY are decided by the Board of Management and approved by the Board of LMETB and are advised to parents in the final term of each year for the following year.

The school makes every effort to keep student direct costs for TY to a minimum. However, in order for the school to be able to plan effectively for the delivery of the TY programme, and for the associated costs involved, it is imperative that all student direct costs are paid for students participating in the programme.

An inability to pay student direct costs for TY should not be a barrier to a student participating in the programme and parent(s)/guardian(s) who are experiencing financial difficulties should contact the school in confidence.

Where a TY student's student direct costs have not been paid (or not been paid in full) and where the school has not been contacted by the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) in relation to financial difficulty, this student may not be able to participate in the full range of TY activities and trips.

The TY Admissions Team

The TY Admissions Team will be responsible for assessing applications for the programme and offering places. The Team will include:

- Programme Coordinator (who will chair the team)
- Deputy Principal
- Year Leader for 3rd year
- Year Leader for Transition Year
- A Guidance Counsellor.

Where interviews are carried out to interview prospective TY candidates, the interview board will be made up from the members of the Admissions Team.

Application for admission to TY is open to all students in Third Year and those interested in the TY programme should apply by completing the schools Transition Year application form.

Acceptance of the application form does not confirm or imply an expectation of a place on the programme.

A closing date will be clearly indicated on the application form and late applications may not be considered. In any case if considered they will only be processed after the on time applications have been assessed.

The number of places available in TY may vary year to year, depending on the number of students that apply and necessary restrictions imposed by timetabling and staff resources.

The Admissions process involves:

- **An information evening for the parents/guardians** of 3rd year students on senior cycle options, including Transition year.
- **An information session for all 3rd year students** presented by the Programme Coordinator on TY.
- Those interested in the TY programme should apply by completing the **application form**. Each applicant must complete all sections of the application form for TY and submit it on or before the deadline given.
Together with their parent(s)/guardian(s), the student must sign the **Transition Year Student Contract** and submit it with the application form.
- Late applications may not be considered. It is the responsibility of each student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that their application has been completed and submitted correctly.

Once the Application process is concluded, all applications for TY are then reviewed:

- The Programme Coordinator will review the **Diary/Chronicle entries** for all applicants.
- Together with this review, the Programme Coordinator will liaise with the relevant Tutors and Year Leaders to assess the **disciplinary and behaviour record** of each applicant along with the applicants **record of attendance and punctuality**.

A consistent record of very good attendance and punctuality along with a positive record of behaviour and discipline at Junior Cycle is required for admission to TY. Applicants who are unable to demonstrate this may not be offered a place in TY.

All applicants must complete a **Group Task** assigned by the Programme Coordinator. Applicants are marked by facilitators on their work within the group to which they are assigned. Applicants are marked on their performance and their application form.

Applicants may be interviewed for the programme by members of the Admissions Team.

Having conducted the comprehensive review of each application and applicant's school record as outlined above, along with the applicant's participation in the Group Task and at interview (where utilised), the Admissions Team will then decide whether the applicant is suitable for admission to TY. This decision will be communicated to the student and their parents in writing. Where the Admissions Team considers an applicant unsuitable for TY, the reason(s) for this will be outlined to the student and their parents.

Where the number of applicants deemed suitable exceeds the number of places available in TY, places will be allocated by way of lottery and a waiting list formed. We could also use a point system to create the order but this may open up to more challenge. Students and Parents will be informed of their position on the waiting list. Should places become available, they will be offered in order up to the first day of the school term.

Where a student is offered a place in Transition Year and subsequently withdraws from the programme and opts for the established Leaving Certificate, their subject options for Fifth Year will be allocated only after the options process for Fifth Year students who did not apply for TY has been completed.

Provisional Admission to TY

The Admissions Team may, at its discretion, decide to provisionally admit a student to TY. Students provisionally admitted to TY will be assessed based on a set of specified targets and criteria prior to the end of the school year (Third Year). Where a student has not met the specified targets and criteria, their offer of a place in TY may be withdrawn and the student will be placed in an established Leaving Cert class.

Reasons why the Admissions Team may decide to offer a provisional place include, but are not limited to:

- The student's prior record of attendance would not meet the standards required in TY.
- The student's prior record of behaviour and discipline would not meet the standards required in TY.

Where a student is offered a provisional place in TY, the reasons for the provisional nature of the admission will be communicated to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) along with:

- The specific targets and criteria under which the student will be assessed at the end of Third Year.
- The date at which the review of these targets and criteria will take place in May of Third Year.

Withdrawal of place in TY

While every effort will be made to assist those admitted to the TY programme in ensuring they are able to engage successfully with the programme, it may become necessary to withdraw a student's place in TY after they have commenced the programme.

Should this become necessary, the decision will be made by the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Programme Coordinator, TY Year Leader, the relevant TY Tutor. Members of the TY teaching team may also be consulted. The decision will be communicated in writing to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

Reasons why a student's place in TY may be withdrawn as outlined above include, but are not limited to:

- The student's record of attendance and punctuality is consistently failing to meet the required standard and has not improved to an acceptable level despite repeated interventions.
- The student's record of behaviour and discipline is consistently poor and has not improved to an acceptable level despite repeated interventions.
- The student's continued participation in the programme is considered to be detrimental to the order, discipline and educational welfare of the other students in their class.

Appeals

Where a student already enrolled in the school has not been offered a place in TY or has had their place in TY withdrawn, the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal this decision to the Principal in writing. The appeal must be made within seven days of the date of the written notification of the decision not to offer or to withdraw a student's place in TY sent to the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

The decision of the Principal on appeal is final.

External Applications

Applications for admission to O'Carolan College are considered under the terms of the school's Admissions Policy and Admissions Notice that are in force at the time of the application.

The number of places available in TY may vary year to year, depending on the number of students that apply and necessary restrictions imposed by timetabling and staff resources. As a result, places in TY will not be offered to external applicants until after the internal TY admissions process has concluded in any given year.

Conclusion

Transition Year is a stand-alone year that allows students a year to grow, mature and develop as learners and as citizen before they move into the final two years of Post Primary school. It is an option in our school as it does not suit all students. TY is an activity based, self-directed programme, which entails learning both inside and outside the classroom. Students, who are self-motivated, can work hard and adapt well to new learning experiences gain most from the TY Programme.