

AI prompts for building coursework

Three prompts a teacher can fill in and paste into an AI assistant, and what to do with the file that comes back.

These were written and tested with Claude, which is free to use at claude.ai and reliably produces a Word file with real heading styles in it. ChatGPT and Copilot will follow the same instructions; check the file before you upload it, and if it will not import, the reason is nearly always the headings.

courseworkhq.ie/free-resources.html

What is in here

1. Build a staged project

Start from a subject, a topic or just an idea. You get back a Word document that imports as a project, with a stage for every piece of work your students hand up.

2. Build a rubric to mark it with

Say what you are marking and what your levels are called. You get back a marking grid with the wording for every level written for you, ready to import and attach to a piece of work.

3. Turn what you already have into a project

Paste in a scheme of work, brief or handout you have already written. It keeps your wording and lays it out as stages — and tells you what is missing instead of making it up.

Before you use any of this

Check what it writes before you put it in front of a class. An assistant does not know your students, and it cannot check anything against a specification.

Do not put a student's name, work or marks into an AI tool. These prompts only ever need to know about the project.

If the file will not import, the message on screen says why. It is nearly always the headings: they have to be Word's Heading 1 style, not just bigger, bolder text.

1. Build a staged project

Best when you are starting from nothing.

Fill in the parts in brackets — this is the only part you write:

I teach in an Irish second-level school and I want to build a coursework project that my class works through in stages. Here is what I teach. Fill in what you can from it, ask me about anything essential I have left blank, then write the project.

- Subject and level: [Leaving Certificate Business, 5th year]
- Topic or brief: [investigate a local enterprise and report on how it manages its money]
- Is this a Leaving Certificate Additional Assessment Component? [yes or no. If yes, name it and give me the official brief and any guidelines that go with it – attach the files or paste the text, whichever is easier – rather than relying on what you remember of them]
- Time available: [six weeks, one double class a week]
- Number of stages: [six, or "you decide"]
- What the finished piece is: [a 1,200-word report with an appendix of sources]
- What my students find hardest: [narrowing a research question, referencing]
- Anything they must use or follow: [our school's report template; no AI used for the writing]

Then copy the rest of it as it is. You do not need to edit it:

Build it like this:

- One stage per thing a student hands up, in the order they hand them up. If nothing is collected at the end of it, it is not a stage.
- Order the stages so the work builds visibly: choosing and planning, then research and notes, then a draft, then the finished piece. The early stages are what make the last one credible as the student's own work.
- Write to the student, in the second person, in language a fifteen-year-old reads without help.
- Each stage gets one paragraph of two to four sentences saying what to do and roughly how long it should take; then a line beginning "What to hand up:"; then a line reading "Done well means:" with three short statements under it about quality rather than length.
- Keep the whole thing realistic for the time I gave you.
- If I gave you an official brief or guidelines, work from those and use their wording for anything they actually specify. Where they are silent, say so in the chat rather than filling the gap.
- Do not invent specification wording, marking schemes or exam requirements. If you are not sure whether something is required, leave it out and tell me in the chat.

Give it to me as a Word document (.docx), built exactly like this. I upload the file straight into CourseworkHQ and the import reads the document's structure rather than how it looks:

1. Name the file after the project.
2. The project name is one paragraph at the very top in Word's Title style.
3. Every stage title is a paragraph in Word's Heading 1 style, and no other paragraph in the document uses a heading style at all.
4. Under each stage heading, put the instructions as ONE ordinary paragraph, then make every remaining line a bulleted list item: the "What to hand up:" line, the "Done well means:" line and the quality statements under it. Only bulleted lines keep their own line when the file is imported – ordinary paragraphs are run together into one. Do not put an ordinary paragraph after the bullets.
5. Put nothing at all between the Title paragraph and the first stage heading. Anything there is dropped on import.
6. No tables, no text boxes, no cover page, no header or footer.
7. Do not make a heading by bolding or enlarging text. The import reads the style Word recorded, not the size.
8. Stage titles should read on their own and stay under 60 characters where you can manage it: "Stage 3 – Draft your findings", not "Draft".
9. Anything you want to tell me that is not part of the project goes in the chat, not in the document.

What to do with the file

1. Save the Word document the assistant gives you.
2. In CourseworkHQ, open Project templates and press Import from a file.
3. Choose the file, leave the level set to Heading 1, and press Read the file.
4. Read what comes back. Every stage is an ordinary editable row — change anything you do not like.
5. Press Save template. Attach a rubric to any stage you are going to mark.

2. Build a rubric to mark it with

Run it in the same chat straight after the project prompt and it will mark the project you just built.

Fill in the parts in brackets — this is the only part you write:

I teach in an Irish second-level school and I need a marking rubric for a piece of coursework. Fill in what you can from what I give you, ask me about anything essential I have left blank, then write it.

- Subject and level: [Leaving Certificate Business, 5th year]
- What is being marked: [the 1,200-word report at the end of the project below]
- The project or brief, if I have one: [paste it here, or attach the file, or leave this blank]
- Criteria I want: [research, analysis, use of evidence, presentation – or "you decide"]
- Levels across the top: [Excellent, Very Good, Good, Moderate, Limited]
- Marks: [either "no marks, descriptors only" or the mark each level is worth]
- Wording I have to use: [paste any official descriptors here, or leave this blank]

Then copy the rest of it as it is. You do not need to edit it:

Build it like this:

- Four to eight criteria, one per row. Fewer, clearer criteria beat a long list nobody can hold in their head while marking.
- Every cell describes what the work looks like at that level, in one or two sentences, in language I could read aloud to a student.
- Describe quality, not quantity: "sources are used to support a point and their limits are acknowledged" beats "at least four sources".
- Make the step between two neighbouring levels a real difference, so that two teachers marking the same piece land in the same column.
- Do not invent official marking-scheme wording, and do not tell me a criterion comes from the specification unless I pasted it above.

Give it to me as a Word document (.docx), built exactly like this. I upload the file straight into CourseworkHQ and the import reads the table:

1. The document holds the rubric as one table and nothing else except its name.
2. The rubric's name is one paragraph above the table in Word's Title style. Do not put the name inside the table – a merged row across the top of it stops the file importing at all.
3. The first row of the table is the level names: the word "Criteria" in the first cell, then one level name in each cell across the top.
4. Every row after that is one criterion: its name in the first cell, then its descriptor for each level in the cells across.
5. Marks, if there are any, go in brackets after every single level name – "Excellent (5)", "Very Good (4)" – or after none of them. A mixture is read as no marks at all.
6. Do not merge cells, do not split the rubric over two tables, and do not put a second table anywhere in the document.
7. Up to 40 criteria and up to 10 levels. Keep each cell under about 300 words.
8. A CSV file works just as well if that is easier: same shape, with the first cell of the first row left empty.

What to do with the file

1. Save the Word document (or CSV) the assistant gives you.
2. In CourseworkHQ, open Rubrics and press Import from a file.
3. Choose the file and press Read the file.
4. Check the grid that comes back, especially the marks, and edit anything you want to change.
5. Press Save rubric. It is then available to attach to any assignment.

3. Turn what you already have into a project

Best when the project already exists on paper and you do not want it rewritten.

Fill in the parts in brackets — this is the only part you write:

I teach in an Irish second-level school and I already have this written. I want it restructured as a staged coursework project I can upload into CourseworkHQ. Do not rewrite my material into something new – keep my content, my sequence and my wording wherever they still work.

Here is what I have: [paste your scheme of work, brief, handout or plan here, or attach the file]

- Subject and level: [Transition Year Enterprise]
- Time available: [from now to the Christmas market on 18 December]
- What is handed up at the end: [a group enterprise report and a personal reflection]

Then copy the rest of it as it is. You do not need to edit it:

Restructure it like this:

- Find the points in my material where something is actually handed up, and make each of those a stage. Do not make a stage out of teaching that produces nothing to collect.
- Keep my sequence unless it makes a stage impossible to hand up, and tell me if you moved anything.
- Where my material is thin, write the stage from what is there and list the gaps in the chat afterwards. Do not fill a gap by inventing a requirement, a deadline or a mark.
- Turn anything addressed to me as the teacher into instructions addressed to the student.
- Every stage ends with a line beginning "What to hand up:".
- Tell me afterwards what you dropped and why.

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