

# Assessment policy

## Introduction

UWC Waterford Kamhlaba (WK) delivers a challenging and transformational educational experience to a diverse cross section of students, inspiring them to create a more peaceful and sustainable future. Students and teachers come to WK from many different countries and regions, receiving their previous education and training in a variety of often strikingly different educational systems. Although WK celebrates and strives to benefit from such educational diversity, it is also important to develop and maintain common standards and practices in our approaches to teaching and learning. This document presents WK's approach to educational assessment, explicating the purpose of assessment, the various types of assessment used and how assessment is presented through grades and reports. As such this document represents a statement of intent and action describing principles and practices for achieving educational goals relating to all aspects of assessment.

## The purposes of assessment

Assessment is a general term embracing all methods customarily used to appraise performance of an individual student or group of students. Broadly speaking, assessment has three main purposes: (1) to judge; (2) to decide; and (3) to foster learning.

- (1) **To judge.** This purpose of assessment is for instance to arrive at a standards-referenced judgement, often in the form of a letter, number or percentage. The most visible example of assessment at the judgement level is the academic report, in which teachers and tutors judge students' performance through grades and written comments.
- (2) **To decide.** Assessment is used to inform a decision. At WK, for instance, Form 3 grades inform a decision to invite a student to continue into Form 4, just as Form 5 grades and results of the mock examinations inform the school's decision to accept or regret a student's application to the IB Diploma programme. WK's entrance tests are another example of assessment at the decision-making level, as the results of these tests inform our admissions process.
- (3) **To foster learning.** The third level concerns itself with the *impact* of assessment. This purpose can be to (a) motivate a student; (b) indicate the extent of a student's progress and what might be needed to improve; (c) give

second parties (teachers, parents) an overview of a student's academic development and how he or she can best be supported.

### **Types of assessment**

Educational scholarship identifies an important distinction between summative and formative assessment. In this dichotomy, summative assessment stands for assessment at the end of a process while formative assessment is meant to identify scope and potential for development within the learning process. In recent decades, the purposes, uses and methods of assessment have been changing, allowing for variety in the ways students are assessed. The point of gravity has moved from the mere use of summative assessment to a balanced combination of the two. The value of formative assessment is now widely recognised, as it is this type of assessment that best fosters learning, reflection and self-awareness. Formative assessment allows a student to take responsibility over his or her own learning, fostering intellectual independence and academic responsibility. Similarly, the emphasis in assessment has already moved away from merely assessing knowledge and products to the assessment of skills, concepts and understanding. Assessment methods have become more diverse, moving beyond written assessment to include oral, peer, self and group assessments. Figure 1 summarizes the changing emphasis in assessment in a nutshell.

**Figure 1:** Changing emphasis in assessment

<b>Shift from</b>	<b>Towards</b>
Assessing knowledge	Assessing skills and understanding
Assessing products	Assessing processes
External end of course assessment	Internal during course assessment
Written assessment only	Use of variety of methods and evidence
Pass/fail summative assessment	Formative identification of strengths and weaknesses and recording of positive achievement

Adapted from Klenowski (2002).

Critics of this development argue that assessment in the new constellation is less rigid, reliable and absolute. At the same time it is widely acknowledged that, as the IB argues, "absolute reliability of assessment results, though highly important in its own right, cannot take priority over student learning." This dilemma was acknowledged by Alec Peterson (who played a significant role in both the establishment of UWC and

the IB Diploma programme) when describing the early development of IB Diploma assessment as follows:

“What is needed is a process of assessment which is as valid as possible, in the sense that it really assesses the whole endowment and personality of the pupil in relation to the next stage of his life, but at the same time [is] sufficiently reliable to assure pupils, parents and teachers, and receiving institutions that justice is being done. Yet such a process must not, by its backwash effect, distort good teaching, nor be too slow, nor absorb too much of our scarce educational resources.”

## **Assessment practice at WK**

### ***Whole school***

All WK teachers are aware of the various purposes and types of assessment, and strive to assess students' progress throughout the academic term using a variety of assessment methods. WK acknowledges that the nature of a subject to a large extent dictates the method and form of assessment. Assessment in Mathematics and Science, for instance, will often be different from assessment in the performing Arts. Likewise, the frequency and content load of assessment will be different in the Lower School compared to the Upper School. Subject-specific assessment is organized by subject departments under the direction of the Heads of Department.

Assessment at all levels of the school is meant to support and inform learning. Assessment should never be used as a tool for punishment. Teacher feedback is meant to help improve a student's academic performance, and will generally be encouraging in nature. In order to maximize learning from feedback, teachers endeavour to return marked work in a timely manner.

Teachers formally report to colleagues on student's progress twice in an academic term through the process of Phase meetings. Phase meetings are convened by the respective Phase Coordinator, with the Deputy Principal: Academic in attendance.

Phase meetings function as an early response mechanism, focusing on students of concern and evaluating a student's progress in the course of the past term. The purpose of this early response system is to allow observations to be made to students in good time. Mid-cycle indicators are informal and are not part of a student's academic transcript. Students with one concern are referred to their tutors, who will discuss the concern with the student involved. Students with concerns in multiple

subjects are raised for general discussion in the Phase meeting with the purpose of finding solutions or establishing a plan to support the students going forward. The Phase Coordinator will gather comments from many or all teachers. Ideas on how to proceed are passed on to the student via the tutor and/or Phase Coordinator. At times the Tutor or Coordinator may also decide to contact the parents or guardians.

Twice a year, teachers are expected to submit grades for each student they teach. This grade should be based on a number of assessed pieces of work, assessing a student's performance in a range of assessment methods. These could include classroom tests (short answer responses, multiple choice, essays, etc.), homework assignments, classroom performances and presentations, lab reports etc.

Teachers also hold regular general staff meetings and Department meetings during the term and students of concern may also be raised as a designated agenda item during these meetings.

In addition to the academic grade (A-E or 1-7), teachers also assess a student's Learning Skills and Behaviours (LSBs). These are thinking, social, communication, self-management and research skills.

These provide students and parents with a more comprehensive overview of how student skills and behaviour impact on academic performance. The LSBs also inform approaches to teaching. The LSBs are adapted from the IB's *Approaches to Teaching and Learning*.

Learning Skills and Behaviours				
Thinking	Social	Communication	Self-Management	Research
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is proactive in the acquisition of knowledge</li> <li>Actively listens, views and reads in order to understand</li> <li>Applies knowledge with skill and accuracy</li> <li>Is able to think critically</li> <li>Is able to innovate and think creatively</li> </ul> <p><i>where relevant in the subject area:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates the ability to analyse information</li> <li>Is able to synthesise and evaluate information from multiple sources</li> </ul>	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is able and willing to accept responsibility for himself/herself and/or others.</li> <li>Behaves in a way that demonstrates respect for others</li> <li>Respects the physical learning environment</li> <li>Cooperates</li> <li>Is able to resolve conflicts</li> <li>Works very well in groups</li> <li>Is able to engage with various personalities</li> <li>Respects differing points of view</li> </ul>	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes every effort to listen to others</li> <li>Speaks respectfully to others</li> <li>Is able to present written information in an appropriate way for the subject discipline</li> <li>Is able to present work effectively</li> <li>Demonstrates supportive and respectful body language</li> <li>Actively seeks feedback</li> </ul>	<p>The student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organises his /her work very well</li> <li>Manages his or her time excellently – meets all deadlines and attends all classes</li> <li>Demonstrates a positive attitude to learning</li> <li>Seeks support when needed</li> </ul>	<p>The student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates academic integrity at all times</li> <li>Is able to present findings in appropriate academic register</li> <li>Demonstrates investigation and inquiry skills</li> </ul> <p><i>where relevant in the subject area:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observes and assimilates information</li> <li>Collects and organises data</li> <li>Interprets data</li> </ul>

Grading Table			
<p><b>Excelling</b> These skills and behaviours are clearly evident. There is consistent effort, commitment and respect for the learning process and for others.</p>	<p><b>Achieving</b> These skills and behaviours are often evident. There is generally evidence of effort, commitment and respect for the learning process and for others.</p>	<p><b>Developing</b> These skills and behaviours are sometimes evident with degrees of success. There is some evidence of effort, commitment and respect for the learning process and for others.</p>	<p><b>Causing Concern</b> These skills and behaviours are underdeveloped and often not evident. There is little effort, commitment or respect for the learning process or for others.</p>

Academic grades and LSB indicators are included in the written reports, which students and parents/guardians receive at the end of each academic cycle ( twice a year). Teachers also provide a short, written account of a student’s progress. Such a report is likely to describe the student’s progress, but may also indicate how academic achievement can be improved, LSBs and attitude. The contents of the subject-specific reports are synthesized and summarized in a report written by the tutor. Parents and guardians with questions relating to this report are advised to contact their child’s tutor.

Students with outstanding academic results will be nominated for an Academic Commendation from the Principal. Criteria for an Academic Commendation differ depending on the year group. The final decision on the presentation of an Academic Commendation rests with the Academic Coordinator of that school level.

Principal’s Commendations are awarded for:

1. Academic excellence: this is a certificate awarded for exceptional effort and achievement. The criteria are:

Form 1: 8 A grades with no LSBs “Causing Concern”

Form 2: 7 A grades with no LSBs “Causing Concern”

Form 3: 6 A grades with no LSBs “Causing Concern”

Forms 4 & 5 (IGCSE): 5 A grades with no LSBs “Causing Concern”

IBDP: 39 points and above including the bonus points. 37 points and above for SSMT students who are given a default grade of 5 if they have not completed their exams.

It is noted that some factors “causing concern” will be outside a student’s control in which case the Phase Coordinator in consultation with the tutor will apply common sense and understanding.

2. A particularly good project or extended piece of work: subject teachers may award this Commendation after discussion with their HOD and the relevant Phase Co-ordinator.

### **Lower school (F1-3)**

In the Lower School, grades range from A to E:

A = very good, B = good, C = satisfactory, D = not satisfactory, E = poor.

An N indicates that no grade has been awarded.

Subjects such as Physical Education, Information Technology and Art also indicate achievement in *sections* of the course with descriptions such as Satisfactory, Good, Excellent, etc. Written reports without grades are provided for Life Skills.

During Phase meetings, students with more than three concerns are raised for discussion. After reports are written, all students with more than three Ds are discussed, as well as those students whose academic achievements are seriously deteriorating. In addition, students with behavioural concerns may also be raised during these meetings.

Form 1 students write short end of year tests in most subjects. These summative tests take place in normal class time. Form 2 and 3 students have longer, more formal end-of-year tests of an hour or more in exam conditions. Form 1-3 end of year exams take place towards the end of term 3.

Admission into the IGCSE programme in Form 4-5 depends on satisfactory progress being made in the course of Form 3. Students and their parents/guardians will receive “early signals” in the course of Form 3 when continuation into the IGCSE programme is deemed problematic.

### **Middle school (F4-5) – IGCSE programme**

During Forms 4 and 5, students study for the internationally recognised Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in their chosen subjects.

Assessment practices are aligned with the assessment philosophy and practices of CAIE and are designed to monitor progress and prepare the student for successful completion of the IGCSE examinations.

Academic grades range from A to F:

A = very good, B = good, C = satisfactory, D = not satisfactory, E = poor, F = very poor. An N indicates that no grade has been awarded.

Physical Education also indicates achievement in *sections* of the course with descriptions such as Satisfactory, Good, Excellent, etc.

Written reports without grades are provided for ICDL and Life Skills in Form 4 and involvement in Community Service in Form 5.

During Phase meetings, students with more than three concerns are raised for discussion. After reports are written, all students with more than three Ds are discussed, as well as those students whose academic achievements are seriously deteriorating. In addition, students with behavioural concerns may also be raised during these meetings.

Form 4 students write formal end of year exams in term 3. These exams are conducted under official CAIE exam regulations in order to familiarize the students for the final examinations the next year.

Form 5 students write Mock examinations at the end of Term 2. Students receive in-depth feedback about these examinations in class at the start of Term 3. The remainder of term 3 is dedicated to the completion of the Form 5 courses and revision of the work done.

Form 5 students wishing to study towards the IB Diploma programme should submit an application form to the IGCSE Coordinator. This process commences in Term 1 of Form 5 and will be discussed and explained in detail with students and parents/guardians. Internal IB Diploma applications are discussed by the IB Diploma selection committee meeting. This meeting is chaired by the Director of Admissions.

**Upper school (IB1 and IB2) – IB Diploma programme**

Assessment practices in the Upper School are aligned with the assessment philosophy and practices of the International Baccalaureate, and are designed to monitor progress and prepare the student for successful completion of the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme. The International Baccalaureate explicates its approach to assessment in a document called *Diploma Programme assessment: principles and practice*. Students and/or parents or guardians who wish to learn more about the workings of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme assessment system and their underlying rationale should contact the IBDP Phase Coordinator.

Academic grades range from 7 to 1:

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = satisfactory, 3 = mediocre, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor.

An N indicates that no grade has been awarded.

Progress in Theory of Knowledge is graded on an A-E scale.

A written report without a grade is provided by the Extended Essay supervisor in the report in IB2.

Written reports without grades are provided for involvement in Community Service are provided in all reports.

During Phase meetings, students with more than two concerns are raised for discussion. After reports are written, all students on a DP “failing condition” are discussed, as well as those students whose academic achievements are deteriorating. In addition, students with behavioural concerns may also be raised during these meetings.

IB1 students write formal end of year exams in term 3. These exams are conducted under official IB exam regulations in order to familiarize the students for the final examinations the next year.

IB2 students write mock examinations at the beginning of term 3. Students receive in-depth feedback about these examinations in class. The remainder of term 3 is dedicated to the completion of the IB courses and revision of the work done.

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