



Green Hills Academy

“Towards Excellence”

Assessment Policy (Secondary School)

Policy #

15 March 2012

I. Philosophy and Principles

While some people may consider the assessment of students, and the marking, grading and reporting associated with it, as something quite separate from teaching and learning, it is in fact an integral part of the process of education and an essential aspect of any school’s responsibility.

Assessment has two main purposes, although these will rarely be completely separate:

1. In formative assessment, the emphasis is on “gathering, analysing, interpreting and using the evidence to improve student learning and to help students to achieve their potential.”

Examples of formative assessment are homework that is given to students and group projects that are discussed in class. In each case the student receives feedback on their performance that should enable them to perform better in future. ‘Mock exams’ are in the first place a learning experience for students and are therefore a kind of formative assessment.

The main requirements for formative assessment is that it be constructive and helpful to the student, and that it motivate the student to learn. Formative assessment can, or even should, take into account the student’s starting point and be a measure of progress made.

2. Summative assessment, on the other hand, measures student performance against given assessment criteria to judge levels of attainment.

The end-of-term and final exams, as well as externally and internally assessed coursework in the IB Diploma programme are examples of summative assessment.

The main requirement for summative assessment is that it be accurate and fair, so that the results allow students or groups of students, (and sometimes by implication the performance of their teachers) to be compared. Summative assessment is a measure of the level reached rather than of the progress made.

Whereas in the younger classes, teaching and assessment are predominantly the domain of the teacher, as students progress through their education, they are increasingly expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore peer- and self-assessment begin to play a greater role, and teachers in the IB Diploma programme should find ways to include these elements in their teaching.



The benefits and purpose of assessment are largely undermined if the work that is assessed is not the student's own. The temptation to 'cheat', in some way or another, will be particularly great if assessment is experienced as being mostly a negative process. The school has an Academic Honesty Policy, including clear sanctions in case of infringement, that all students and teachers should be familiar with and adhere to.

II. Assessment Practices at GHA

There are a wide range of student activities that can and should be assessed as part of regular teaching, so that the teacher can gain a reliable impression of the class's and each student's progress and level of understanding. This will help the teacher to make their subsequent teaching more effective. As in all teaching, it is essential that all students are involved, and in particular that no students are left behind.

1. Any contribution that a student makes in the classroom, individually or as part of a group, orally or in written form, deserves acknowledgement from the teacher. This kind of feedback will help correct errors quickly and eliminate misunderstanding, and if it is positive and constructive, it will be a major motivating factor.
2. Students should on a regular basis be given assignments to complete on their own, outside class, so that they can practise what they have learnt, expand their understanding and knowledge, and learn to work independently. This 'homework' too should generally be assessed by the teacher; especially in the lower grades, students depend on frequent feedback and encouragement.
3. In all subjects, especially the sciences, there are practical skills students need to learn, and these are often best developed by them working in small groups – in fact, being able to work as part of a group is itself a skill that students should acquire; so in the IB Diploma programme some of the assessment is explicitly of projects that students have done in groups. Teachers even in the younger grades should therefore find ways of including appropriate group-activities in their teaching and assessing.
4. At regular intervals, teachers should give tests to students on the material that has recently been covered. These 'unit tests' should have a clear focus and an appropriate level of difficulty so that a student who has followed the class well can do well, but any problems can be identified and subsequently addressed, if necessary by re-teaching parts of the material.
5. Twice a year, and certainly at the end of the academic year, students will have a period of more formal exams in all their subjects; while these are primarily summative in nature, they are also an opportunity for students to develop techniques for revising and for taking exams that they will need in the formal external exams at the end of grades 10 and 12. To serve their purpose, these exams should be the same for parallel classes in any year.
6. About two months before the external IGCSE and IB exams, students will have a period of 'mock exams' in all their subjects. The question papers, the way the examinations are conducted and the marking of scripts should be as close as possible to what the students can

expect in the final exams, so that students will be able to set priorities for the remaining revision time and approach their final exams better prepared.

The process of assessment will usually have the following aspects.

1. Setting of the questions or tasks:

Teachers should choose questions or tasks mostly on recently covered content, but also at times about material covered previously, to reinforce the earlier learning. Each homework, test or exam should have questions and tasks of a range of difficulty, so that some parts of the assessment can be completed even by weak students while other parts are challenging even for the most able students.

2. Marking:

The teacher should have a clear idea of what constitutes a correct answer or what ideas need to be included in the response, and also of how marks should be awarded for partially correct answers or when not all the ideas are clearly present in the script. To be consistent in the awarding of marks, the teacher should make a mark scheme and follow it closely while marking each script. Students should always be able to understand how their marks are arrived at; marking does not only need to be fair, it needs to be seen to be fair.

3. Grading:

In most cases, students receive a grade on their performance, depending on the number of marks they obtained. There are different scales in use for students in different grades:

Grades 07 – 10: letters A (best) to F (worst). For the IGCSE exams, there are some additional letters, and in some subjects students can take the exams for either the Core or the Extended syllabus; the top grade that can be attained in the Core exam is grade C.

Grades 11 – 12: numbers 7 (best) to 1 (worst). While there are no fixed grade boundaries, and there is considerable variation between papers, subjects and years, the school has adopted a particular scale that is available to teachers, students and teachers.

4. Recording:

It is each teacher's responsibility to keep a complete record of the marks for all each student's assessed work in each one of their classes and of the grade awarded. As well as recording marks and grades, teachers should also perform some analysis of the information, to discover trends and patterns that might help them improve their teaching. It is especially important to identify students who may have difficulties in the course and to find ways of helping them.

5. Reporting:

At the end of each term, students at Green Hills Academy receive a printed Report of their performance in different aspects of each course they are taking, including grades for Effort and Attitude and a comment. The Report also contains a section where the homeroom teacher gives a more general appraisal of how the student appears in school.

An all-day 'Open House', at which all teachers are available, is an opportunity for parents to come, to collect their son's or daughter's report and have their exam scripts returned, and to discuss their progress with teachers.

To be most productive, the process of assessment should be a collaborative activity: in their subject teams, teachers should (a) share details of the assessments they are conducting, (b) compare their ways of marking, (c) discuss their students' performance, and (d) raise any problems they may be facing. Teachers should also be prepared at any time to make available to a member of the administrative team, and explain, the assessments they have conducted and their students' performance, individually and as a group.

III. Assessment in the IB

Both the IGCSE and the IB are internationally recognised exams, and so the assessment procedures are more formal than for the internal exams of the school. Some of the following points apply only to teachers who are teaching in the IB Diploma programme, but others are relevant to all teachers at the school.

1. Internal Assessment:

In each IB course, at least 20% of the final marks is awarded on the basis of work that students have done during their two years of the programme and that has been marked by the students' teacher. "Examples include oral exercises in language subjects, projects, student portfolios, reports, class presentations, practical laboratory work, mathematical investigations and artistic performances."

To ensure that the teacher's marking is of the right standard, the assessment is subject to moderation: after the marks of all students in a course have been entered, (by 10 April) the scripts of some students, selected automatically on the website, have to be sent off for moderation, (to arrive by 20 April) and the marks awarded to these students' scripts by the moderator are used to adjust the marks of all students in the class.

When they mark their students' work, it is essential that teachers understand and adopt the IB's "criterion-related (as opposed to norm-referenced) assessment. This method of assessment judges students' work in relation to identified levels of attainment, rather than in relation to the work of other students." For each piece of work, there will be different criteria, for each of which there is a maximum number of marks that can be awarded. Each criterion will come with a series of descriptors which describe the requirements for each range of marks for that criterion.

2. External Assessment:

Other "assessment tasks are conducted and overseen by teachers without the restrictions of examination conditions, but are then marked externally by examiners. Examples include written assignments for language subjects in groups 1 and 2, the essay for Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay."

These externally assessed pieces of work have to be dispatched so that they are with

examiners by 15 March. Even though these pieces of work are marked externally, teachers play a crucial role in helping students and organising their work. Teachers are also expected to determine a predicted grade for each piece of work, which again needs to be arrived at by criterion-related assessment according to the applicable criteria.

3. Predicted Grades:

Teachers are also expected to provide a predicted final grade for each student. These predicted grades are a 'safety feature': if a student falls well below their predicted grade and they are close to a grade boundary, their scripts will be remarked (– provided that the predicted grades for the rest of the class are reasonably accurate.)

Teachers should submit their students' marks for the internally assessed components and each student's predicted grade by the end of March, so that they can be entered on the website by 10 April. Teachers should not inform students of the predicted grades they have given them.

4. Final Exams:

In most IB Diploma courses, most of the total marks awarded are based on the students' performance in the final exams in May. Here too teachers play an important role, not only in preparing the students for the exam, but also in helping to conduct the exams. They therefore have to be familiar with all the prescribed procedures and implement them faithfully.

Both for internally and for externally assessed coursework, teachers need to be careful to give only the appropriate kind and amount of help to students. The subject guides, which are available on the OCC, specify for each course and each piece of coursework the precise role of the teacher, so teachers must familiarise themselves with the details and act accordingly.

Teachers have a major responsibility to make sure that the IB Diploma programme is assessed properly at the school. In particular, teachers must be aware of the possibility of academic dishonesty and immediately inform a member of the administrative team if they suspect that there may be a problem with a student's work. For more information, please see the Academic Honesty Policy.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

Assessment is an essential part of the educational responsibility of the school, and all members of the academic staff have a role to play.

1. Teachers:

Teachers need to be familiar with the expectations of the school, as described above, and perform assessments accordingly.

In general, teachers should return assessed work within a week of setting it. In the course of a term, each teacher should have at least three marks from unit tests, but in Term I it should be at least five marks, to have a sufficient basis on which to give a grade in the end-of-term report.

When a teacher leaves the school, so as not to disadvantage the students, they need to provide complete sets of marks for all the classes they have taught.

A good understanding of all the requirements and careful implementation, including completing the process in a timely manner, is especially important where assessments are conducted on behalf of the IBO or the Cambridge IGCSE; all the information is available in the subject guides on the OCC, and any questions can be addressed to the IB DP Coordinator.

2. Teams and team leaders:

The subject-area teams and their leaders have a responsibility to support teachers, and in particular to ensure that teachers new to the school or to the international examinations are quickly able to understand and administer the required assessment procedures.

Teachers should collaborate across subject boundaries: the assessment model is the same in corresponding courses in different languages in groups 1 and 2 of the IB, and in most of the group 4 subjects.

3. Administrative team:

The members of the administrative team are responsible for the overall organisation of all aspects of formal assessment, including setting deadlines, and for ensuring that all teachers are aware of and follow the expectations of the school and the requirements of the external organisations.

Part of that responsibility is to provide each teacher with a copy of this document.

Within the administrative team, a Vice-Principal and the IB DP Coordinator have particular responsibility for the assessment procedures in the IGCSE- and the IB Diploma programme, respectively. They need to ensure that (a) all teachers are given, or know where to access, all relevant information about assessment in their subjects, (b) they are in a position to perform assessments in accordance with the school's expectations and the external organisation's requirements, and (c) they actually perform those tasks fully and properly.

Members of the administrative team will also decide on the information from the assessment of particular students that will be shared with other academic institutions that the student may go on to, whether it be as copies of the student's reports, as transcripts of grades, or as expected final grades.

Note: Any quoted text in this document is taken from the publicly available IBO publications on assessment.