

Assessment Policy

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“UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.” (UWC Mission Statement, 2006)

Introduction

UWC Robert Bosch College (RBC) 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 RBC from many different countries and regions, receiving their previous education and training in a variety of often strikingly different educational systems. Although RBC 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 RBC’s approach to educational assessment, explicating the purpose of assessment, the various types of assessment used and how assessment is reflected in 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 number, letter or percentage grade.

(2) To decide. Assessment can be used to inform a decision, such as where to apply to university (and in what courses of study) or whether to offer or enrol in a particular subject at a higher or standard level.

(3) To foster learning. The third level concerns itself with the impact of assessment. This purpose can be to (a) motivate a student; (b) give the student an idea of their own progress and what might be needed to improve; (c) give second parties (teachers, parents/guardians) an idea of a student’s academic development and how they 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 in many schools have changed, 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 their 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.

Table 1: Changing emphasis in assessment

| Shift from | Towards |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Assessing knowledge | Assessing skills and understanding |
| Assessing products | Assessing processes |
| External end of course assessment | Internal during course assessment |
| Written assessment only | Use 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. This dilemma was acknowledged by Alec Peterson (who played a significant role in both the establishment of UWC and the IB Diploma programme, and who served as the first Director General of the IB) as early as in 1971 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.”

Even today, the IB makes its own position clear: “The IB believes that construct-relevant and authentic assessment is more important than maximizing reliability” (“Assessment principles and practices”).

Assessment and grades in the IB Diploma Programme

The International Baccalaureate explicates its approach to assessment in a document called “Assessment principles and practices—Quality assessments in a digital age”. All courses include a combination of internal assessments (carried out by teachers in the school) and external assessments (marked by examiners beyond the school). Student 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 Director of Studies and/or refer to the IB document, available on the IB website.

Diploma Programme students take six academic subjects, with three to four at Higher Level (HL) and the remainder at Standard Level (SL). The grades awarded for each course range from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). Students can also be awarded up to three additional points for their combined results on Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay. Therefore, the highest total that a Diploma Programme student can be awarded is 45 points. The diploma is awarded to students who gain at least 24 points, subject to certain minimum levels of performance across the whole diploma and to satisfactory participation in Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS). The full criteria for achieving an IB Diploma are published on the IB website, currently available at <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/what-it-means-to-be-an-ib-student/recognizing-student-achievement/about-assessment/dp-passing-criteria/>.

A comprehensive description of the meaning of the grades within each subject is available in the IB Publication “Diploma Programme Grade Descriptors”. In brief, 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. Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and the Extended Essay (EE) are graded on an A-E scale: A = Excellent, B = Good, C = Satisfactory, D = Mediocre, E = Elementary.

Assessment practice at UWC Robert Bosch College

All UWC Robert Bosch College 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, based on the objectives and assessment criteria specific to each subject wherever appropriate. RBC acknowledges that the nature of a subject to a large extent dictates the method and form of assessment. Assessment in Mathematics and the Experimental Sciences, for instance, will often be different from assessment in the performing Arts. Likewise, the frequency and content load of assessment will vary across the two-year Diploma Programme. Subject-specific assessment is organized by subject departments under the leadership of the Director of Studies. Students have timeous access to the criteria for the grading in each of their subjects, Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge, and for the different components within each subject.

Assessment practices are aligned with the assessment philosophy and practices of the IB and are designed to monitor progress and prepare the student for successful completion of the IB Diploma Programme. Assessment at RBC is meant to support and inform teaching and learning. Assessment should never be used as a tool for punishment.

Teachers are expected to be familiar with the details of the subject guide, including the assessment objectives, syllabus content, internal and external assessment instruments and assessment criteria, as well as with the teacher support material, subject reports, grade descriptors, and grade boundaries applicable to the subjects they teach. To ensure access to these materials, all teachers are provided with access to MyIB. Additionally, RBC provides professional development opportunities, including IB-approved workshops, to enable teachers in their work.

Teachers are encouraged to use multiple approaches to assessment to allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers should take particular care to support students with special educational needs (SEN) and students identified as English language learners (ELL), modifying assessments or assessment timings as appropriate. The Director of Studies and the SEN Coordinator are available to provide further support. Teachers must ensure that students are provided with any school- or IB-approved assessment accommodations.

Teacher feedback is meant to help improve a student’s academic performance and should generally be encouraging in nature. To maximize learning from feedback, teachers endeavour to return marked work in a timely manner. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to provide regular opportunities for students to participate in and reflect on the assessment of their work.

As the course progresses, and in a timeous manner, teachers must ensure that students are familiar with and are well prepared to fulfil the format, requirements and criteria of internal and external assessments within their given subject. Teachers must also ensure that all assessments are conducted in line with the expectations and regulations outlined in the subject guide or other IB publications. Teachers should take care to regularly review the expectations regarding academic integrity, clarifying the boundaries of what kinds of resources or support are permitted for each task, including by providing guidance to students on how to cite and reference any sources used.

To the best of their ability, teachers must strive to be accurate, fair and consistent in their marking and grading. Where multiple teachers are teaching the same course, teachers are expected to align their assessments and to standardize their marking (by comparing and discussing a sample of student work) to ensure that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by their placement with a particular teacher. Each year, teachers should also review the moderated IA marks (including any examiner feedback), the students' final grades, and the subject reports with the aim of adjusting their own teaching strategies and marking to better align with the IB's standards and expectations.

Grading and reporting cycles

A fixed schedule of collecting and reviewing grades and/or reports supports the school and its staff members in monitoring and supporting students' learning, wellbeing and progress:

| | Students in Year 1 | Students in Year 2 |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| October (mid-term) | - Effort grade (internal only) | - Effort grade (internal only) |
| December (fall term) | - Written report, with effort grade - Achieved grade | - Written report, with effort grade - Achieved grade (fall term) - Updated predicted grade |
| March (mid-term) | - Achieved grade | - Achieved grade - Mock exam grade - Updated predicted grade |
| May/June (spring term) | - Written report, with effort grade - Achieved grade - Predicted grade | - Written report, with effort grade |

Achieved grades

Achieved grades are given using the IB's 1–7 scale and reflect the student's performance on assessed work completed within that term (e.g. homework, written responses, presentations, quizzes, essays, tests). The composition of each term grade (i.e. which assessments will be factored into the grade and how each assessment will be weighted) should be shared with students near the start of each term. When determining achieved grades, teachers should consider the "Diploma Programme Grade Descriptors" as well as recent grade boundaries in that subject and the final grades of recent RBC cohorts of students in that subject. Achieved grades are shared with students, and they are used to monitor student progress, to inform plans for revision or support, and to inform decisions about university applications or other pathways beyond RBC.

Predicted grades

Predicted grades are given using the IB's 1–7 scale and reflect the teacher's professional judgment about the grade the student is most likely to earn in that subject at the end of the entire course. The predicted grades are evidence-based, and in line with IB policies and recommendations, they are determined holistically based on a student's overall performance up to that point, with reference to the "Diploma Programme Grade Descriptors". Predicted grades are used alongside achieved grades to monitor student progress, to inform plans for revision or support, and to inform decisions about university applications or other pathways beyond RBC.

Before the start of each examination session, the IB also requires the College to indicate predicted grades for all students completing IB subjects (including Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay) in that session. These predicted grades, submitted via IBIS (the IB Information System), are used to support IB assessment practices in the examination session and are not shared with students or included on their RBC transcripts.

Reports and effort grades

The written reports at the end of each term describe the student's progress and may also indicate how a student could improve their academic achievement and engagement in the course. The primary audience for the reports comprises each student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and National Committee. An "effort grade" reflects the degree to which each student is meeting expectations and living up to the UWC values in classes, in CAS, and in their student house. Three options are available for the effort grade: Meets expectations, Almost meets expectations, and Does not meet expectations.

Deadlines and exams

The Director of Studies (DOS) maintains and distributes a calendar of deadlines for internal and external assessments as well as for tests or other substantial assignments. These deadlines are designed to assist students and teachers in the organization and pacing of their academic work. Even where they fall before the IB's submission deadlines, the internal deadlines are regarded as final. RBC is not obligated to submit student work that has been submitted after the school's internal deadline, so late submission of work will jeopardize the student's final grade and award of the Diploma. If a draft of an IB assessment is submitted after the deadline, the student will receive only limited feedback on that draft. If a final copy of a piece of work is submitted after the deadline, then the previously submitted draft will be treated as the final version of the student's work. Exceptions may be granted only if the DOS approves an extension.

The DOS ensures that official IB submission deadlines are communicated to teachers well in advance. The DOS also produces and distributes an internal calendar of deadlines for teachers to upload and submit relevant coursework, marks, grades and any other files or data as required.

The academic calendar includes several opportunities for exams or other assessments which are longer than a standard lesson. For both first- and second-year students, a "Block Week" late in the fall term provides each subject with a three-hour timeslot which can be used for assessment or for other learning activities as deemed appropriate by each teacher. First-year students have another Block Week late in the spring term, while second-year students have a round of "mock examinations" partway through their final term, usually in early March. To familiarise students and staff invigilators with the procedures of the final IB exams, mock exams are conducted largely in accordance with the guidelines in the "Conduct of examinations booklet".

The DOS provides all students with an exam briefing prior to the examinations and sees to the orderly and proper administration of exams.

Policy details

This policy is adapted from the UWC Waterford Kamhlaba Assessment Policy developed by Lodewijk van Oord (UWCWK Director of Studies), used with permission, with additions and amendments. The first version of this policy at UWC WK was adopted in January 2013; the first version of the UWC Robert Bosch College policy was adopted in November 2013.

This policy is to be published on the school website. The Director of Studies (DOS) has the primary responsibility to ensure its implementation. Under the guidance of the DOS, and with input from key stakeholders, this policy should be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. The date of last review is noted on the first page.

Sources and further reading

The writing of the WK assessment policy was informed by the following publications:

Black, P. (1998) *Testing: friend or foe? Theory and practice of assessment and testing*. London: Falmer Press.

International Baccalaureate (2004) *Diploma Programme assessment: principles and practice*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

--- (2010) *Guidelines for developing a school assessment policy in the Diploma Programme*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

--- (2021) *Diploma Programme grade descriptors*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

--- (2023) *Assessment principles and practices—Quality assessments in a digital age*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

Klenowski, V. (2002) *Developing portfolios for learning and assessment*. London & New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Newton, P. (2007) Clarifying the purpose of educational assessment. *Assessment in Education* 14(2): 149-170.

Peterson, A. D. C. (1971) *New techniques for the assessment of pupils' work*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Appendix A

Role-Based Responsibilities

The **Director of Studies** (DOS) has the responsibility to:

- Keep apprised of IB policies and practices relating to assessment
- Promote sound assessment practices within the school, in keeping with IB policies
- Ensure that teachers have access to suitable professional development opportunities
- Ensure that teachers and students have access to sufficient resources and guidance to complete all prescribed IB assessments
- Prepare and distribute an academic calendar, assessment calendar, and internal deadlines for submitting coursework, marks and grades to IBIS/eCoursework
- Ensure the orderly and proper administration of mock exams and final exams
- Coordinate with the SEN Coordinator and teachers to ensure that appropriate assessment accommodations are provided to students as needed
- Review and update the assessment policy as needed
 - *Topics for future consideration: number of assessments per term; maximum weight of any individual assessment; sharing internal assessment marks or grades with students*

Teachers have the responsibility to:

- Act with integrity, fairness and consistency in all matters related to assessment and grading
- Ensure that their teaching is informed by assessment
- Use sound assessment practices, including by following the principles of backward design
- Be familiar with the subject guide as well as with the teacher support material, subject reports, grade descriptors, and grade boundaries applicable to the subjects they teach
- Coordinate with other teachers in the same subject to standardize marking and grading
- Mark and return work in a timely manner, providing feedback to support students' learning
- Support students in understanding assessment formats and criteria, including by providing and reviewing samples of assessed student work
- Ensure that students receive appropriate guidance, support and feedback on internal assessments and coursework
- For coursework where students are allowed to revise in response to feedback, ensure that students have sufficient time (generally at least 2 weeks) between receiving feedback and submission of the final draft
- Submit grades and reports as requested by the DOS or the Rektor
- Adhere to the school's internal deadlines for submitting coursework, marks, grades and any other data as required in IBIS/eCoursework
- Keep records and evidence of students' performance on assessments

Students have the responsibility to:

- Complete assessments with integrity, adhering to the given deadlines
- Seek support or clarification from teachers as needed regarding assessments

Students have the right to point out any objective mistakes in marking (e.g. where credit was mistakenly not given for a correct answer) and to ask teachers for clarification to understand the marking or grading on any individual assessment. However, students are not permitted to lobby teachers to change an achieved or predicted grade. If a student believes that a grade is not fair or accurate, they may follow the process outlined in the school's IBDP-Related Grievance Procedure.