

**GUIDELINES
FOR
ASSESSING
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
AND
REPORTING**

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT UNIT

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STUDENT ASSESSMENT

1. Definition

- 1.1 Assessment is the process of gathering and analysing information in order to make judgements about students' learning in relation to a set of learning outcomes.
- 1.2 The assessment process involves
 - providing students with opportunities to demonstrate learning outcomes
 - gathering and recording evidence about students' demonstrations of these learning outcomes
 - using the evidence to make overall judgements about students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes.
- 1.3 Reporting is communicating the knowledge gained from assessing students' learning.

2. Purposes of Assessment

- 2.1 The primary purpose of assessment is to improve and support student learning.
- 2.2 Assessment can provide information about **individuals** and about **groups**.
- 2.3 With respect to **individuals**, the purposes of assessment are to provide information
 - to students, their families, and their teachers about individual progress
 - to students so that they may make decisions about future formal learning and other life experiences
 - to teachers and other professionals so they may develop appropriate learning programmes
 - to people who will assist the student in making decisions
 - to people who will certify students' achievements.
- 2.4 With respect to **groups**, the purposes of assessment are to provide information
 - to teachers to assist them in adapting the curriculum to the school context

- to curriculum developers to assist them in developing and modifying the curriculum
- to people who make decisions about the allocation of resources for curriculum, pedagogy, school organisation and other educational provision.

3. Assessment Processes

- 3.1 Assessment should relate to the learning outcomes prescribed in the syllabus.
- 3.2 Where practicable, assessment should be a cooperative activity between the student and the assessor.
- 3.3 Students should be encouraged and enabled to carry out self-assessment throughout their schooling and beyond.
- 3.4 Assessment should identify students' strengths and weaknesses and directions for further learning. Assessment opportunities are also learning opportunities.
- 3.5 Assessment should essentially be criterion based rather than norm based.
- 3.6 The distribution of the assessment results (or grades) should not follow a predetermined formula.
- 3.7 Assessment should not be premised on success for some and failure for others.
- 3.8 A range of valid assessment strategies should be employed. Strategies should reflect the complexity of student learning and the full range of curriculum objectives.
- 3.9 Effective assessment takes into account that students will progress at different rates in relation to the learning outcomes. It takes into account that individual students could progress at different rates in relation to learning outcomes in different strands and key learning areas.
- 3.10 Assessment opportunities take into account that individual students may demonstrate their learning in different ways.
- 3.11 Assessment should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Assessment should be ongoing and students should be provided with more than one opportunity to meet assessment requirements.
- 3.12 Learning, teaching, assessment and reporting are planned concurrently.

- 3.13 Assessment tasks should be sensitive to gender, culture, linguistic background and physical disability.
- 3.14 School based assessment should be the major process by means of which individual student achievement is monitored. Schools should have procedures for enabling classroom-based student assessment information to follow each student from year to year.
- 3.15 Assessment methods, samples of assessment, scoring guides or rubrics, and examples of work of varying kind and quality are discussed and understood by students and teachers.
- 3.16 Assessment activities that contribute to the professional development of teachers, such as moderation meetings, should be employed wherever possible. Schools use assessment information to improve curriculum and teacher effectiveness.
- 3.17 Assessment should be recognised as a complex and inexact process that involves varying degrees of errors of observation, description, measurement and judgement.
- 3.18 Judgements about students' demonstration of learning outcomes are based on a broad range of evidence gathered and recorded over time.
- 3.19 Teacher judgements about students' demonstration of learning outcomes are consistent with the judgements of other teachers in their own school and other schools.
- 3.20 Teachers use current principles and technical concepts of assessment, particularly validity and reliability, in developing and analysing their classroom assessments.

REPORTING

4 Definition

- 4.1 Reporting is the process of communicating information, obtained from the assessment process, about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Reporting may be formal or informal.
- 4.2 Reporting provides information on
- assessment opportunities
 - evidence gathered
 - judgements made about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes

5 Audiences and Purposes

- 5.1 The primary audiences for reporting are students and parents. The main purposes of reporting are to acknowledge and to support student learning.
- 5.2 Reporting to students provides them with
- continual feedback about their progress in relation to the learning outcomes
 - positive feedback on which learning outcomes they have demonstrated
 - constructive and supportive feedback on how they can continue to make progress in relation to the learning outcomes
 - information that they can use to reflect on their progress in relation to learning outcomes and negotiate future learning and assessment
- 5.3 Reporting to parents provides them with information about the progress of their child in relation to learning outcomes and information about how they can support further learning.
- 5.4 Other audiences for reporting include teachers, school administrators, education authority, employers, post-compulsory institutions.
- 5.5 Reporting to other audiences about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes may
- inform the evaluation of learning and teaching programmes
 - facilitate coordination among teachers
 - facilitate student transition between year levels
 - facilitate student transition between schools
 - inform the evaluation and development of learning resources and curriculum materials
 - inform policy development

6 Timing of Reporting

- 6.1 Reporting occurs
- throughout the learning and teaching process as teachers monitor students' progress and provide students and parents with ongoing feedback about their learning
 - at certain points in time as identified by teachers and schools in their overall plans for learning, assessment and reporting

7 Modes of Reporting

- 7.1 Effective reporting uses language and formats that best suit the needs and preferences of the target audience.
- 7.2 Modes of reporting may include
- Written reports
 - Student-teacher conferences
 - Parent interviews
 - Performances, presentations, portfolios
- 7.3 Reports of a diagnostic assessment, which may indicate areas in which the student has not yet reached a satisfactory level of achievement, should be provided for the student and his family only.
- 7.4 School and teacher reports about student achievement focus on what students know and are able to do, what they need to learn to do, and what will be done to facilitate improvement.
- 7.5 Reporting of assessment should acknowledge that the assessment process involves imprecision, for example, by reporting performance in terms of bands, or levels attained or working towards.
- 7.6 Certification reports should document student achievements. Levels and strands (e.g. in English the strands are Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing) provide the framework for reporting student achievement.

Appendix 1

Examples of ways to gather and record evidence from a variety of sources

Sources of evidence

Discussions with students	Journals
Individual and group performances	Design briefs and plans
Interviews led by teacher or student	Games
Questioning led by the teacher or student	Debates
Written tests	Persuasive speeches
Short and extended written responses to stimuli	Workshops
Observation of written work in progress	Role-plays
Sketches and drawings of ideas and products	Structured whole- or small-group discussion
Student explanations of work progress	Audio/video productions
Student portfolios	Research projects
Reports (e.g. on investigations, excursions)	Computer-generated presentations
Skill drills	

Assessment techniques

Observation involves teachers observing students as they participate in planned activities. Teacher observation occurs continually as a natural part of the learning and teaching process and is used to gather a broad range of information about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Teacher observations can also be structured to gather particular kinds of information in relation to learning outcomes.

Consultation involves teachers discussing student work with students, colleagues, parents/carers and other paraprofessionals. The varying perspectives of the participants in consultations can help enrich the evidence gathered about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Consultation is used to verify the evidence gathered using other techniques. Some consultations may reveal a need for more detailed assessment.

Focused analysis involves teachers examining, in detail, student responses to tasks or activities, role-plays, group discussions, tests, debates or research projects, dramatic presentations, video presentations, responses to stimulus. This technique provides detailed evidence about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Self- and peer-assessment involve students in using the above techniques to assess their own work and the work of their peers. Self- and peer-assessment allow teachers to take account of students' perceptions when gathering evidence.

Recording Instruments

- anecdotal records
- checklists
- teacher/student journals
- visual folios
- statements of anticipated evidence or criteria sheets
- annotated work samples
- worksheets
- reports of test results
- reflection sheets, diaries, scrapbooks
- learning logs
- observation notes
- conference logs
- feedback sheets
- progress charts
- self- and peer-assessment sheets
- self- and peer-reflective journals
- audio and visual (including photographic and video) recordings

Appendix 2

Consistency Strategies

Consistency Strategy A

Sharing understandings about learning outcomes involves teachers discussing the meaning of learning outcomes and what students have to know and do with what they know to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Sharing understandings about learning outcomes:

- develops shared understandings about the meanings of the learning outcomes and how they might be demonstrated in different contexts
- develops shared understandings about the basis for judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes
- develops shared understandings about how a range of opportunities can be provided for students to demonstrate learning outcomes in different ways.

Sharing understandings about learning outcomes could involve teachers focusing on particular learning outcomes and discussing:

- what students would need to know and do to demonstrate the learning outcomes
- what students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes might look like in different contexts
- what might constitute sufficient evidence for a teacher to be confident that a student has demonstrated the learning outcomes
- what would be appropriate assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes
- what anticipated evidence (assessment task criteria or assessment expectations) could be used as the basis for judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes
- how evidence about students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes could be gathered and recorded.

Consistency Strategy B

Collaborative planning involves two or more teachers collaboratively planning for learning and assessment using learning outcomes. Collaborative planning may involve teachers in focusing on the same learning outcomes to plan units of work with:

- the same learning activities and assessment opportunities
- learning activities and assessment opportunities for different contexts
- learning activities and assessment opportunities for different subject areas.

Collaborative planning:

- develops shared understandings about the meanings of the learning outcomes and how they might be demonstrated
- develops shared understandings about which learning activities and assessment opportunities are appropriate to the learning outcomes
- develops shared understandings about how a range of opportunities can be provided for students to demonstrate learning outcomes in different ways
- facilitates comparability of teacher judgments about students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes where teachers are providing their students with the same assessment opportunities.

Collaboratively:

- choosing the learning outcomes that will be the focus for a unit of work
- analysing what the learning outcomes require students to know and do with what they know
- selecting an appropriate context for the unit of work
- planning and sequencing the learning activities that will provide students with opportunities to develop the necessary knowledge, practices and dispositions to demonstrate the learning outcomes
- identifying the assessment opportunities that will be provided and the anticipated evidence (assessment task criteria or assessment expectations) that will be used as the basis for judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Individually:

- delivering the learning and teaching programme
- gathering evidence about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes
- making judgements about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes based on the identified anticipated evidence (assessment task criteria or assessment expectations).

Collaboratively:

- comparing the judgments made about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes
- considering how the judgments were made and whether the judgments were the same or different and why
- considering whether the learning activities and assessment opportunities were appropriate to the learning outcomes
- reflecting on any barriers to making consistent judgments and considering how they might be overcome.

Consistency Strategy C

A common assessment task is a cooperatively planned and/or moderated assessment task that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate identified learning outcomes. A common assessment task that provides students

with opportunities to demonstrate learning outcomes at a range of levels allows teachers to develop shared understandings about what the demonstration of learning outcomes looks like at different levels.

Using a common assessment task is useful in promoting consistency because teachers:

- are making judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes in the same context
- are using the same anticipated evidence (assessment task criteria or assessment expectations) to judge students' responses to the task
- can discuss and compare the judgments they make about students' responses to the same task
- can identify variations in their judgments.

Collaboratively:

- deciding relevant learning outcomes for the assessment task
- designing the assessment task
- developing the anticipated evidence (assessment task criteria or assessment expectations) for making judgments about students' responses to the task. This would include developing statements of anticipated evidence or assessment task criteria for several levels if the assessment task is designed to provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate learning outcomes at a range of levels
- deciding on a common format for recording.

Individually:

- delivering the common assessment task as planned
- making judgments about student responses to the assessment task.

Collaboratively:

- moderating the student responses to the assessment task
- considering whether judgments were consistent
- collating a folio of moderated student responses that demonstrate typical responses for a particular level (i.e. samples of typical responses)
- reflecting on any barriers to making consistent judgments and considering how they might be overcome.

Consistency Strategy D

A statement of anticipated evidence or a criteria sheet identifies the properties, components or dimensions by which students' demonstrations of learning outcomes will be judged.

Developing a common statement of anticipated evidence or criteria sheet involves teachers collaboratively analysing the learning outcomes to identify and

record the anticipated evidence or criteria that will be used as the basis for judgments.

A statement of anticipated evidence or a criteria sheet promotes consistency as it makes explicit the basis for judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes.

Developing and using a common statement of anticipated evidence or criteria sheet promotes consistency as teachers have shared understandings about what will be used as the basis for judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes in a range of contexts.

Collaboratively:

- selecting a learning area, strand and relevant learning outcomes
- grouping teachers in like year levels
- choosing the two or three levels that are most appropriate to the learners in the relevant year level
- analysing the learning outcomes for these levels and discussing what students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes would look like at each level
- identifying the anticipated evidence or criteria that would be used as the basis for judgments for each level
- discussing what the demonstration of the learning outcomes might look like in different contexts
- considering what the contextualised anticipated evidence or criteria might be for making judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes in specific contexts.

Consistency Strategy E

Moderation processes

Formal and informal moderation processes involve teachers in comparing students' work and discussing and comparing the judgments that have been made about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes. Moderation could involve the comparison of:

- folios that include representative evidence of a student's demonstrations of learning outcomes
- student responses to selected assessment tasks. Formal moderation processes occur when school authorities require teachers from within or among schools to compare student work and to discuss the consistency of judgments about demonstrations of learning outcomes. Informal moderation occurs any time that teachers compare student work and discuss judgments.

Moderation processes promote consistency of teacher judgment because:

- teachers develop shared understandings about what students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes look like at particular levels
- teachers develop shared understandings about what is sufficient evidence to be confident that a student has demonstrated a learning outcome
- teacher judgments may be validated or modified in response to shared understandings
- it provides opportunities to collate folios of moderated student work that demonstrate typical 'levelness' of learning outcomes.

Collaboratively:

- deciding on the key learning area, strands and learning outcomes that will be the focus of the moderation process
- deciding on the type of student work that will be collected and the timeline for collection.

Individually:

- collecting the student work
- making and recording judgments about students' demonstrations of learning outcomes
- selecting samples of student work for moderation. (It may be helpful to select student work that has been difficult to judge.)

Collaboratively:

- describing the nature of the student work, the context in which learning occurred and how much scaffolding (if any) was provided
- comparing the student work and discussing and comparing the judgments that have been made
- discussing and reaching consensus on the judgments that have been made
- comparing how judgments were made about students' demonstrations of the learning outcomes and what was considered as sufficient evidence
- considering why the judgments were the same or different
- considering steps that could be taken to address issues of consistency that arise from the comparisons
- collating folios of moderated student work that demonstrate typical 'levelness' of learning outcomes
- reflecting on any barriers to making consistent judgments and considering how they might be overcome.

Appendix 3

CODE OF FAIR EXAMINATION PRACTICE

RATIONALE

The purpose of this code of practice is to list the obligations of the school as a **test developer** (concerning test construction) and a **test user** (concerning decisions made on the basis of test scores) towards the test takers.

By means of this code the school is obliged to provide and use examinations that are fair to **all test takers**, thus giving them all an opportunity to demonstrate what they know and how they can perform in the area being tested. Fairness is a priority in all aspects of the examination process.

This code is intended to assist the school in carrying out such commitments and establishes standards in four key areas:

- ❖ **The construction of examination (test) papers**
- ❖ **The interpretation of the scores**
- ❖ **The guarantee of fairness**
- ❖ **The communication of information to the test takers/parents/guardians**

OBLIGATIONS

The school binds itself to safeguard the rights of the test takers by assuming the commitments listed hereunder.

The Construction of Appropriate Tests

- ❖ Define what each test measures and what use will be made of the scores
- ❖ Describe the population for which the test is appropriate
- ❖ Specify the characteristics, usefulness and limitations of the test vis-à-vis its intended purposes, including the level of precision of the test scores
- ❖ Specify how the test was developed and how it meets its intended purposes by submitting a detailed specification grid
- ❖ Provide test takers with copies of instructions, sample test questions and mark schemes
- ❖ Ensure that the test material does not contain content which is unclear or incorrect
- ❖ Ensure that the test material is appropriate for the intended test takers¹

¹ Ensuring that the test items are the most appropriate in relation to the objectives of the test; that the test covers as much as possible of the set syllabus and is supported by a specification grid; that the test is student friendly

The Interpretation of the Test Scores

- ❖ Provide easily understood reports that describe the performance of the test takers clearly and accurately, and that explain the meaning and limitations of the reported scores
- ❖ Gather evidence that the test is meeting its intended purpose(s)
- ❖ Ensure that test scores are not misused or used for a purpose different from that intended
- ❖ Inform test takers about the pass marks.

The Guarantee of Fairness

- ❖ Ensure that the test items and material do not contain potentially offensive content or language
- ❖ Ensure the security of the test materials during all the phases of the test development, administration, scoring and reporting.
- ❖ Ensure that differences in performance are related mainly to the skills being assessed rather than to irrelevant factors
- ❖ Evaluate the performance of different groups of test takers
- ❖ Evaluate the extent to which performance differences may have been caused by inappropriate characteristics of the test²
- ❖ Make appropriate modifications to test papers to facilitate access to test takers including those with special needs or learning difficulties
- ❖ Ensure that scores are awarded in a fair and consistent way and reflect the test takers' performance
- ❖ Provide procedures and guidelines for scoring the tests and for monitoring the reliability of the scoring process.

The Communication of Information

- ❖ Provide parents/guardians with information to help them judge whether the test should be taken
- ❖ Make parents/guardians aware of any available alternatives to the test
- ❖ Provide the test takers with the relevant information concerning syllabus coverage, question formats and instructions
- ❖ Provide clear descriptions of detailed procedures for the administration of the examination in a standardized manner
- ❖ Inform test takers or their parents/guardians about their rights concerning special examination arrangements, re-marking and re-taking of tests, registration of complaints and resolution of other related problems
- ❖ Inform test takers or their parents/guardians that the data concerning the test taker is confidential and is protected by the Data Protection Act
- ❖ Provide the test results in a manner that is understood by the test taker and parents/guardians.

² Undesirable characteristics include culture bias and inappropriate balance of items that test predominantly on one or more particular aspects of the syllabus

APPENDIX 4

KEY TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH ASSESSMENT

Assessment	Assessment is a process which can serve different purposes. It informs teaching and planning. It informs parents about their child's achievements and progress. It is also a means for certification.
Formative assessment or assessment <i>for</i> learning	The aim of Formative Assessment is to support and improve teaching and learning. Formative Assessment provides feedback and feed-forward, both for pupils and teachers. Questioning, sharing learning intentions and success criteria, providing feedback highlighting strengths and weaknesses and indicating what needs to be done to improve, self assessment and peer assessment are key features of formative assessment.
Summative assessment or assessment <i>of</i> learning	Summative Assessment aims to summarize students' attainments, predominantly at the end of a unit of work, year or course. Tests and examinations fall in this category.
Learning objective or learning intention	This refers to what a teacher wants students to learn (to know, understand and be able to do) during a lesson, series of lessons or unit of work; sometimes also called learning purpose or learning goals.
Learning outcome	This is what a teacher expects students to have achieved as the result of a piece of work - the evidence of achievement or attainment, or the criteria for success.
Feedback	This refers to the dialogue with students about the qualities of their work; feedback can be oral or written. It aims to bring about improvement in the work of the students.
Continuous Assessment	This relates to both formative and summative assessment. Continuous formative assessment identifies with the ongoing assessment used in a formative way, as described above. Continuous summative assessment refers to the regular use of written and oral assignments (coursework, homework, presentations, tests, etc) to inform judgements and measure attainment.
Teacher Assessment	A professional judgment made by the teacher that indicates or describes the students' attainment levels. Teacher assessment is based on informed judgments arising from various sources such as evidence collected from informal observations, coursework, tests, interviews, presentations, portfolios, etc.
Level Descriptors	These describe different levels of achievement throughout primary and secondary education. They are useful in reporting the progress of learners.

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