

Policy on Assessment

1. Philosophy and principles

The purpose of the policy

The IB Diploma Programme at BISC endeavours to establish an assessment policy which is consonant with its mission statement and with the IB's assessment philosophy and principles. With regard to the former, the policy seeks to educate "students to the highest possible standards." With regard to the latter, BISC's assessment policy aims to "support curricular goals and encourage appropriate student learning." (Guidelines for developing a school assessment policy in the diploma programme, 2010: 3). Our assessment policy also aims to advance the 'reflective' attribute of the IB learner profile.

Assessment above all must be fair, transparent and effective. These are the three watchwords of our assessment policy. It is fair because it applies to all students and does not either prejudice or favour one student over another. It is transparent because all stakeholders (students, parents, staff, management) are informed of its remit. It is effective because assessment aims to capture both the content of knowledge but also the skills that a student is in possession of at a given moment in time.

The purpose of assessment, and the practice of 'assessment for learning', is to assist educational professionals in adapting lesson content to better respond to the needs of the students in the class as well as enable students to determine what those needs are.

The principles that guide the school's approach to marking and feedback

Marking and feedback should

- be manageable for teachers and accessible to students
- provide clear feedback to children, relating to the learning objective and marking criteria
- be positive, motivating and constructive for children
- inform future planning and target setting
- take place at the earliest opportunity, regularly in all subjects
- be given both orally and written
- ultimately be seen by students as a positive approach to improving their learning

2. Assessment practices

Formative vs summative assessment

Assessment comes in many different formats, and fall under one of two kinds: *formative assessment*, which "represents the process of gathering, analysing, interpreting and using the evidence to improve student learning" (Guidelines for Developing a school assessment policy in the Diploma Programme, 2010: 1); and *summative assessment*, which is "concerned with measuring student performance against Diploma Programme assessment criteria to judge levels of attainment." (Ibid.). We take seriously the following principles, as enumerated by the IB:

- “An emphasis on 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.
- A distinction between formal IB assessment and the supporting formative processes that schools need to develop for themselves
- Valuing the most accurate demonstration of student performance, rather than just averaging attainment grades over a reporting period
- Examining student understanding at the end of the course, based on the whole course and not just aspects of it Students must be able to recall, adapt and apply knowledge and skills to new questions and contexts.” (Ibid: 3)

Of course, any summative assessment tool can also be used formatively but its underlying purpose tends to be different: it tries to capture a ‘snapshot’ of a moment in time whilst formative assessment generates a ‘scrapbook’ (IBO webinar - strengthening programme implementation - standard C4). The ‘scrapbook’ comes from a combination of observations carried out in class, conversations with the student about their learning and the product the student creates.

For students to better understand what they need to aspire towards in terms of the IB’s grading policy, they are referred to the document ‘Grade descriptors’. These “consist of characteristics of performance at each grade” (Grade Descriptors, 2017: 1) and is used by students and teachers to set goals. They provide a discreet and concrete means by which to measure progress. This is supplemented by level descriptors for each subject as found in subject guides.

Furthermore, we believe that better understanding is reached if a student is given the responsibility of establishing where they are along the continuum. This imposes a responsibility on teachers to provide students with the opportunity to self-assess as well as peer-assess.

The IB places a strong emphasis on self-awareness, as reflected in the IB learner profile (e.g. inquirers; balanced; reflective). BISC is therefore exploring the following possibilities to give meaning to the IB learner profile:

- Students and teachers reflect on and write a ‘shared report’
- Students are present during parent-teacher consultations
- Students aim with the advice of the form tutor to work on one or several aspects from assessment criteria in one or more subjects

Procedures

The following are in place to ensure that teachers and students understand how assessment works in the IB programme:

- Students are given copies of the marking criteria for each subject (including IAs, TOK and EE)
- Students and parents are sent the IB document ‘Grade descriptors’ at the beginning of each academic year
- Teachers regularly assess students by means of essays or structured tests, and subsequent teacher feedback allows students to gauge where they are along the marking scale

- Teachers of each group are encouraged to use a standardised marking code (see Appendix B)
- Students are encouraged to give peer feedback
- For ease of reference, teachers can use a standard template by which they give feedback
- School reports are issued twice per year at the end of the first and third term, and include a written comment, an attainment grade (from 1-7) and an effort grade (A+ - E).

A key aspect of the IB programme is the Internal Assessment (IA), which is like a project for each subject and is marked by the teacher (moderated by the IB). Each IA will have its own assessment criteria, and students are given these at the start.

Internal standardization meetings occur in English and in Mathematics, which ensure a consistency in our marking. The IB provides dedicated time to this as part of its total allowance for each subject.

In TOK students are assessed by means of an essay (externally marked) and a presentation (internally marked). Both are assessed using descriptors, as found in the Theory of Knowledge guide (First assessment 2015).

For the Extended Essay (EE) assessment is external. Students are given both the generic assessment criteria and the subject-specific criteria, which can be found in the EE guide (First assessment 2018).

For CAS, students are assessed by means of a CAS portfolio and are expected to demonstrate seven learning outcomes. This is internally assessed.

3. Links between the assessment policy and other documents

All students who apply to the IB programme are assessed by means of an entry test to determine their English language proficiency and their mathematical skills. These determine what support a student needs and provides a useful reference point to build on once enrolled. Our IB handbook states what the requirements are for each subject.

Academic Honesty

Assessment works hand in hand with our Academic Honesty policy as the latter requires that student work be authentic. It is by reflecting on and understanding one's strengths and weaknesses that progress along the assessment continuum can be made. For our Academic Honesty policy please see here:

Language

As most of the work produced is carried out through the medium of English, teachers will also attempt to give feedback on language and will be guided by our EAL coordinator. This comes from an acknowledgement that all teachers "are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities for facilitating communication." (Principles and practice: 35). For our Language policy please see here:

Inclusion

To better determine student needs BISC uses a literary test by GL Assessment. This not only allows us to identify who may be entitled to exam access arrangements but allows us to support learning needs from the outset. For our Inclusion policy please see here:

4. Roles and responsibilities

Shaping assessment

The school has implemented the following:

- organised a training session in October 2018 held by external consultants (Karen Ardley)
- identified assessment leaders among its staff - teachers who examine for the IB and workshop leaders
- hold inset sessions (once per term) in which assessment is discussed
- timetabled an academic skills class in the first year of the IB programme to enable students to reflect on their assessment
- held a steering committee session on assessment in April 2018 (see Appendix A for minutes)
- made subject reports available on the shared drive so that teachers are aware of how examiners assess
- organised workshops run by teachers who have previously participated in IB training (Language A and Language B)
- encourages its teachers to take part in IB webinars, such as 'Ensuring the integrity of assessment'

Changes to assessment policy

Our assessment policy is a product of joint effort, and any changes are first mooted in a steering committee which includes representatives of students, teachers, parents and school management. Ideas for change are then brought up with teachers in IB meetings. Following this any ideas are then communicated to the headmaster subject for approval.

School action plan

With a view to standardising our assessment practices, assessment will be one of the topics for discussion in January 2019 when teachers from the same subject groups will meet to discuss how they go about assessing students. We envisage that assessment practices will achieve a degree of harmony from September 2019 onwards. We also envisage that a bank of assessment tools will be made available on the school's shared drive.

5. References

IBO. 2010. Guidelines for developing a school assessment policy in the diploma programme

IBO. 2015. Diploma Programme.: From principles into practice

IBO. 2017. Grade Descriptors

IBO. 2018. Webinar - strengthening programme implementation - standard C4. <https://ibo.webex.com/ibo/ldr.php?RCID=17148b26fb2d976f04c6e9815d5d36ba> (last accessed December 2018)

IBO. 2018. Webinar - ensuring the integrity of assessment. <https://ibo-events.webex.com/cmp3300/webcomponents/jsp/docshow/closewindow.jsp>

Appendix A

Here is a summary of what was discussed with reference to IB standard C4-Assessment:

2. The school communicates its assessment philosophy, policy and procedures to the school community.

- PL: The policy will be included in the IB handbook as well as included in a welcome pack for new IB students at the start of the year
- PL: Assessment can be included in the planning
- UOD: The school can print a calendar of deadlines within a diary, to be distributed to IB students (and I would add teachers)

3. The school uses a range of strategies and tools to assess student learning.

- PL: formative assessment is key in giving students prompt feedback (as with the analogy of the plane) but AT makes the important point that planning needs to be flexible. AT can work on a planning template in May.
- Martyna: more assessment would help keep learners on track
- Zach: past papers are an effective way to gauge progress

5. The school has systems for recording student progress aligned with the assessment philosophy of the programme(s).

- PL: teachers to use a template which they can then keep a copy of to keep track of student learning. As a side note, I would suggest the same template be used for each group.
- PS: teachers to have a time-frame within which they need to mark and return student work
- PS: The school to drop weekly Schoology reports if these do not form part of reporting

8. The school provides opportunities for students to participate in, and reflect on, the assessment of their work.

- FMT: teachers to include self-assessment as a strategy
- PL: IB criteria nomenclature to be used across subjects so that it becomes second-nature to students.
- PL/SD: Students to discuss assessment as part of their meetings with the tutor
- PL: grade descriptors are a convenient means to show progress along a cline
- Martyna: subject descriptors for groups 1 and 2 are not as comprehensive as in other groups

Please let me know if I have missed anything. The above will be discussed with headmaster and will then be communicated/presented to IB teachers at the next IB meeting.

Appendix B: writing correction code

Symbol	Meaning	Example
WW	Wrong word	<i>As our plane flew <u>on</u> the mountains we saw snow</i>
WT	Wrong time	<i>As our plane flew over the mountains we <u>see</u> snow.</i>
WF	Word form	<i>As our plane flew over the mountains we <u>sight</u> snow</i>
WO	Wrong order	<i>As our plane over the mountain <u>flew</u> we saw snow.</i>
SP	Spelling	<i>As our plane <u>flue</u> over the mountains we saw snow.</i>
Punct.	Punctuation error	<i>As our plane flew over the mountains;_ we saw snow.</i>
WM	Word missing	<i>As our plane flew over the mountains __ saw snow.</i>
R	Register i.e. too formal/informal	<i>As our plane flew over the mountains we <u>caught a gander at</u> snow.</i>
?	Unclear - rewrite	<i>Our plane flew on the mountains we saw snow</i>
/	Start a new sentence	<i>Our plane flew over the <u>mountains we</u> saw snow</i>
//	Start a new paragraph	
Art	Error with articles (a, an, the)	<i>As our plane flew over ___ mountains, we saw snow.</i>
SV	Subject-verb agreement error	<i>Our plane <u>flies</u> over the mountains <u>we sees</u> snow.</i>
WM	Word missing	<i>Our plane flew _____ the mountains we saw snow.</i>

Ref.	In-text reference problem i.e. reference needed or incorrect format	
Cau	Caution (too 'strong' – 'soften' ('hedge') with 'could', 'may', 'might', 'appears', 'possibly')	<i>You <u>will</u> die of cancer if you smoke</i>