

Assessment Policy



Grange
Community
College
Donaghmede



Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Átha Cliath agus Dhún Laoghaire Education and Training Board

Assessment Policy

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1. Link to Mission Statement

This Policy has been developed in line with our mission statement which is:

Enabling students to develop their talents to the full by providing a balanced, challenging curriculum that fosters intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical growth.

Fostering an atmosphere that promotes self-esteem, honesty, justice, and respect for others.

Creating a safe, healthy learning environment that nurtures self-discipline and encourages students to take responsibility for their learning.

Promoting co-operation, teamwork and commitment within the school and community so that all are unified as partners in learning for life.

2. Rationale

The purpose of the policy is to set out the nature of the various assessment techniques used in our school and our rationale for employing each of the tests and assessments. The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parent(s)/guardian(s). In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement. This Assessment Policy outlines the importance of assessment and the key role students, parents/guardians and teaching staff play in supporting this policy document.

Circular letter 0058/2019 Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or additional and special educational needs (SEN) in post-primary schools:

Results of an individual standardised test should not be interpreted in isolation. Information from ability tests, attainment tests, teacher observations, the Education Passport and parents' reports are also very important aspects of a thorough assessment. This evidence-based approach facilitates the identification of individual students' strengths and learning needs and helps to inform the actions and interventions that best address those needs."

3. Scope of this Policy

The policy also operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following:

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- Equal Status Act, 2000
- The Equality Act, 2004
- Children First Act, 2015
- Looking At Our Schools, 2016
- DES Circular Letter 0024/2016
- DES Circular Letter 0058/2019
- Grange CC Special Educational Needs Policy
- Grange CC School Guidance Plan

4. Defining Assessment Within Our School Context

The term “assessment” refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student’s learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths, and learning needs. Assessment is an important part of quality teaching and learning. Students are assessed for the following reasons:

- to monitor a student’s progress
- to provide teachers with information about students’ learning preferences. This information allows the teacher to identify methods for progressing the student’s learning and to adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.
- to provide students and parents/guardians with information regarding progress
- to establish baseline data to a student’s attainments in certain subjects
- to help students to choose appropriate levels at Junior and Senior Cycle
- to assess students’ needs and eligibility for additional support within the school
- to assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to the DDLETB Psychological Support Service and/or external psychologists where necessary and agreed by parents/guardians.
- to enable and encourage students to engage in the process of assessing one’s work and building on previous work through formative assessment practices.

5. Assessment within the Continuum of Special Educational Needs Support

The continuum of support encompasses all students, including those with special educational needs. Students whose needs may fall within the remit of the EPSEN Act (Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs, 2005) are included in the continuum.

First-year students are assessed by the Learning Support core team to investigate the possible provision of additional help where necessary and supports needed. If a student is identified as having a learning need/difficulty, the SEN Coordinator will discuss the matter with the core SEN team, parents/guardians, and relevant bodies.

Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time, and the use of dictionaries amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the SEN Coordinator in consultation with individual subject teachers.

Differentiation for assessment:

- giving more support or direction to some students
- extending the work of more able students, with more sophisticated tasks
- adapting questions asked to the ability level of students
- applications for Reasonable Accommodations at Exam Certificates

The responsibilities, in terms of assessment, of the SEN Coordinator and core SEN team are as follows:

- liaising with primary schools for student data and organising the assessment of needs of the incoming 1st Year students
- working with the Guidance Department to organise the CAT4 tests for particular year groups
- identifying students with needs and gathering data on assessments
- testing SEN students where applicable and liaising with external agencies
- identifying students suited to the variety of programmes available in the school, implementing these programmes with SEN students and monitoring and assessing their progress
- liaising with SEN co in the structuring and allocation of educational provision where applicable
- assisting and guiding learning support/resource teachers to devise a suitable programme of support
- guiding and supporting the classroom teacher through the setting of individual targets for SEN students around assessments
- developing Student Support Files by the Learning Support Team in conjunction with parents and SEN team

- applying for reasonable accommodations for the Junior and Leaving Certificate State Examinations where applicable

6. Assessments

Since the implementation of the new Junior Cycle, there is now a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over three years. This approach measures and reports achievement at the end of those three years. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment. This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when provided with feedback that helps them understand how their learning can be improved.

Assessment for certification purposes remains external (State Examinations Commission) www.sec.ie

Formative Assessment: (*Assessment for Learning*)

Formative assessment is ongoing and involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding on the next steps to ensure successful outcomes. It involves a shift from focusing mainly on summative judgements to engaging in ongoing activities that can be used to support the next stages of learning. A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students and students' feedback to teachers.

Through a range of assessments for learning strategies, the teacher helps the student to identify what they have achieved and where there is room for further learning and development.

Grange Community College endeavours to implement formative assessment using the following Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies:

- *Sharing of Learning Outcomes with students:* Teachers will share the learning outcomes with students at the beginning of each lesson/where deemed necessary and refer to them during questioning or end of lesson/topic where necessary. This will help to clarify what the student was supposed to have learned and will assist both teachers and students in determining the levels to which the outcomes have been achieved.
- *Sharing of Features of Quality/Criteria for Success:* Teachers will tell students in advance of a piece of work what exactly the teacher will be looking for when assessing it. This allows students to know what exactly they must do to present a successful piece of work. Teachers are aware that it is important to share this information with students beforehand so that they will be in a better position to know what is expected of them.
- *Comment-Only Marking:* Teachers will periodically engage in comment-only feedback using strategies such as 'two stars and a wish. Such feedback focuses on what students have done well and provides them with something to work on to make further improvements. Such feedback allows both teacher and student to identify the next steps in learning.

- *Peer Assessment and Self-Assessment:* Teachers will, occasionally, supervise students to correct their own or their peer's work, based on success criteria. Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down what they can do to improve.

We encourage other classroom practices and strategies needed for AFL. They include the following:

- Positive classroom culture and ethos encourages students to think and talk about their learning. A positive classroom culture provides a safe place for students to engage in open, honest, and respectful discussions.
- Questioning skills which include group work opportunities - (student to teacher/ teacher to student/ student to student), which stimulate thinking and reflecting on learning and explicit teaching of how to consciously reflect on what one knows and how to make an evaluative comment on it (Bloom's Taxonomy).
- Encouraging students to engage in Goal setting. This can be done through teacher-directed discussion, clearly defining learning objectives and success criteria thereby empowering students to take responsibility for their learning. Students can self-reflect and offer themselves written feedback on their performance and areas to improve themselves.
- Encouraging wait time- hands down – post it – one-sentence summary approaches.
- Using technology and interactive scaffolded techniques in the classroom using education apps like the booklet games – brain training or, Kahoot play & create quizzes.

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBA) in subjects and short courses

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They will be used for the assessment of learning in subjects and short courses. CBAs will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parent(s)/guardian(s) during Junior Cycle and in the JCPA. Students will undertake two CBAs one in the 2nd year and one in the 3rd year. These CBAs are facilitated by the subject teacher. The timing of the CBAs varies for each subject.

Assessment Task

The written Assessment Task for each subject will be specified and published by the NCCA. It will relate to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. Students must complete their second CBA to undertake the associated Assessment Task. The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher following a timeframe and guidance from the NCCA. The Assessment Task will be returned to the SEC for marking and will be marked as part of the Final Examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the calculation of the grade for that subject by the SEC. The value to be assigned to the Assessment Task will be included in the assessment guidelines for each subject.

Subjects in Junior Cycle with new specifications will be assessed through:

- Two Classroom-Based Assessments reported on to parent(s)/guardian(s) by the school.
- An Assessment Task (marked by the SEC) in each subject.
- A Final Examination set held and marked by the SEC. The combination of the Assessment Task and the Final Examination will generate a final grade, certified by the SEC.

Summative Assessment: (Assessment of Learning)

The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit or programme of learning. It aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner. All students undertake quarterly assessments (Oct – Midterm, Dec – Xmas, April – Easter, May – Summer, with third- and sixth-year students undergoing their state examinations in June. Third - and sixth-year students also undertake ‘*mock*’ final exams in the third term as part of their preparations for their state examinations. The total number of days required for Leaving Cert mock exams will be kept under review.

All student attainment is monitored by the academic monitoring coordinator using the *Athena Tracker Assessment Tool*. Other end-of-topic/chapter assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to students and parent/guardian(s) on the level of attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

Transition Year students (TYs) complete projects within their modules. TYs will sit in-house exams at the end of the first term. Students are then expected to complete a portfolio with a piece of work from each module along with reflections on what they have learned. At the end of the year, this portfolio is assessed, and the students must complete an interview.

7. Definition of Specific Assessment Instruments for the Policy:

Athena Tracker

The Athena Tracker is an academic tracking tool that tracks student progress and creates a baseline potential in each subject in each exam. This baseline is based on a statistical model we have built using the exam results of all the previous results of students on the software. The purpose of the software is to highlight when a student's performance falls below this potential and may need further support so that whenever a student falls below their potential in any subject, the teacher receives an alert and can investigate what is going on with the student and whether any additional support or intervention is required. Thus, ensuring no student gets missed in a very busy school system.

Assessment instruments include achievement/attainment, ability, and diagnostic tests

Standardised ability tests

Sometimes referred to as psychometric tests, this test is designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning, that is, they measure what a student can know rather than what is known.

Standardised achievement tests

Sometimes referred to as attainment tests, this test measures what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these areas. On the foot of information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests, further information may be gathered through the administration of diagnostic tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.

A diagnostic test is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspects of learning, for example, word identification skills or understanding of number concepts.

In addition, guidance counsellors may use the outcomes of ability and interest tests to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for higher education and/or further education training.

Entrance Assessment

All incoming first-year students are screened using the Cognitive Ability Test (Cat 4). This test measures four principal areas of reasoning – verbal, non-verbal, quantitative, and spatial – to provide a comprehensive profile of the core abilities relating to learning.

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Students are tested in school at the end of September. When the results of the tests become available, group and individual reports are shared with teachers and a report for parents is posted to parents/guardians. The information is used for academic monitoring purposes where the academic progress of the student is tracked during each academic year.

The SEN Department will use the data to identify students that may have special educational needs such, as dyslexia and dyscalculia, and may refer students to our Psychological Support Service for assessments aimed at finding out those students' difficulties and levels of need. The SEN department will also use the data to inform the Individual Educational Plans for students with special needs. The data will also be used by the Student Support Team when determining an action plan for students who are having social, emotional, learning and/or behavioural difficulties.

NGRT (The New Group Reading Test)

The NGRT assessment enables you to assess students' reading and comprehension skills in a single test. This assessment helps identify those students who may need further support and benchmarks their performance against other students of the same age.

This assessment is particularly useful in identifying EAL students who may appear to be competent readers but who could have weak comprehension skills. These standardised tests will help teachers to understand the reading ability of their group or class and allow them to use this information to support personalised learning and target setting.

Each test is made up of two parts:

- Sentence completion measures decoding with an element of comprehension.
- Then, depending on the student's score, either a passage comprehension, which measures a range of comprehension skills of increasing difficulty; or very weak readers will take a phonics task.

PASS (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School)

The PASS assessment is a short self-evaluation survey that may be used to gain insight into attitudes that could be hindering achievement. It can capture feelings about school and teachers and help to detect possible barriers to learning, including issues around attitudes, motivation, confidence, concentration, interests, disaffection, and alienation.

The survey has nine attitudinal factors. Each attitudinal factor can be analysed separately, and responses can be converted to standardised scores through comparisons with national norms.

- Feelings about school.
- Perceived learning capability.
- Self-regard, as a learner.
- Preparedness for learning.
- Attitudes to teachers.
- General work ethic.
- Confidence in learning.
- Attitudes to attendance.
- Response to curriculum demands.

Informed Consent

The consent of the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be sought when the student is under 18 years at the time of enrolment in the school. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be advised, at the point of entry, of the range of assessment instruments that could potentially be administered to their child, to support their child's learning and development. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be advised that they will be informed of the results of all tests administered.

State Exams

The school will support students in preparation for the State Exams. We will ensure that students are fully informed of the practices and procedures necessary for these exams. The Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations begin the first Wednesday after the June Bank Holiday Monday each year. The exact timetable of examinations is usually available from the previous January.

Reporting Procedures

- As In-house exams in December are held preceding the Christmas break, adequate time will be given for correction of these tests after term resumes in January. An agreed date will be set for the input of these results. All results of in-house exams will be made available to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on Vsware.
- Student Journal – the teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student by writing the result or a note in the student journal. The parent(s)/guardian(s) is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.
- Direct Contact – In consultation with the Year Head, the teacher/ Year Head may decide as they see fit to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardian directly concerning the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) are welcome to arrange a meeting by appointment.
- Signature of Parent(s)/guardian(s) on Assessment – the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may access their child’s academic records through Vsware.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) Teacher Meetings – there are Parent(s)/guardian(s) Teacher Meetings for all year groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings, it will be possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians of individual students that generate an accurate picture of the student’s progress.
- As stated above, academic monitoring takes place for 1st and 2nd-year students. This tracked monthly. The assessment is decided by the subject teacher and the result is recorded on Vsware to track individual students’ progress.

8. Responsibilities and Standard Operating Procedures

The Guidance and SEN departments within our school have overall responsibility for administering the above diagnostic assessment instruments within our school.

Other tests should only be administered and interpreted by appropriately qualified personnel depending on the nature of the instrument used.

The administration of ability tests in schools should be restricted to appropriately qualified personnel who have been specifically trained in specialised psychometric testing including the selection and administration of such assessment instruments, interpretation of assessment results, scoring and feedback. Typically, in the case of psychometric instruments of general ability, such personnel will be qualified guidance counsellors or teachers of special education with appropriate qualifications to administer specific tests. Such personnel should engage in ongoing training and continuing professional development.

9. Homework as a means of Assessment

- The setting, completion and correction of homework remain an integral part of school life.
- When setting homework, staff will give clear instructions and will be mindful of the amount of homework given, when the work will be due, the age of the class involved, etc. Students will be required to write details of homework into their Journals.
- All assigned homework will be checked/corrected as soon as possible.
- Dealing with incomplete/unsatisfactory homework is a matter in the first instance for the subject teacher to deal with. The teacher may, for instance, request it for the next day etc. The teacher may also write a note in the student’s Journal. This will be countersigned by the parent(s)/guardian(s). A note entitled “No Homework or Homework Incomplete” will be printed in the student’s journal.
- If, on the following day, the work is still not done it will be open to the teacher to deal with the problem as he/she thinks appropriate and in the case of persistent refusal to complete homework, the incident should be put in writing to the Year Head (see HFSS Code of Behaviour).

Please note: *It is important that students feel comfortable enough to mention to their subject teachers if they are under pressure and if they desire a reasonable extension to submit a homework essay or project or a reduction in the amount of homework.*

In addition to this, teachers' welcome students telling them if they have some tests on a particular day so that the teacher can change the date of a test if possible. Students who miss class due to school matches, medical/dental appointments are expected to find out from their classmates/peer's what homework was set by the teacher and to complete it on time.

10. Advice for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Sharing standardised test results with members of school staff and with external parties

The results of standardised tests will be shared with other relevant members of school staff to plan effectively to meet the educational, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of the students. It may also be necessary at times to share relevant information with external parties, such as PPS, CAMHS and the Inspectorate for example, following the school's policies on standardised testing and data protection.

Be mindful of the limitations of standardised tests when sharing results and the potential for students to acquire a label based on these results. It is important when sharing these results that they are presented in a way that is clearly understood by the receiving party i.e., the use of percentiles may be avoided if they are going to be confused with percentages; that the difference between standardised ability and achievement tests is understood and the limitations of such tests have been explained.

Who will be involved in the administration of assessment instruments?

Administration of assessment instruments will be undertaken by appropriately qualified school staff only, which in some instances will involve subject teachers, the school guidance counsellor and/or the learning support teacher (depending on the nature of the test).

How will the information be protected?

Being mindful and aware of obligations relating to access to stored data under the Freedom of Information Act 1997, the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2013, associated regulations, and the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, and GDPR (2018) The school will ensure that the information, in line with data protection requirements, is kept secure with access confined to designated school staff. In the case of electronic information, this will be kept secure through password protection. Only designated school staff will have access to this password.

Who will be able to access the information and results?

To ensure that our students receive an education that best supports their development, the information and results will be shared with students' teachers following established test practice. This is to ensure that teaching approaches can be adapted to accommodate the different learning needs and styles of students. In addition, the guidance counsellor and the learning support teacher will have access to the information.

How long with the school retain the information?

The school will retain the information until seven years after the student has left school. This is in line with data protection requirements.

Will we be informed of the results?

Parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians will have access to the test scores achieved by students. The information will be presented following established test practice and in a format that is easily understood.

My child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) or takes English as an Additional Language (EAL), is further testing appropriate?

If your child has been identified as having an SEN or is an EAL student, and you have disclosed this information to the school, it may not be necessary or appropriate for your child to take a specific test. In some circumstances, it may be necessary, or not necessary, to be tested, based on the individual needs of the student.

Appendix 1.

Schedule of Assessments

Our schedule of Assessments is reviewed on an annual basis and are updated as necessary. The completed schedule will be available to all students from First Year to Sixth Year and placed in the school journal.

ASSESSMENT JOURNEY

JUNIOR CYCLE

1 st Year	
January (6 th Class)	Entrance Exams (CAT4)
September	Primary Passports (Information for teachers on Vsware, our online system)
September	CAT 4 - Reports sent to parents in October/November
October	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
December	1 st Year Parent's Junior Cycle Information Evening Christmas Assessments (End of Term) (NGRT Literacy Test, Numeracy Test, Irish Test)
January	PASS survey (Pupil's Attitude to Self and School)
February	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
May	Summer Assessments (End of Term)
2 nd Year	
October	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
December	Christmas Assessments
January – February Midterm	CBA 1 - Science, Business, Home Economics & Visual Art
February – March/April (Easter)	CBA 1 – Geography & Maths
February	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests/CBAs)
April – May	CBA1 - English, MFL (Modern Foreign Languages), History & Music
May	Summer Assessments (Includes follow-up NGRT (New Group Reading Test and Numeracy Test)
3 rd Year	
October	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
November – December	CBA 1 - Gaeilge
November – December	CBA 2 - English, Science, Business & Visual Art
November – March	Junior Cycle Assessment Tasks

December	Study Skills Seminar Christmas Assessments
January – Feb Midterm	CBA 2 - Gaeilge
February – Easter	CBA 1 – PE CBA 2 – MFL
February/March	Junior Cycle Mock Examinations Mock Results Analysis & Academic Mentoring
June	Junior Cycle Examinations
September (Transition Year)	Results Analysis

SENIOR CYCLE

Transition Year	
September – May	Portfolio Work/Continuous Assessment
September – May	ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence)
December – May	Christmas Assessments Interest Test (to assist Subject Choice)
March	Mock Interviews
May	Portfolio Completion
5th Year	
October	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
December	Christmas Assessments
February	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
May	Summer Assessments
6th Year	
October	Midterm Assessments (In-Classroom tests)
December	Study Skills Seminar Christmas Assessments
February/March	Leaving Certificate Mock Examinations Mock Results Analysis
Easter	Practical Exams/Orals/Research Topics/LCVP
June	Leaving Certificate Examinations
September (Following Release of Results)	Results Analysis