

## ASSESSMENT POLICY

### Assessment Philosophy

*Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about learner performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what learners know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process.*

*Making the PYP Happen, 2009*

*The teacher is seen as a supporter rather than a director of learning and should make use of assessment tasks and instruments that help the student work in what Vygotsky refers to as the “zone of proximal development”. This is the range of achievement between what the student can do on his/her own, and what the student can do with the support of the teacher.*

*Vygotsky, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978*

Nexus International School recognises that teaching, learning and the assessment of that learning are fundamentally interdependent. Assessment is therefore an essential part of the school’s teaching and learning programme and the following points form the basis of our beliefs and practices:

- Learning outcomes, which include knowledge and understanding of a subject as well as cognitive, personal and academic skills should be explicitly stated in each unit of work and these should be the pivot around which the whole course is developed.
- Assessment should produce coherent feedback for parents/guardians and external organizations as well as informing the process of curriculum review. It should be fair and transparent.
- NIS recognizes that its learners have different learning styles, cultural experiences, expectations and needs and assessment methods must take account of these.
- Assessment is managed through an active partnership among learners, teachers and parents/guardians. All parties should be aware of learner strengths and weaknesses as well as strategies to improve their learning.
- Clarity of expectations and good communication are shared responsibilities and feedback should be both positive and constructive.

### Appropriate for Purpose

Assessment is carried out for two main purposes: assessment of learning and assessment for learning. All assessments should be appropriate for purpose, valid, reliable and authentic.

Assessment of learning refers to assessment that measures what has been learned to inform decisions about individual learner or system achievement. Assessment of learning usually makes judgements about learners’ achievements and leads to decisions about progress, placement and rewards. A variety of means of assessment should be employed so that learners have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their learning. The audiences for assessment of learning may include learners, parents, teachers, school management, Taylor’s Schools and other external parties. Assessment of learning tells learners and others how learners have performed in comparison with other learners or an external standard. These comparisons are often reported as grades (letters, numbers, ticks and crosses) and can be aggregated to provide information about the overall performance of a group, class, school or school system compared

with other similar groups or a preset standard. Assessment of learning is sometimes referred to as summative assessment or evaluation.

Assessment for learning is ongoing and diagnostic: its goal is to provide teachers and learners with ongoing data about the learner's readiness for further learning. When we assess for learning, we are gathering information about student learning that informs teaching and helps learners to learn more. Assessment for learning is used to modify the content and process of teaching to improve learning. The main audiences for data gathered for this purpose are the teacher and the learner, although parents and other interested parties may also benefit from the information if they use it to help further learning. Assessment for learning involves learners receiving a considerable quantity of descriptive feedback during the learning process. This feedback allows the teacher and learner to adjust what they are doing in order to improve. This feedback can come from many sources, including the learner, peers, teachers and parents, and will usually be related to a specific piece of learning. Assessment for learning is sometimes referred to as formative assessment.

Where assessment relates to external examination bodies such as CIE and IB teachers will use the relevant rubrics and assessment criterion to help guide learning progress.

### Validity

All assessments should be designed so that they will measure what they are intended to measure. They should be consistent with the purpose of the assessment.

### Reliability

Assessments should be reliable. This is particularly important when undertaking assessment of learning. The assessment must be able to provide consistent data when used with different learners at different times.

### Authenticity

As much as possible, assessments should be founded on real world problems and should assess what is worth assessing, not just what can be assessed.

### Principles of Assessment

In summary, effective assessment should:

- Account for a variety of learning styles and the diverse backgrounds of learners
- Provide a wide variety of different assessment opportunities (e.g. written assignments, oral presentations, field work, practical work, exhibitions, performance, tests, research papers, online assessment quizzes, peer and self assessment)
- Be anchored in authentic tasks as an integral part of the curriculum
- Be criteria-referenced using clear learning objectives set down by IB/IGCSE/ENC Curricula and made clear to learners before the task is set
- Measure what students understand, what they can do and what they know
- Be both formative (to assist students in building understanding, skills and knowledge) and summative (to assess students' acquired understanding, skills and knowledge)
- Be on-going rather than episodic
- Allow students to reflect on and evaluate their progress and set targets for improvement
- Allow the school to evaluate the measure of success in meeting specific learning objectives
- Be internally moderated to ensure consistency

- Be geared towards appraisal of a broad range of concepts, attitudes, knowledge and skills appropriate to an international and increasingly complex world
- Accord with the various conventions of IB/IGCSE/ENC Curricula and Exam Boards, procedures and requirements that may from time to time exist

### Assessment practice

- All assessment at NISS is criteria-referenced
- Where grades are given the IGCSE/IB/ENC grades/levels are to be used. Only whole numbers or letters may be used.
- Feedback to students should be prompt and supportive
- Teachers must explain what is required to fulfill criteria for any piece of assessed work
- There should be opportunities for both formative and summative assessment
- Teachers must keep a clear and accurate record of all assessment activities. This may include continuums, work samples, running records and pre and post assessments.
- When using criteria-referenced assessment descriptors, a learner may achieve differently for each aspect. In these circumstances and where an overall grade is required the teacher has to use his/her judgment as to which grade most accurately reflects the overall quality of the work.
- Assessment is undertaken positively and consistently giving credit to learners for what they have achieved. Marks are not subtracted for irrelevant or incorrect work. Alternative, but equally valid, answers that contain coherent ideas relevant to the question are acknowledged.
- Percentages are discouraged because these can be misleading.
- If a teacher suspects a learner is guilty of malpractice or plagiarism, assessment should not be completed and the case be referred in accordance with the school's Academic Honesty Policy.
- After any assessment is complete, it is important to consider whether the process itself provided ample information to allow a judgement; whether the assessment purposes or objectives were met and what changes should be made in future assessment processes.
- After any assessment is complete, it is important to consider how the teaching and learning process may be modified as a result of the assessment.

### Communication

Communication is key to assessment. The information that arises from assessment should be comprehensive, honest, fair and credible. Effective communication of assessment involves parents, learners and teachers as partners and should be clear and understandable to all parties. The following outlines how we will communicate information about assessment:

#### Teacher - Student Conferences

Daily, on-going feedback from teacher to student and student to teacher, enables reflection and further refinement of skills and understandings supporting student learning and teacher planning. The feedback is designed to propel students forward, to address misconceptions and acknowledge skills and understandings that are consolidated.

#### Teacher- Parent Conferences

These opportunities occur both formally and informally (as requested by either the parents or teacher) throughout each year. Each Phase will also conduct an Information Evening with parents at the start of each year to outline expectations, learning intentions, and administrative matters and provide a forum for parents to ask questions.

### Celebrations of Learning (led by the students)

We offer a wide range of additional opportunities to celebrate learning. These include Learning Conferences in the Primary School, Exhibitions and Productions. These celebrations of learning will reflect the learning process as well as outcomes.

### Written Reporting

Formal written reports summarising the learning over a period of time are issued at intervals throughout the academic year. Informal reporting of learning taking place in the school, in the form of emails, newsletters and blogs happens constantly.

Details of these communications for the Secondary and Primary School are available in the relevant parent and learner handbooks and staff handbooks.

### Moderation

Phases and Learning Areas (LA) should make internal arrangements to ensure that tasks are being assessed in a consistent manner. This could, for example, take the form of a assessment exercise undertaken at Phase or LA meetings or guidelines drawn up by the Phase or LA, which individuals should adhere to.

It is particularly important that whenever teachers are assessing the same piece of coursework for externally examined subjects that they meet to discuss application of the marking scheme.

### Review of Assessment Policy

This assessment policy will be reviewed annually as part of the internal review. Overall responsibility for the process rests with the Heads of School. Teachers, parents and learners will be surveyed to determine the effectiveness of the school's assessment techniques and, where necessary, the assessment policy will be updated. Questions addressed will include:

- Is there a close match between assessment tasks and course objectives?
- Do learners experience a variety of assessment methods?
- Is the assessment process manageable in terms of the time it takes?
- How are students informed about assessment purpose, requirements and expectations and is this communication clear?
- Is the assessment fair and does it cater for learners from a wide variety of educational experiences?
- Do learners receive timely and helpful feedback?
- Do assessment tasks provide staff with useful feedback on learning?

## Appendix One - IB Diploma Assessment

### The IB grading system

NIS follows the International Baccalaureate grading system. This is a criteria-referenced scale ranging from 7 (high) to 1 (low). Each subject area has published grade descriptors from IB and these are expected to form the basis for any grades that are awarded. Grade descriptors should be clearly displayed and unpacked, where appropriate, by the teacher before an assessed piece of work is set. A very brief summary of what each grade means is provided below.

Grade 7 – Excellent

Grade 6 – Very Good

Grade 5 – Good

Grade 4 – Satisfactory

Grade 3 – Mediocre

Grade 2 – Poor

Grade 1 – Very Poor

### Theory of Knowledge Grades

It is anticipated that much of the assessment taking place in the Theory of Knowledge course will be formative and take the form of written comments. Since the final TOK grade ranges from A-E it is reasonable to use this system when assessing TOK work. Learners should have opportunities to demonstrate their TOK knowledge through written work, presentations and class discussion. Teachers should be guided by the assessment matrix for both the presentation and essay when assessing a learner's level and there is guidance provided by IB about how the marks received for these are translated into a grade.

### The Extended Essay

All learners are required to submit an Extended Essay. They will choose, or be assigned, an Extended Essay supervisor who will oversee the learner's development of the essay. The teacher may steer the learner away from unproductive lines of enquiry or suggest areas for further investigation and in particular help to shape a well-focused research question. Supervisors are only allowed to give detailed comments on one completed draft of the essay. All comments are of a formative nature designed to help the learner produce the best essay of which they are capable. It should always be remembered that the essay is the learner's own work and teachers must bear this in mind in the kind of advice they give. The final assessment of this essay is completed on an IBO supplied form to enable the IBO to carry out the actual assessment of the piece and provide the grade for inclusion in the Diploma data.

### Creativity, Action, Service (CAS)

All learners are required to satisfactorily fulfill the requirements of the CAS programme to gain their IB Diploma. Whilst no formal assessment of this takes place, learners are encouraged to reflect meaningfully on the experiences they have undergone.

### Progression over the IB course

It is assumed that there will be a development of IB learner skills and knowledge over the IB course. It is therefore reasonable to expect higher quality work in Year 13 than Year 12 and so the grade descriptors

may be interpreted differently even though they remain the same. As stated above the grade descriptors should always be unpacked clearly for assessed work and learners should have a clear idea of what is expected from them to achieve each level. This becomes even more important as the expectations will change over the IB course.

### IB Coursework

Virtually all IB subjects have a coursework component, which contributes to the learner's final grade. This may be marked internally, externally or a sample sent for moderation. Regulations, instructions and criteria for marking coursework are laid down by the IBO and must be adhered to by the teacher concerned. A list of deadlines for different pieces of coursework will be prepared by the IB Coordinator and given to the learners at the start of their IB course. There may be cases where a teacher in consultation with his/her learners wishes to extend the deadline and, if good reasons exist and the request is made in plenty of time, this may be granted by the IB Coordinator. It should be stressed that the list of deadlines is designed to help the learners plan their work. The involvement of learners in negotiating deadlines is in keeping with the school's philosophy of encouraging an active partnership of learners and teachers in the education process. A copy (hard or soft) must be made of all coursework before it is sent to IBO and similarly teachers must keep a record of marks of any coursework they have marked.

Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Academic Honesty Policy.

### Predicted Grades

Predicted grades are required for university applications, usually in the first term of Year 13 and by the IBO in March of the Year 13 year as part of their monitoring process. These will be collected by the IB Coordinator and the same rule applies to each set of grades: the predicted grade is the best estimate of what the teacher thinks the learner will achieve at the end of the course. It will be based on the assessment tasks undertaken by the learner but there is also some room for subjective assessment by the teacher. Predicted grades should not be communicated to the learner, although a teacher may advise on the desirability or otherwise of a particular course of study.

### Transcript Grades

For those learners who have completed the IB course, the grade appearing on a school transcript will be the final grade awarded by IB. For those leaving NISS before completion of the course, the grade appearing on their transcript will be the achievement grade for that subject appearing on their last school report.

## Appendix Two - IGCSE Assessment

IGCSE grades are awarded on the following scale:

A\* (highest)

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

U - unclassified.

Cambridge International Examinations publishes grade descriptors for each subject from which rubrics to mark individual pieces can be produced by teachers. Upon use of these rubrics to feed back on a given piece of work, learners should then understand the next steps needed to improve to the next grade in a given area.

Final assessment of a particular course can be a mix of coursework and final examinations, or just final examinations.

Learners receive formative feedback throughout the two-year course. This can be in a wide variety of ways as discussed in the main policy.

Trial examinations are sat in Year 10 (Term 4) and in Year 11 (Term 3) to help give learners an experience of what the real process might be like. The Trial Exams are marked and discussed formatively.

### Predicted Grades

Predicted grades are required for Cambridge International Examinations in March of Year 11 as part of their monitoring process. These will be collected by the Reports Process and the same rule applies to each set of grades: the predicted grade is the best estimate of what the teacher thinks the learner will achieve at the end of the course. It will be based on the assessment tasks undertaken by the learner but there is also some room for subjective assessment by the teacher. Predicted grades should not be communicated to the learner, although a teacher may advise on the desirability or otherwise of a particular course of study.

### Transcript Grades

For those learners who have completed the IGCSE course, the grade appearing on a school transcript will be the final grade awarded by IGCSE. For those leaving NISS before completion of the course, the grade appearing on their transcript will be the achievement grade for that subject appearing on their last school report.

### Appendix Three - Years 7 to 9 Assessment

Each subject in the English National Curriculum has a set of Levels ranging from 1 to 8 (8 is the highest) that are loosely based around Bloom's Taxonomy. The levels are a description of a range of skills and content which must be met several times before a teacher can judge that a learner is certainly working at that level.

Formative and summative tasks can be judged against these levels and teachers develop rubrics to help learners see the next steps.

A wide range of assessment is used and Learning Exhibitions and Extended Projects are positively encouraged.

#### Progression during Years 7 to 9

It is assumed that there will be a development of learner skills and knowledge over the Year 7 to 9 course. As learners become more competent with using and demonstrating these skills and knowledge it is expected that their Level in each subject will steadily increase from (on average), Levels 3,4,5 in Year 7 to (on average) Levels 5,6,7,8 in Year 9.

Achievement Level	School Year			KEY	
	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9		
Level 8	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Achieving above expectations for Age	
Level 7	Yellow	Yellow	Green		Achieving as Expected for Age
Level 6	Yellow	Green	Green		
Level 5	Green	Green	Green	Working towards expected level for age	
Level 4	Green	Green	Olive		
Level 3	Green	Olive	Olive		
Level 2	Olive	Olive	Olive		

An arrow points from the bottom-left cell (Level 4, Year 7) towards the top-right cell (Level 8, Year 9), indicating progression.

#### Transcript Grades

For those leaving NISS the Level appearing on their transcript will be the achievement grade for that subject appearing on their last school report.

## Appendix Four – PYP

### Progression over the PYP

It is assumed that there will be a development of five essential elements over the PYP course. Assessment should effectively guide students through the five essential elements of the PYP curriculum:

- the understanding concepts
- the acquisition of knowledge
- the mastering of approaches to learning
- the development of attitudes
- the decisions to take action as a result of learning

Nexus' approach to assessment recognises the importance of assessing the process of inquiry as well as the products of inquiry. The main aim of assessment in the PYP at Nexus is to provide feedback on the learning process and the development of the five essential elements to inform future learning. As such assessment for learning is the most appropriate approach. Students, teachers and parents are actively engaged in this process.

Homeroom and specialist teachers are responsible for the assessment of these elements. Teachers are expected to record the detail of inquiries initiated by students in order to look for an increase in the substance and depth of the inquiry. The teacher needs to consider:

- if the nature of students' conceptual inquiry develops over time—if they are asking questions of more depth, that are likely to enhance their learning substantially
- if students are becoming aware that real problems require solutions and they take action accordingly
- if students are demonstrating mastery of the approaches to learning
- if students are accumulating a comprehensive knowledge base and can apply their understanding to further their inquiries successfully
- if students are demonstrating the attitudes and attributes of the learner profile.

### Collecting and Recording Evidence

To assess learning and progress teachers will use a range of tools and strategies to assess. Tools may include rubrics, exemplars, checklists, anecdotal records, continuums and standardized tests. Strategies include observations, performance assessments, process-focused assessments, selected responses and open-ended tasks. Details of these may be found in 'Making the PYP Happen'.

Evidence may include, but is not limited to, videos, audio, photographs and graphic representations. Teachers may also use written records of student conversations, comments, explanations and hypotheses as well as annotated pieces of student work that may form part of a student's portfolio of learning.

The minimum expectations for assessing PYP students are as follows:

- For all UOIs a summative task will be undertaken. As a minimum, the task will assess the concepts through the lines of inquiry selected. The tasks will also assess the approaches to learning, action taken and attitudes developed (ie: the five essential elements). The assessment will be in the form of a four-stage rubric. This aligns with our reporting framework.
- Children in Years K (starting Term 4) to 6 are regularly individually assessed for reading using the PM or PROBE tools (refer to the Language Arts flow chart to determine which tool(s) to use. As a minimum this takes place in Terms 1, 2 and 3, but more frequently for students below age

expectations for reading as defined in the Language Arts Scope and Sequence. A Term 4 assessment is not required for children exceeding age expectations. All students new to the school in these year groups will be assessed within 3 weeks of arriving at the school.

- Children in Nursery (starting Term 3) to Year 2 are regularly individually assessed for phonics using Letters and Sounds materials, this includes the Nexus Essential Word List. As a minimum this takes place once each term. All students new to the school in these year groups will be assessed within 3 weeks of arriving at the school.
- Children in Years 3 to 6 are regularly individually assessed for word study using Words their Way materials. As a minimum this takes place once each term. All students new to the school in these year groups will be assessed within 3 weeks of arriving at the school.
- Writing will be regularly assessed against the expectations in the Language Arts Scope and Sequence and rubric created for the appropriate genres. Writing will be moderated using exemplars developed by Language Arts team.
- Formative assessment in Mathematics will be carried out regularly using pre and post inquiry assessments (these may take the form of rich maths tasks, performance tasks or diagnostic interviews). These will be assessed against the expectations in the Mathematics Scope and Sequence.
- A summative assessment for Mathematics will be carried out annually using an internationally benchmarked assessment tool, ACER-ISA.
- Concepts and skills in Music, Visual Arts, HPE and LOTE are regularly assessed against the relevant Scope and Sequence documents

Homeroom teachers will be responsible for recording assessment information for all the students in their class. Specialists will be responsible for all the students in their groups. The Primary Leadership Team will have access to all assessment information. However to ensure, robust conversations and open communication, information is shared widely across the Primary School.

### Reporting

Reporting on assessment at Nexus International School (Singapore) includes communicating what learners know, understand and can do. Reporting involves parents, learners and teachers as partners and is honest, comprehensive and understandable to all parties.

Reporting to parents, students and teachers occurs through:

- Parent Information Evenings and Parent Workshops
- Learning Conferences (parent-student-teacher) (parent-teacher)
- Portfolios
- Written Reports
- PYP Exhibition
- Mini Exhibitions

### Parent Information Evenings and Workshops

Parents gain information about the school from the Head of Primary, the PYP Coordinator and classroom teachers regarding the curriculum and classroom routines via this important evening that is held at the beginning of Term 1. Workshops are held throughout the year on aspects of the PYP (eg: learning through inquiry, developing motor skills, the maths scope and sequence)

### Portfolios

The Portfolio is an important part of the school's reporting program. It provides a record of student effort and achievement in all areas of school curriculum and life as well as a dynamic means of three-way

communication between parents, students and teachers. Each student has his/her own Portfolio. For learners in Nursery, Kindergarten and Year 1 the Portfolio will be maintained in a folder to allow the learners to easily select, reflect and engage in the tactile experience of managing a Portfolio. For learners in Year 2 and above, the Portfolio will be held on TEAMIE, with learners in Year 1 beginning to access and use TEAMIE in preparation. The evidence selected for the Portfolio is the result of a learning conversation between teacher and learner. As a minimum, the Portfolio will include:

- The summative task and associated reflection/feedback for all Units of Inquiry (using a range of teacher, self and peer assessments)
- Termly Mathematics evidence (two number and two strand)
- Language Arts (one writing sample per semester that shows the writing process)
- Annual piece of evidence from LOTE, Visual Arts, Music and HPE with curation led by homeroom teachers
- A weekly learner reflection (for learners in Year 3 and above) with time provided in homeroom classes for this to happen

### **Learning Conferences**

Learning Conferences are formal reporting sessions to parents. These begin with a three-way discussion with the learner, parent and homeroom teacher. This is followed by a series of discussions between parent and child and led by the learners themselves. The teacher's role in this process is to guide and prepare the learners. The emphasis is on the discussion between a child and his/her parent.

The focus of the Learning Conferences is on learners' progress – academic and social. Learning Conferences are designed to give students ownership of the assessment of their learning, so they can become more actively involved and committed. These conferences make learners accountable for their learning and encourage learner/parent communication.

Other benefits are that learners learn to evaluate their own progress and build critical thinking skills, self-confidence and self-esteem. Parents become an active participant in their child's learning and skills, and have an opportunity to help their child set positive goals. Learners are trained to become confident participants and conference leaders. The development of their training will naturally be progressive as learners move through the year levels. Clearly we would have different expectations about how a Nursery learner would report as distinct from a Year 6 learner. Our aim is to build skill development beginning in Nursery and moving through the year levels. Parents will be supported and guided with checklists and suggested questions so that they are informed about their child's learning in the most effective way possible.

### **Written Reports:**

Two reports per academic year will be completed for each of the following curriculum areas:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- UOI
- Visual Arts
- Music
- LOTE
- Health and Physical Education (including swimming)
- Approaches to learning
- Attitudes, the learner profile and student-led action

The reports also include personalised next steps in Language Arts, Mathematics and the Approaches to Learning or Attitudes. Reference will be made to the next step identified in the previous report (if applicable) and how the child has made progress towards it. If this has been chosen well and been focused on over the semester it should have been met.

### **The PYP Exhibition**

The Year 6 learners each year will carry out an extended, collaborative inquiry - the PYP Exhibition - to highlight their learning in the program. The PYP Exhibition is used as a summative assessment. The exhibition requires the learners to demonstrate engagement with and an understanding of the five essential elements of the PYP programme:- knowledge, concepts, approaches to learning, attitudes and action. The key purposes include the following:

- to provide a forum for learner driven reporting.
- for learners to engage and report on an in-depth, collaborative inquiry
- to provide children with an opportunity to demonstrate independence and responsibility for their learning
- to provide learners with an opportunity to explore the multiple perspectives of their inquiries
- for children to synthesize and apply their learning of previous years, and to reflect on their journey through the PYP
- to provide an authentic process of assessing learner understanding
- to demonstrate how learners can take action as a result of their learning
- to unite the learners, teachers, parents and other members of the school community in a collaborative experience that incorporates the essential elements of the PYP
- to recognise the transition of learners from PYP to Secondary School

The exhibition can be explored through any one of the six transdisciplinary themes. For further details of the exhibition please consult 'Making the PYP Happen'.

### **Mini Exhibitions**

At least once each year learners engage in a Mini Exhibition. The Mini Exhibition runs in a similar format to the PYP Exhibition. Clearly we would have different expectations about how a Nursery learner would lead a Mini Exhibition as distinct from a Year 6 learner. Our aim is to build skill development beginning in Nursery and moving through the year levels. For example, in Nursery the Mini Exhibition may simply provide a forum for a child to share their learning with their parents through a series of activities and demonstrate how they have taken action as a result of their learning. The Mini-Exhibitions in Years 5 and 6 would be much more closely aligned to the purposes of the PYP Exhibition.