

Updated 1 December 2022

The purpose of this document is to provide clear information about WSA's assessment policy and practices to students, teachers, and other stakeholders.

WSA Background

Our mission to support students along an engaging educational journey where they can ignite their unique spark and learn to use it to make a positive impact in the world is upheld through the school's assessment practices.

West Sound Academy faculty design and carry out a curriculum that inspires inquiry, creativity, accountability, and the application of new learning in real-world situations. All teachers at West Sound Academy are skilled at meeting students where they are, identifying their individual needs, and encouraging learning and growth. Students enrolling from different programs at any grade level are given the foundational skills they will need in future West Sound courses and life. We believe that more learning happens when students connect with their learning goals and can monitor their progress towards those goals.

Philosophy

Assessment has multiple inter-related purposes:

- showing students where they are in making progress towards learning goals and outcomes,
- evaluating students' performance on a task against a set of skills, and knowledge expected,
- providing information to teachers about individual students to inform the implementation of new strategies,
- communicating student progress and performance to their families and other institutions

Assessment Principles

1. Valid - our assessments test the qualities and abilities that they are intended to test
2. Reliable - our assessments' outcome will be consistent with the evaluation descriptors measured, and could be repeated with the same outcome
3. Equitable - our assessments are accessible for all students using a range of methods, including access for those who need inclusive arrangements
4. Transparent - our assessments are comprehensible and our evaluation of assessments is explained in advance
5. Achievable - our assessments are coherent with the course of study and feasible to implement in our context
6. Supports learning - our assessments are learning opportunities in themselves, and the outcomes inform future learning experiences

Forms of Assessment

There are multiple approaches to assessing student learning and measuring progress toward learning goals. Teachers typically use these two broad categories to describe tasks:

- Formative assessment - minor tasks
 - Informal or formal, ongoing learning checks - these might include vocab quiz, chat with students, small group discussion, lab set up, observation by the teacher, peer review, reflection prompts, journals, and many other learning activities
- Summative assessment - major tasks
 - More formal task that consolidates learning from material studied in the course - might include unit or final exam, essay, presentation, interview, lab report, and other types

The use of both kinds of tasks is typical in the classroom, with more frequent formative tasks, and occasional culminating summative tasks. In each semester, a teacher might use 30-40 minor tasks, while there may be 2-4 major tasks.

Connection to IB DP

Coursework and Papers submitted in the *IB Diploma Programme* are summative tasks, that represent the consolidation of course materials from the two years of study. There are some subjects that use portfolios that include formative tasks and preparation for or evidence of the summative tasks.

Key terms

- Syllabus
 - Each course has a course description, including key skills, knowledge, and assessment practices, and policies used by the instructor. This document is updated each year or semester per course.
- Feedback
 - There are three types of necessary feedback in teacher-learner relationships: appreciation, coaching, and evaluative feedback. Appreciation supports building rapport and trust by acknowledging, giving thanks, connecting, and building motivation. Coaching helps students expand their knowledge, sharpen their skills, and improve their capabilities. Evaluation includes ranking against standards of performance and informs decision-making.¹
- Rubric
 - Describes the performance goal or learning outcome in some detail, and might include descriptions for categories of assessment, checklist, and/or assigned marks per category
- Marks
 - Number points assigned to describe performance on a specific task based on a markscheme.
- Grades
 - Letters (typically A, A-, B+, B, etc.) assigned to describe the quality of the student's work against a defined standard. Grades take into account task completion and difficulty.² Depending on the subject, the meaning of the grade "A" typically indicates that the student has excellent knowledge and skills, while "C" typically indicates that the student has adequate

¹ From [Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well](#) by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen

² From [Assessment principles and practices—Quality assessments in a digital age](#), IBO, 2018

knowledge and skills. NC means no credit and is used to indicate a failing condition, which expresses that the student did not meet the expectations of the task.

- GPA
 - WSA uses a 4.0 scale that corresponds to A = 4, B =3, C =2, and D = 1. We do not weigh GPAs IB classes more heavily.
- Moderation
 - In the IB DP there are some tasks that are evaluated by IB examiners, typically Internal Assessments, which are “moderated” to ensure that the established evaluation is accurate. The process involves submitting samples of the task to IB, examiners evaluate the tasks and report back on the accuracy of the sample marks, which may be adjusted at the end of the process so that all tasks are accurate to the samples evaluated.
- Internal assessment
 - In an IB Diploma Programme course, these tasks are marked by the instructor and submitted to IB for moderation.
- External assessment
 - In an IB Diploma Programme course, these tasks are marked by IB examiners (not by instructors) for the IB grade, they may or may not factor into the teacher’s course grade depending on the task.
- Examiner
 - An examiner evaluates students’ work in the IB Diploma Programme against a markscheme or rubric based on the task’s performance criteria. The process typically includes at least two people’s review to ensure that marking is accurate.
- Predicted grade
 - Each IB course is marked on a 1-7 scale (with the exception of TOK), and IB instructors provide a predicted grade to IB based on their evaluation of a student’s performance in the course that reflects the description of the 1-7 in the [IB Grade Descriptors](#).

Communicating Grades

Each instructor prepares a syllabus for each course. In the syllabus, the instructor outlines assessment policies, categories, and procedures. These are distributed in the first weeks of school and published online.

WSA Tools

- Google Classroom
 - is a learning management system (LMS) that allows teachers to distribute and collect digital work, and it also has a grading feature including integrated rubrics, points-based marking for assignments, and commenting and in-text comments using the Google Suite of products (drive, slides, docs, sheets, etc). Students and teachers access Google Classroom directly, and the weekly digest reports are sent to caregivers who opt to receive those emails.
- FACTS
 - is a School Information System (SIS) used by WSA teachers, students and parents to manage information such as grades, attendance, homework, lesson plans, data, behavior, etc.

Learning Team Conferences

At the beginning of each school year, students set academic and personal goals for themselves with support from their Advisors. Their Advisors, teachers, and caregivers meet in goal-setting conferences to hear about the student's goals and give feedback and support comments. In the second semester, students reevaluate their goals and have a second meeting with the Advisors, teachers, and caregivers to check in on their progress and hear updates on the goals. There are occasions when Learning Team conferences are added mid-term on a case-by-case basis to support individual students' needs.

Progress Reflections

In Advisory, once per semester students reflect on their academic progress using a template with linked examples, and short statements. These are seen by Advisors, and teachers, and emailed to guardians.

Report Cards

Final grade reports are sent at the end of each semester. The academic record (transcript) is updated automatically at the end of each semester.

Student success plans

Students who are in need of behavior change will be placed on a Student Success Plan. A student may be placed on a Student Success Plan for academic or disciplinary reasons. Some examples of reasons for a Plan include low grades, academic dishonesty, chronic missing assignments, chronic absenteeism, misbehavior, or general lack of participation in academics. The Student Success Plan will be tailored to the situation and the student's needs and include steps for ending the Plan.

Student Success Plans are coordinated by the Student Wellness Director.

Addressing student questions

Students have the right to advocate for themselves in order to understand a mark or grade. Students have the right to have caregivers or another teacher of their choice present in any discussions regarding assessment. Teachers have the right to have another teacher or admin present in any conversation about assessment.

IB Diploma Programme Grades

Using a strengths-based approach, IB instructors evaluate student work based on descriptions of standards. The method used in IB Courses reflects how examiners evaluate the work using the markscheme or rubric and reading for the best-fit descriptor.

When multiple teachers are trained in the subject area, they evaluate IB assessments together, typically marking the task individually, then consolidating the marks and discussing any discrepancies, before arriving at a final mark or grade to submit for moderation by IB examiners. Teachers utilize the wider IB community for support with evaluating assessment tasks.

Standardization of grading in one subject area

Many of our subject areas have a single teacher, in which case that teacher uses a consistent grading system for all students in their course. When there are subject areas that have multiple teachers, they align their courses with a progression of skills, knowledge, and assessment tasks in the sequence that benefits students moving through the school. These meetings typically occur four times in the academic year, and concern the course content, articulation of the curriculum, and examining student work with “what does an excellent piece of work look like?” or “what does a proficient piece of work look like?” using examples from the classroom.

IB Marks and Communication

In IB Diploma Programme courses, students are prepared for assessment tasks, including the practice of exams, Papers, and mocks, so that they are prepared for the final Papers or tasks in the subject. Teachers utilize self-evaluation, peer review, and corrective feedback on these practice exams so that students have a clear idea of what to expect, their current performance level, how to improve, and what to study or review ahead of the actual task or exam session in May. Students may also receive predicted marks on internal assessments as a score or as a range.

WSA will communicate teachers' predicted course grades to IB when submitting materials and will provide predicted grades to universities directly upon request by the student as part of the application process. WSA does not provide overall predicted grades to students directly, however, students have a strong sense of their performance on each assessment task.

Assessment policy review

Previous Assessment Policy Reviews

Assessment policies, procedures, and tools are reviewed regularly at WSA, and in the past, the reviews were conducted by the Assessment Committee. The committee included Head of School, IB Coordinator, and faculty representatives from various departments.

In 2018-2019, the Assessment Committee revised some of the policies, procedures, and tools used by WSA faculty, which had previously been used to report grades and narrative comments. In the model³ adopted for the 2019-2020 school year, the objectives included:

- Inspire more tangible goal-setting and reflection by students
- Engage parents more with the student's Learning Team (teachers, admin, caregivers)
- Provide more tangible feedback for improvement and accomplishments
- Maximize the impact of teacher feedback
- Use only semesters (and not quarters)

³ 2019-2020 School Year - [Assessment Model Update and Rationale](#)

In 2019-2020 two teachers also piloted and coordinated new portfolio-based assessment models in their classes (Math, Language Acquisition, and Language & Literature). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions at the end of that school year, the committee's attention shifted to the necessary adaptations to the 2020-21 school year and online learning modes.

Current Policy Review

Now, the Assessment Committee's work is done with all faculty members in monthly faculty meeting sessions. We are currently reviewing our assessment tools, protocols, and outcomes in alignment with our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging goals, and are engaging in the revision process as an entire faculty using the book *Grading for Equity*⁴ throughout the 2022-23 school year.

The assessment policy is reviewed annually, as part of this ongoing process, and updated in the school's Parent-student handbook at the beginning of each academic year.

References

- WSA Website - [Curriculum](#) page
- [Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well](#) by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen
- [Assessment principles and practices—Quality assessments in a digital age](#) IBO, 2018
- [IB Grade Descriptors](#) from December 2017
- [Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms](#) by Joe Feldman
- Previously reported policy in the [WSA Parent-Student Handbook 2022-23](#)
- Example [WSA Syllabi Folder AY2020-2021](#)

⁴ [Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms](#) by Joe Feldman