



Wexford C.B.S. Assessment Policy

“Our school community exists primarily to develop responsible individuals who will participate fully in a changing society and to carry out this task in a Christian environment.”

1. Definition:

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.

Methods include examinations; homework; class work; projects; written, oral and aural work. This list is not exhaustive.

2. Why Assess?

Assessment is part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

- to monitor a student’s progress and to provide the teacher with information to make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the students learning and adapt his teaching strategies and / or learning activities as appropriate.
- to reinforce the learning carried out in the classroom.
- to provide the students and parents with information regarding progress.
- to establish baseline data in relation to a student’s attainments in certain subjects.
- to identify students for levels in Junior Cycle at Senior Cycle.

- to assess a student's eligibility for additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
- to assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.
- to fulfil the course requirements in certain subjects.

3. Legislation:

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement.

4. Formative Assessment:

(1) Definition:

The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. More specifically, formative assessments:

- help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work.
- help teachers recognise where students are struggling and address problems immediately.

Examples include homework and class work.

Formative assessment involves a range of strategies designed to give students, teachers and parents' feedback about students' understanding of elements of their learning in courses.

(2) Wexford C.B.S. has adopted the Assessment for Learning (AFL) approach to formative assessment. Its purpose is to use the whole process of assessment to help learners improve their learning. It is formative because its intention is to form, shape or guide the next steps in learning. It is about 'learning to learn.' We recognise, however, that not all aspects of this approach are of benefit in all curriculum areas and the discretion of the teacher is advised to adapt the theory to suit the particular demands of the subject.

(3) In line with the demands of the syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers set regular homework and comment on the merits of work and make suggestions for improvement.

(4) Assessment work may be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of the individual.

Questioning and Bloom's Taxonomy

In 1956 Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behaviour important in learning. Teachers' questions start at the bottom of this triangle which is known as "lower-order questioning". Depending on how far the teacher wants to push the class, he/ she will gradually move up the triangle to make their questions stimulate a "higher order" thinking among their students.



- Remembering: can the student recall or remember the information? define, duplicate, list, memorize, recall, repeat, reproduce state
- Understanding: can the student explain ideas or concepts?
- Classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate, paraphrase Applying: can the student use the information in a new way?
- Choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write. Analyzing: can the student distinguish between the different parts?
- Appraise, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
- Evaluating: can the student justify a stand or decision? appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, evaluate.

- Creating: can the student create new product or point of view? assemble, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, write.

When teachers question as above, they can ascertain how students are progressing which assists in identifying the next steps in learning.

Extra on Formative Assessment (AfL)

Wexford CBS endeavours to implement formative assessment (AfL). This involves using the following method:

- 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 back to them during questioning throughout the lesson and at again at the end of the lesson if 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 they will be looking for when assessing it. This is known as WILF (What I'm Looking For). 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. They can also decide how far they want to push themselves.
- Comment- Only Marking: Teachers will periodically engage in comment-only feedback: This will include 3 things: o What the student has done well, o Where the areas for improvement are and o How the improvement might be made This 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 a list of criteria for success. Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and

write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it – perhaps in a separate section of their copy, similar to a reflective journal.

Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it – perhaps in a separate section of their copy, similar to a reflective journal. We consider the following to be key classroom practices and strategies needed for AfL:

- a positive classroom culture and ethos, which encourages students to think and talk about their learning and which provides a safe place for open, honest and respectful discussion.
- questioning skills (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).
- frequent identification and review of learning goals through teacher-directed discussion, clearly defining learning objectives and success criteria thereby empowering students and enabling them to take responsibility for their learning
- a recognition and acknowledgement of the purpose and importance of collaboration between home and school in the student's learning process. This may be facilitated by various means including web resources.

5. Summative Assessment:

Definition:

Summative Assessment refers to the assessment of learning and aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner.

- All years (except Transition Years) have House Examinations in December. Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert. have Mock examinations in early February and the State

Examinations in June.

- Teachers give regular class tests in various subjects and results are recorded on page 4 & 5 of the Homework Journal to track progress.
- The mode of assessment may include: written examinations, practicals, aural and/or oral work.
- Transition Year assessments may involve the following: External certification, portfolio, oral presentation, self and peer evaluation.
- Examinations generally follow a similar format to the Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations and a marking scheme is clearly identified.
- Mock Examinations are set and corrected externally.
- Reports are forwarded to Parents/Guardians of all years in December; Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert. in February/March and to First, Second, Fourth and Fifth Years in June.
- The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. A mark and grade are awarded and a comment can be generated from a menu.
- Parents of Transition Year students receive a progress report from teachers three times per year.

6. Psychometric Tests:

The following tests are administered to incoming First Years students by the Guidance Counsellor and the Deputy Principal on First Year Assessment Day:

- CAT 4 Level E – Verbal, Numerical, Non-Verbal, Spatial
- GRT 2– General Reading Test to assess reading age

When the results of the tests become available appropriate action is taken in line with S.E.N. Policy. Students with numeracy and/or literacy issues are identified and applications made to the DES for low incidence hours were necessary

Standardised numeracy and literacy scores for each incoming First Year student are gathered from the feeder primary schools in advance of their attendance at second level.

Each student's scores from primary and secondary school tests are compiled on a spread sheet by class. This information is distributed to each class teacher of First Years to facilitate differentiation in terms of teaching approaches. It is also used for academic monitoring purposes where the academic progress of the student is tracked during each academic year by the Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal.

7. Homework as a means of assessment

Homework is considered to be an important element in reinforcing the student's grasp of material and work covered in class. It allows the teacher to informally assess how well the students have grasped new concepts and allows both the teacher and student to identify the next steps of learning. It consists of both written assignments and the learning of work done in class.

Homework is corrected in a variety of ways at the discretion of the individual teacher. These methods may include the teacher collecting and correcting it and giving a grade or comment-only marking. It could also consist of the teacher demonstrating in class how the homework should have been completed and students peer or self-correct. Alternatively, the teacher gives the students the marking scheme or the list of "features of quality" and students peer or self-correct. The teacher ascertains during such activities how well students are progressing.

The school expects that all homework will be completed on time and to the best of a student's ability. All homework – written and learning – is to be recorded by students in their School Diary. Students are encouraged to spread their homework evenly through the week so as to minimise the risk of overload on any given night.

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 submitting 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 a number of 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 colleagues what homework was set by the teacher and to complete it on time.

The School Diary of students in 1st, 2nd and 3rd years is to be signed on a weekly basis by both the Class Teacher and a parent. As students differ so much in terms of their ability and speed of completion of work, it is impossible to be specific as to the amount of time to be spent on a daily basis on homework and revision by each individual student. However, the following general guidelines are offered:

Year	Hours per school day on homework and revision
1 st	1 to 2
2 nd	1.5 to 2
3 rd	2 to 3
TY	Variable in accordance with amount of project work
5 th	3
6 th	3+

Parents are asked to ensure, where possible, that students are afforded a suitable room at home in which to study i.e. quiet, adequately ventilated/heated and equipped with a proper table and chair.

Parents and students should also ensure that any part-time jobs held by students do not interfere with the full and proper completion of homework and revision. The school strongly recommends that sixth year students do not engage in any part-time work in term time as their commitments to study are already considerable.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:

Date: 17th November 2015

This policy will be due for review in **September 2017**