

## **UWC Robert Bosch College Preliminary Assessment Policy**

This policy is an adaptation of the UWC Waterford Kamhlaba Assessment Policy developed by Lodewijk van Oord, UWCWK Director of Studies, with additions, and used with permission.

### **Introduction**

“UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.” (UWC Mission Statement, 2006)

UWC Robert Bosch College (UWCRBC) delivers a challenging and transformational educational experience to a diverse cross section of students, inspiring them to create a more peaceful and sustainable future. Students and teachers come to UWCRBC from many different countries and regions, receiving their previous education and training in a variety of often strikingly different educational systems. Although UWCRBC celebrates and strives to benefit from such educational diversity, it is also important to develop and maintain common standards and practices in our approaches to teaching and learning. This document presents UWCRBC’s approach to educational assessment, explicating the purpose of assessment, the various types of assessment used and how assessment is presented through grades and reports. As such this document represents a statement of intent and action describing principles and practices for achieving educational goals relating to all aspects of assessment.

### **The purposes of assessment**

Assessment is a general term embracing all methods customarily used to appraise performance of an individual student or group of students. Broadly speaking, assessment has three main purposes: (1) to judge; (2) to decide; and (3) to foster learning.

(1) **To judge.** This purpose of assessment is for instance to arrive at a standards-referenced judgement, often in the form of a number, letter or percentage. The most visible example of assessment at the judgement level is the academic report, in which teachers and tutors judge students’ performance through grades and written comments.

(2) **To decide.** Assessment can be used to inform a decision, such as whether or not to offer a particular subject at a higher or standard level, or indeed to take a different subject from the same group.

(3) **To foster learning.** The third level concerns itself with the *impact* of assessment. This purpose can be to (a) motivate a student; (b) give the student an idea of his or her own progress and what might be needed to improve; (c) give second parties (teachers, parents) an idea of a student’s academic development and how he or she can best be supported.

### **Types of assessment**

Educational scholarship identifies an important distinction between summative and formative assessment. In this dichotomy, summative assessment stands for assessment at the end of a process while formative assessment is meant to identify

scope and potential for development within the learning process. In recent decades, the purposes, uses and methods of assessment in many schools have changed, allowing for variety in the ways students are assessed. The point of gravity has moved from the mere use of summative assessment to a balanced combination of the two. The value of formative assessment is now widely recognised, as it is this type of assessment that best fosters learning, reflection and self-awareness. Formative assessment allows a student to take responsibility over his or her own learning, fostering intellectual independence and academic responsibility. Similarly, the emphasis in assessment has already moved away from merely assessing knowledge and products to the assessment of skills, concepts and understanding. Assessment methods have become more diverse, moving beyond written assessment to include oral, peer, self and group assessments. Figure 1 summarizes the changing emphasis in assessment in a nutshell.

Figure 1: Changing emphasis in assessment

Shift from	Towards
Assessing knowledge	Assessing skills and understanding
Assessing products	Assessing processes
External end of course assessment	Internal during course assessment
Written assessment only	Use variety of methods and evidence
Pass/fail summative assessment	Formative identification of strengths and weaknesses and recording of positive achievement

Adapted from Klenowski (2002).

Critics of this development argue that assessment in the new constellation is less rigid, reliable and absolute. At the same time it is widely acknowledged that, as the IB argues, “absolute reliability of assessment results, though highly important in its own right, cannot take priority over student learning.” This dilemma was acknowledged by Alec Peterson (who played a significant role in both the establishment of UWC and the IB Diploma programme) when describing the early development of IB Diploma assessment as follows:

“What is needed is a process of assessment which is as valid as possible, in the sense that it really assesses the whole endowment and personality of the pupil in relation to the next stage of his life, but at the same time [is] sufficiently reliable to assure pupils, parents and teachers, and receiving institutions that justice is being done. Yet such a process must not, by its backwash effect, distort good teaching, nor be too slow, nor absorb too much of our scarce educational resources.” *Schools Across Frontiers: The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges.*

### Assessment practice at UWC Robert Bosch College

General:

All UWC Robert Bosch College teachers are aware of the various purposes and types of assessment, and strive to assess students' progress throughout the

academic term using a variety of assessment methods, based on the objectives and assessment criteria specific to each subject wherever appropriate. UWCRBC acknowledges that the nature of a subject to a large extent dictates the method and form of assessment. Assessment in Mathematics and the Experimental Sciences, for instance, will often be different from assessment in the performing Arts. Likewise, the frequency and content load of assessment will vary across the two year Diploma programme. Subject-specific assessment is organized by subject departments under the leadership of the Director of Studies. Students have timeous access to the criteria for the grading in each of their subjects, Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge, and for the different components within each subject

Assessment at all levels of the school is meant to support and inform learning. Assessment should never be used as a tool for punishment. Teacher feedback is meant to help improve a student's academic performance, and will generally be encouraging in nature. In order to maximize learning from feedback, teachers endeavour to return marked work in a timely manner. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to provide regular opportunities for students to participate in and reflect on the assessment of their work.

Teachers formally report to colleagues on student's progress twice per semester through the process of cycle meetings. The cycle meetings typically are held in week 7 and the pre-final week of term. Cycle meetings are convened by the Director of Studies, with the Rektor and Director of Student Life in attendance.

The Mid-semester cycle meetings function as an early response mechanism, focusing on students of concern, while end-semester cycle meetings evaluate a student's progress in the course of the past semester. The purpose of this early response system is to allow observations to be made to students in good time: this will allow and encourage them to convert any concerns into satisfactory or good grades. Mid-cycle indicators are informal and are not part of a student's academic transcript. Students with one concern are referred to the personal tutor, who will discuss the concern with the student involved. Students with concerns in two or more areas or on a "failing condition", or whose academic performance is perceived as seriously below potential are raised for general discussion in the cycle meetings. In addition, students with behavioural concerns may also be raised during these meetings. The Director of Studies will gather comments from many or all teachers. Ideas on how to proceed are passed on to the student via the tutor and/or Director of Studies. At times the tutor or Director of Studies may also decide to contact the parents or guardians.

Prior to the end-cycle meeting, teachers are expected to submit term grades for each student they teach. This term grade should be based on a number of assessed pieces of work, assessing a student's performance in a range of assessment methods, wherever appropriate using the subject-specific assessment criteria of the IB. These could include classroom tests (short answer responses, multiple choice, essays, etc.), homework assignments, classroom performances and presentations, lab reports etc.

Teachers also hold regular general staff meetings during the term (usually once a month) and students of concern may also be raised in a designated agenda item during these meetings.

In addition to the academic grade (1-7) (see below), teachers also provide an effort symbol, with the “+” symbol indicating a good or improving performance, no symbol indicating a satisfactory performance and a “-” symbol indicating an insufficient or deteriorating performance. Effort symbols emphasize a student’s behaviour and attitude during the academic term and are meant to encourage and support effective learning.

Reports to students and their parents/guardians: Academic grades and effort symbols are included in written reports, which students and parents/guardians receive at the end of each semester. Teachers also provide a short written account of a student’s progress. Such a report is likely to describe the student’s progress in the past semester, but may also indicate how a student could improve his academic achievement and attitude. A written account without a grade is provided by the Extended Essay supervisor at the end of the 3rd semester. Written reports without grades are provided for involvement in the CAS programme in all reports. The contents of the subject-specific reports are synthesized and summarized in a report written by the personal tutor. Parents and guardians with questions relating to this report are advised to contact their child’s personal tutor.

Students with outstanding academic results will be nominated for an Academic Commendation from the Rektor. Criteria for an Academic Commendation remain to be determined. The final decision on the presentation of an Academic Commendation rests with the Director of Studies.

### ***Further Considerations - Diploma programme***

Assessment practices are aligned with the assessment philosophy and practices of the IB, and are designed to monitor progress and prepare the student for successful completion of the IB Diploma programme. The International Baccalaureate explicates its approach to assessment in a document called *Diploma Programme assessment: principles and practice*. Student and/or parents or guardians who wish to learn more about the workings of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme assessment system and their underlying rationale should contact the Diploma Coordinator and/or refer to the IB document, available on the IB website: <http://ibo.org/diploma/assessment/documents/DPAAssessmentPrinciplesandPracticeApril2013.pdf>.

### Internal Calendar of Deadlines

UWC Robert Bosch College publishes on an annual basis an Internal Calendar of Deadlines. These deadlines are designed to assist students in the organization and pacing of their academic work. Even where these deadlines are before those of the IB, the UWC Robert Bosch College deadlines are regarded as final and late submission of work will jeopardize the student’s final grade and award of the Diploma. In particular, UWC Robert Bosch College is under no obligation to submit student work that has been submitted after the internal deadline.

### Academic Grades

Academic grades range from 7 to 1: 7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = satisfactory, 3 = mediocre, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor. An N indicates that no grade has been awarded. Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay are graded on an A-E scale.

Diploma Programme students follow six courses at higher level or standard level. The grades awarded for each course range from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest). Students can also be awarded up to three additional points for their combined results on [theory of knowledge](#) and the [extended essay](#). Therefore, the highest total that a Diploma Programme student can be awarded is 45 points. The diploma is awarded to students who gain at least 24 points, subject to certain minimum levels of performance across the whole diploma and to satisfactory participation in [creativity, action and service](#) (CAS). (<http://ibo.org/diploma/assessment/results/> 21 October 2014)

### Predicted Grades

From the end of the first academic year, teachers will submit to the Director of Studies “predicted grades” for each student in each subject. These grades are reviewed from time to time. The grades are not confidential. These are used to support university and/or college applications.

One month before the final examination session, the IB requires the College to submit predicted grades including for the extended essay and Theory of Knowledge. These are confidential and are used to support IB assessment practices in the examination session.

### Examinations – internal and external

First year students write formal end of academic year exams at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. These exams are conducted under official IB exam regulations in order to familiarize the students for the final examinations the next year.

Second year students write trial examinations in mid 4<sup>th</sup> (final) semester. Students receive in-depth feedback about these examinations in class. The remainder of the semester is dedicated to the completion of the IB courses and revision of the work done.

### **Further reading**

The writing of the WK assessment policy was informed by the following publications:  
Black, P. (1998) *Testing: friend or foe? Theory and practice of assessment and testing*. London: Falmer Press.

International Baccalaureate (2004) *Diploma Programme assessment: principles and practice*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

International Baccalaureate (2010) *Guidelines for developing a school assessment policy in the Diploma Programme*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization.

Klenowski, V. (2002) *Developing portfolios for learning and assessment*. London & New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Newton, P. (2007) Clarifying the purpose of educational assessment. *Assessment in Education* 14(2): 149-170.

Peterson, A. D. C. (1971) *New techniques for the assessment of pupils' work*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

All queries relating to WKs Assessment Policy should be directed to the Director of Studies.

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UWC Robert Bosch College 11 November 2013

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All UWC Robert Bosch College policies are to be published on the College website.