

Palmer High School / North Middle School

IB Assessment Policy

Section 1: Definitions and Philosophy

Assessment

Assessment is the measurement of what students know and can do. How and when we evaluate students directly informs planning, teaching, and learning. Effective assessment places students at the center of their learning by allowing teachers to monitor student progress and adjust instruction to improve achievement. Assessment is managed through an active partnership among students, teachers, and parents/guardians. Clarity of expectations and good communication are shared responsibilities.

Formal IB Assessment and Classroom Grades

In the International Baccalaureate Diploma program (grades 11-12), students demonstrate learning through formal, IB-required assessments that result in final IB marks ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high).¹ In the IB Middle Years program (grades 6-10), assessments are designed by local schools and teachers following IB guidelines. IB students are also assessed throughout their courses and receive classroom grades reported through Q (District 11's electronic grading system). In high school, semester grades earned become part of the student's transcript that may be reported to colleges, employers, and others.

Summative and Formative Assessment

Aligned with both current research into best practices and IB's own guidelines, teachers use a range of formative and summative tasks.² Formative assessment allows teachers to monitor student progress towards meeting IB standards. Students receive meaningful, detailed, and timely feedback that supports improvement. Teachers use data from such assessments to modify instruction to promote learning. Formative assessment serves as the foundation for learning and prepares students for the "higher-stakes" nature of summative assessments, which measure achievement at the end of a course or unit. Although grades entered by teachers into Q may include both formative and summative tasks, final

¹ Some assessments are external, such as the official IB exams at the end of courses that are submitted to IB examiners for grading. Others are internal, meaning that teachers mark the assessments and submit scores and samples to IB for moderation.

² Descriptions of research-based best practices may be found in Guskey, Thomas R., ed., *The Teacher as Assessment Leader*, 2009; Marzano, R., *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action* (2003); Reeves, Douglas, ed., *Ahead of the Curve: The Power of Assessment to Transform Teaching and Learning* (2007); and Wiggins, G. and McTighe, J., *Understanding by Design* (2004). IB guidelines are described in IBO, *The Middle Years Programme: From Principles into Practice* (2009); IBO, *The Diploma Programme: From Principles into Practice* (2009); and IBO, *Diploma Programme Assessment: Principles and Practice* (2004).

semester grades value the most accurate reflection of student achievement rather than simply averaging of grades over time.

Criterion-Related Assessment

IB assessment is criterion-related rather than norm-referenced. This means that a rubric is used to “judge student work in relation to identified levels of attainment.”³ For some components, assessment is measured through “mark schemes” aligned to the relevant IB subject’s formal Aims and Objectives.

Section 2: Summative Assessment of Learning

Defining summative assessment

Summative assessments “occur at the end of a unit or a course and summarize what the students learned or didn’t learn. They are...for giving grades and measuring the overall learning of students against a given standard.”⁴ Consequently, summative tasks are seen as “assessment of learning.”

The use of criteria and rubrics

In IB courses at Palmer High School and North Middle School, the vast majority of summative assessments are graded by teachers using IB assessment criteria.⁵ In this way, students, parents, and teachers have specific information about how students are progressing towards achieving IB standards. Because students can only meet standards they know about, it is the responsibility of the teacher to share rubrics with students in advance and to provide explicit instruction that clarify expectations.

Assessment models, sample work, and feedback to students

In the case of the Diploma program (grades 11 and 12) summative assessments often model in both format and material tested the formal assessments that are officially set by the IB itself. In the Middle Years program, summative assessments are designed by classroom teachers as there are no formal assessments externally set by the IB for 6th through 10th graders. In both MYP and DP courses, summative assessments target the official IB Aims and Objectives of the relevant subject, whether or not formal IB assessment criteria are used.

³ IBO, “Guidelines for Developing a School Assessment Policy,” 2009 (in press).

⁴ Jakicic, “Assessment that Makes Sense,” in Guskey, 2009, p. 35.

⁵ When might a summative assessment not be marked using IB criteria? Certain assessments might use a format that is not explicitly mandated by the IB for that subject. For instance, there is no IB requirement for oral presentation in History courses; however, a teacher may require students to demonstrate content knowledge and skills as part of a group seminar report. Even so, such assessments will support the Aims and Objectives of the relevant subject, and teachers will provide students with appropriate rubrics and clarify expectations.

Whenever practical, teachers provide samples of work that have been marked so that students can internalize the assessment standards and understand what is expected.⁶ Such samples may be 1) the actual work of former Palmer/North students that have been marked or moderated by the IB; 2) models generated personally by instructors; and/or 3) samples provided by the IB in official “Teacher Support Material” or through formal training.

Feedback to students on summative assessments is related to the criteria; however, it may take various forms, including indicating specific achievement levels attained against the various criteria; descriptive marginal comments or annotations; and/or an overall summative comment.

Summative assessments and course grades

Summative assessments comprise an important role in the final letter grade a student earns in a given IB course. Teachers must translate achievement levels attained on the IB rubric into point totals that can be entered into Q, District 11’s electronic grading program. Teachers have several methods available to them to clarify to students how IB grades are derived: they may post on web pages, distribute to students in hard copy, and/or publish explanations as part of their “Course of Study” available in the “Written Curriculum” section of the school’s IB website.

Section 3: Formative Assessment for Learning

Defining formative assessment

Formative assessments are “all those activities undertaken by teachers and students that provide information to be used as feedback to enhance learning and achievement.”⁷ IB teachers use a variety of formative assessment strategies to gather evidence of student progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities towards specific learning targets.

The use of criteria and rubrics

⁶ When might it not be practical for a teacher to provide a marked sample? Some formal IB assessments include short answer questions (constructed responses) or even multiple-choice items with very definite right-and-wrong answers. It is important for teachers to give students experience with assessments like that, but providing a marked sample of that specific assessment ahead of time would be impractical.

⁷ William, D., & Thompson, M. (2007). Integrating assessment with learning: What will it take to make it work? In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.), *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (pp. 53-84). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

IB subject area criteria are deconstructed to identify and describe levels of achievement to shape formative assessment tasks, providing students and teachers with learning targets that directly inform achievement on summative tasks. Progress is communicated with clear distinction between various levels of achievement to assist learning progress.

Student and teacher partnerships develop as a result of collaborative efforts to analyze feedback, monitor progress and adopt new, more effective strategies for teaching and learning to reach the intended learning goals. Teachers work towards providing descriptive and timely feedback on well-designed formative assessments. In turn, students develop understanding that lifelong learning requires their effort, practice and advocacy in order to progress. Students must invest in their progress daily, initiating additional support as needed and building self-awareness of their learning strengths and challenges.

Formative assessments and course grades

Formative assessments provide the opportunity for students and teachers to take manageable risks in the learning process, and, therefore, these assessments play a lesser role in the calculation of the final course grade than do summative tasks. Additionally, IB teachers are encouraged to separate performance from behavior when factoring course grades and work towards the development of a “fairly-weighted grading scale” together with department colleagues and guided by researched best-practices and IB subject guides.⁸

Section 4: Reporting and Recording IB Achievement

In an effort to inform students and parents about the progress that students are making towards meeting IB standards, IB marks (1-7) are reported in each subject area as part of quarter and semester report cards. (Teachers may also report IB achievement on mid-quarterly progress reports, but this is not required.) These cumulative marks indicate a student’s achievement in meeting specific learning goals as measured by IB assessment rubrics contained in the relevant IB subject guides, or, in the case of grades 6 through 9 of the Middle Years program, based on an interim objective derived from the assessment criteria within the subject guides for 10th grade.

It is important to understand that these IB cumulative marks indicate a student’s level of achievement thus far in the course as defined by IB. These marks do not reflect effort, motivation, or behavior. Nor do these marks become part of a student’s transcript or permanent record. They do not influence grade

⁸ O’Connor, K. (2002). *How to grade for learning: Linking grades to standards* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

point average or class rank in any way. Rather, the marks allow the school and the family to view the student's growth in a subject over time, and to focus on areas of challenge and formulate a response to a need in a given area. (In the Diploma program, these marks also provide some predictive insight into how well the student may ultimately perform on official IB exams.)

Students and parents can determine how teachers derive IB cumulative marks by visiting the websites of individual teachers. In most cases, the mark will be the result of one or more summative assessments graded according to IB criteria. In Diploma program courses, the mark may also reflect student performance on official IB internal assessments: these are assessments designed by the IB but graded by the instructor and then submitted to IB as part of the student's overall IB mark.

Section 5: Accountability and Review

Students can expect a culture of accountability in the development of assessment protocols that inform their learning. Teachers work regularly in collaborative "professional learning communities" to discuss, clarify and sequence the learning targets for the class, and hence develop formative and summative assessments to measure student progress toward these objectives.

All teachers are responsible for clarifying how their own classroom assessment practices adhere to the general guidelines described in the official Palmer/North IB Assessment policy. Teachers may post such explanations on course websites, distribute hard copy explanations to students, and/or publish them as part of their "Course of Study" outlines included in the "Written Curriculum" section of the school's IB website.

IB instructors work in collaboration with parents through the IB Parent Advisory Board and the Building Action and Accountability Committee, BAAC, to develop and maintain transparency of teaching and assessment practices.

It is the IB coordinator's responsibility to assist instructors in the implementation of the policy by providing access to key IB documents and the IB Online Curriculum Centre. It is the responsibility of the head of school to ensure compliance with the policy and to provide the staff development needed to implement the policy.