



BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

Assessment and Marking Policy

Overall the purpose of assessment is to improve standards, not merely to measure them (Ofsted 1998)

The quality of assessment has a significant impact on attitudes to learning and on attainment in schools by stimulating and challenging students to work hard and by encouraging teachers to focus on how to improve the learning of individual students (Ofsted: Good assessment in secondary schools 2003)

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Assessment is the range of activities through which we come to know about the abilities and achievements of our students and the extent of the knowledge, skills and understanding that they have developed. It is the vehicle by which we can advise students (and others) of their progress, their targets and how to close the gap that might exist between their targets and level of attainment. It is an integral part of effective learning and teaching. This policy, which sets out the rationale for assessment arrangements in Birmingham Independent College, has been based on consideration of statutory responsibilities placed on schools, current practice and evidence from research that is commonly accepted. It confirms our understanding and promotion of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Section 2 Rationale

2.1 Assessment serves three fundamental purposes: -

1. To help students learn
2. To help teachers teach more effectively and to adopt a more personalised approach to the needs of their students, and
3. To provide relevant and accurate information about attainment for students, parents, teachers and others (e.g., to decide on student groupings or provide relevant careers advice).

2.2 It is more helpful to regard the nature of assessment in two ways:-

- Assessment **for** learning (formative assessment, serving purposes 1 and 2): this involves the continuous use of classroom assessments to improve learning
- Assessment **of** learning (summative assessment, serving purpose 3): measures what learners know or can do at a particular point in time

We recognise the great importance that formative assessment has on motivation, self-esteem and learning.

2.3 This Policy provides the framework for all school assessment practice, whilst recognising that different assessment strategies will be appropriate at different times in various areas of the curriculum. Learning schools and subject teams will develop assessment policies and practices, which are consistent with school policy. Schemes of Work for each subject will specify appropriate assessment opportunities and methods.

Section 3: Assessment for Learning

3.1 The details of how and when formative assessment will take place are specified in all published schemes of work. Lesson planning will identify opportunities for mini-reviews during individual lessons.

3.2 To ensure that assessment is used to help students learn effectively, the following features will be evident in classroom practice.

Involving students in their learning

Teachers will:

- Set targets for each student in line with the school calendar. Targets should be aspirational but attainable. They should be discussed with students and noted in exercise books and planners. See Appendix 1.
- Explain the reasons for the lesson or activity and share the learning objectives and learning outcomes
- Share the specific assessment criteria with students and, as appropriate, parents; making sure that these criteria can be easily understood by all
- Help students to understand what they have done well and what they need to develop
- Show students how to use assessment criteria to assess their own work
- Provide regular opportunities for self and peer assessment
- Use effective questioning techniques to encourage discussion which give vital feedback on the current level of understanding

Modelling quality

Teachers will:

- Share examples of work with students so that they can see the standards they are aiming for
- Use examples of work to highlight the ways that assessment criteria are met
- Encourage students to review examples of work that do not meet the assessment criteria
- Include in their teaching, activities designed to model the necessary skills

Giving feedback to students on their work

This is an essential element in assessment for learning. Teachers will give regular, effective feedback to students that:

- Focuses on the task and learning objective, not presentation
- Indicates what is good, what needs correction and which aspects need further improvement
- Suggests the next steps students could take to improve their work
- Helps students to find alternative solutions
- Teachers will give students oral feedback whenever possible, since it is generally more effective than written feedback.

Self assessment and peer assessment

Students will be given opportunities on a routine basis to learn by assessing their own work and that of their peers.

Students will be encouraged to:

- Reflect on their own work
- Identify the standard they are trying to achieve
- Think about how to bridge the gap between aspiration and achievement
- Admit problems without the risk of losing self-esteem
- Take time to work problems out for themselves
- Consider a number of possible solutions before deciding on a course of action

Teachers are important in this process as opportunities need to be planned into Schemes of Work and assessment criteria shared with students in a suitable format. However, peers can be effective in taking on the role of critical friend and will inevitably enhance their own understanding as a result of this practice.

Section 4: Assessment of Learning

4.1 Assessment Opportunities

The School will create formal summative assessment opportunities, such as internal examinations, at appropriate times of the year. Other summative assessments will be identified in subject schemes of work. The attainment data will be used as the basis for monitoring student progress which informs teacher reports, and reporting to parents. The Staff Handbook contains an annual calendar of assessment opportunities and their timings. The School Calendar, which is published annually, contains specific dates for each academic year. This information is also communicated to parents via the annual Information Books issued at the start of the academic year. It is important that Subject Areas ensure that they can show how they have taken account of the assessment calendar in planning Schemes of Work. **It is particularly important that there is a significant milestone task which provides the evidence for each progress check and allows standardisation across the Subject Area.**

This will provide hard evidence against which a student's progress towards his / her target is measured.

4.2 Methods

Different kinds of assessment will be used by subject teachers, which will fit the purpose of the assessment and provide data which is valid, precise and reliable e.g. past questions use the relevant mark schemes and moderation of some of these tasks at subject level will ensure rigour.

4.3 Levels

Attainment will be assessed to GCSE grades and the requirements and methodologies of the relevant awarding bodies. It is important that students have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the different levels and how to progress to the next one.

4.4 Records

The School will keep a record of progress of each student, including a record of prior attainment from previous schools. Individual teachers will keep their own records of student achievement in their classes. This could include examples of assessed work. (See 4.7) See 5.3 for more details on the information required in mark books

4.5 Monitoring and Reporting Progress

All staff will follow the School system of assessment, recording and reporting progress to parents, as described in Appendix 1. All staff are required to take an active role in tracking student attainment against targets and in taking necessary and appropriate intervention.

4.6 Calendar

All arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting will be agreed by the Management Team in consultation with teaching staff. It will be published in the School Calendar at the start of each academic year. Details of key assessment points are also communicated to parents.

4.7 Standardised Work

Subject Leaders are encouraged to keep portfolios of student work as exemplars of agreed assessment standards. These can be used to support Newly Qualified Teachers and students. It is also useful evidence of procedures for Subject Reviews and Ofsted and will aid the completion of the Subject SEF.

Section 5: Good Practice

5.1 In marking students' work, we will be guided by the following good practice: -

- The purpose of marking can be formative, summative or both, but **it will be used primarily as part of assessment for learning**
- Emphasis will be placed on the **quality of feedback** given in written comments, which will be specific in indicating:
 - what is good (in relation to the assessment criteria)
 - what needs correction or what aspects need further improvement
 - (briefly) how improvements can be made
 - one or two action points (short-term targets) for next time
- Teachers will ensure that prompt (usually within two weeks) and regular marking and appropriate feedback occurs in all classes and all subjects
- Marking may be carried out by teachers, peers or self; teachers will decide on an appropriate balance
- Written comments must be readable by the student
- Marking must convey that a student's work is valued and must not "deface" it
- Feedback shall focus on key areas for improvement on a piece of work
- Feedback shall always include comments and sometimes marks or grades

5.2 As good practice in **assessment for learning**, teachers will: -

- Have confidence that every student can improve; it is good practice to set aspirational targets as well as minimum targets for some students. (See 3.2)
- Decide how and when to assess students' attainment at the same time as they plan the work
- Relate assessment to learning objectives which are shared with students
- Develop students' understanding of success criteria within each subject area
- Use a range of assessment techniques in the classroom, including observation and the use of appropriate questioning (see 3.2 and Learning and Teaching Policy).
- Put the emphasis on feedback (both oral and written) rather than grading work

- Give students the confidence and opportunities to take the action needed to improve
- Record the progress of individual students
- Adjust teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- Involve students in developing the skills required for peer and self assessment

5.3 Literacy

All teachers have a responsibility to develop students' literacy skills. Sometimes it will be appropriate to provide feedback about spelling, punctuation or other aspects of writing. However, literacy objectives may not have formed part of the learning intentions or success criteria for the work carried out. It would also be an unrealistic aim and counterproductive to mark every grammatical error in every piece of students' written work. A balance needs to be struck. At KS4 it is important to support the development of literacy skills for students who are at critical grade boundaries. It is important to correct subject specific vocabulary.

See Appendix 1 - Notation

Section 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Each student has a responsibility to:

- Record their targets for each subject
- Read and take note of feedback given by teachers
- To address the suggestions for improvement
- To ask for clarification where necessary
- To participate in self-evaluation; this includes noting down any instructions / guidance given

6.2 Parents have a responsibility to:

- Discuss targets with their son/daughter
- Ask for support for their son/daughter as necessary
- Keep the school informed if there are any particular reasons why their son/ daughter is finding tasks difficult

6.3 Each subject teacher has a responsibility to:

- Keep clear records. All mark books (either electronic or paper based) will contain prior achievement data
- Use the data to set challenging learning targets for each student according to the school's assessment calendar
- Contribute to the subject area's systems for tracking student progress against targets, including taking appropriate action to implement intervention strategies within the classroom
- Use the data to plan for the different needs of the students they teach
- Share learning objectives for every lesson in a language that is accessible for students
- Use mini-reviews during lessons to enable students to know what they have learnt and what they need to do next

- Ensure that students are aware of the criteria for assessment and to help students to develop the necessary skills to review their performance in their subject
- Mark and return work normally within 2 working weeks of completion.
- Make oral and / or written comments, which should help students identify the strengths of their responses and show how the work could have been improved to achieve the criteria for a higher level. (See Appendix 2 Notation System)
- Participate in the standardisation of assessment and work scrutinies within the Subject Area
- Base the assessment of current working levels on identified milestone tasks
- Praise students who are meeting or exceeding their target grade
- Refer a student whose work continues to be unsatisfactory and are felt to be under-performing to their Subject Leader, and to implement intervention strategies within the classroom context to help address the situation (if necessary in conjunction with other colleagues), and to inform parents
- To make consistent use of the agreed system of notation for marking students' work (see Appendix 2 for details) to support the development of literacy

6.4 Management Team

Management Team have a responsibility to:

- Provide a Scheme of Work which clearly illustrates the range of assessment opportunities and allows students to develop a critical approach to their own learning
- Making sure that departmental policy is clearly stated and is contained in the College Policies folder
- Monitor the implementation of the assessment policy by subject teachers by
- Checking data is in all mark books
- Monitoring the regular marking of work
- Ensuring that data is used to differentiate work for each class
- Monitor the policy through classroom observation, work scrutinies and student questionnaires
- Record their findings and action points on the Subject SEF
- Provide training and support for staff in assessment, recording and reporting practices which affect their particular area
- Ensure standardisation of tasks across the Subject team for each milestone task
- Produce student friendly levels and grades and develop systems for sharing these with students and parents
- Develop assessment for learning strategies which are embedded in the good practice of their area and to disseminate these across the school
- Evaluate assessment tasks and strategies across their Subject area on a regular basis
- Ensure that key assessment points are included in the Parent End of Term Reports
- Keep an overview of assessment and marking via random sampling/work scrutiny/homework planners

- Record their monitoring activities on the SEF
- Identify and work with students who persistently fail to achieve their potential across a number of subjects
- Maintain an overview of the assessment policy via work scrutinies, line management meetings and subject reviews
- Evaluate and review the assessment policy in line with the schedule for policy review
- Support the development of assessment for learning strategies through the Continuing Professional Development programme
- Ensure that the assessment policy is consistent with good practice and with other policies
- Produce an annual calendar of key assessment and reporting points for staff

Appendix 1

Notation

All teachers will use the following symbols as shorthand for common errors when marking work:

Margin Symbol	Explanation
✓	Correct Good idea Good use of language
gd	Especially good example of the above
sp	Spelling
p	Punctuation
exp	Expression, style, poor choice of vocabulary (Underlined in text)
gr	Grammar (Underlined in text)
NP	New paragraph
ic	Incorrect calculation
^	Omission
ww	Wrong word or inappropriate word has been used
ask	See your teacher for explanation
These symbols will be accompanied by formative comments.	
Teachers or students will indicate a specific target for improvement by writing a comment next to this symbol:	
τ =	
Gd =	