

Assessment Policy

21-22

INTRODUCTION

The Assessment Policy Document is drafted in keeping with Gortnor Abbey's mission of helping all students achieve full potential in their educational, personal, social, and vocational development. It relates to all aspects of assessment carried out in the school; it defines the type of assessment involved; the purpose of the assessment and matters related to assessment procedures.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
- To encourage a collaborate approach to provide a consistent and standardised assessment procedure for monitoring and reporting achievement in the school
- To provide information relative to the teaching and learning process
- To encourage peer assessment and self assessment of learning and goal setting
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures within departments on a whole school basis
- To clarify differences in type, purpose and procedure in relation to assessment across departments
- To provide transparency in relation testing competencies and accreditation
- To ensure ethical practice in relation to psychometric and standardised testing procedures, processing and feedback of results to students and parents
- To identify students in need of individual education plans and additional learning supports
- To develop formative feedback including the integration of digital technology

DEFINITION

- As a core activity in progressing teaching, learning and student development, assessment can include, observation and professional judgement, summative, criterion referenced, formative, formal standardised tests, digital technology and student self report measures. It includes diagnostic screening in relation to the work of the Claudine Thevenet Centre, the role of the Guidance Counsellor and the Learning Support Teacher. It includes assessment activities which promote students' responsibility for learning and their development of learning skills.

1 ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

Assessment of academic work provides information about the progress and process of learning and is derived from the subject teacher's professional observation and judgement, summative, standardised and formative assessment. 'Assessment' refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student's learning progress, learning process, learning attainments, learning abilities, learning strengths and learning needs.

1. PURPOSE

- to provide an incentive for students in the learning process
- to provide information about what and how the student is learning
- to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and adapt content, teaching strategies and / or learning activities as appropriate
- to track learning and provide students and parents with feedback regarding progress
- to highlight difficulties and shortcomings in the learning process in order to develop intervention strategies or learning support
- to establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects.
- to identify the appropriate subject level for students
- to assist students in developing learning skills, self assessment and learning analysis, and to take increasing responsibility for self evaluation of their own learning
- to provide baseline data for tracking the academic progress of identified exceptionally able students
- to ascertain whether it is appropriate for a student to continue studying in any given subject area
- to keep records of attainment that will inform parents through the school's reporting process and measure progress over time including Classroom Based Assessments (CBA)

2. DEFINITION

Formative & Summative Assessment

- 1. Formative Assessment** is a an ongoing process of assessment for learning (AFL) and its purpose is to support & advance student learning skills by
 - sharing learning goals with students
 - helping students to recognise the standards they are aiming for
 - collaborating with students in monitoring and assessing their own learning
 - providing focused written feedback to help students to recognise what they must do to close any gaps in their knowledge or understanding
 - promote improvement through teacher focused feedback, peer and self assessment by encouraging students to reflect on their own learning
 - promoting a culture of target setting and self evaluation in the learning process
 - communicating confidence that every student can improve
 - adjusting learning to take account of the results of assessment
 - providing opportunities to use digital technology assessments

Summative Assessment refers to the assessment of learning and aims to provide a summary of the achievement of the learner in mastering a particular learning goal or at the end of a particular learning unit. The mode of assessment may include written examinations, online assessments, classroom based assessments, practicals, aurals and/or oral work.

1. Formal methods of assessment include

2. Formal State Examinations at both Leaving Certificate & Junior Cycle exams
- Classroom based assessments (CBA) as part of the new JC Framework
3. School-based end-of-term examinations as follows:

Assessment	Nov.	February	Summer
1st Year	In class	Exams	Exams
2nd Year	Exams	Exams/CBA	Exams/CBA

3rd Year	Exams/CBA	Mocks	State Exams
TY	Portfolio	In class/Portfolio	In class/Portfolio
LCA			Key Assignments
5th Year	Exams	Exams	Exams
6th Year	Exams	Mocks	State Exams

- Dates of examinations are indicated on the school calendar and include the date by which formal reports will be posted home
- 1st Year subject exams are conducted by the subject teacher in the classroom November Assessments are held for all years students in November.
- Results are monitored by the Principal, Deputy–Principal and Year Head.
- **4.** Dates of tests and results review are indicated on the school calendar.
- **5.** Pre Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations are externally sourced and corrected. They are held immediately before the February mid-term. Results are posted home as soon as possible thereafter. As per circular 0015/2017 all Junior Cycle students from September 2017 will complete two CBAs and one Assessment Task.
- **6.** Summer Examinations are held in the school’s examination centres for 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Years. Results are posted home.
- 1. **7.** Transition Year assessments may involve but is not limited to the following: External certification, portfolio; interview, oral presentation; multimedia; self and peer evaluation.

Recommended Length of Formal Examinations

1st Year: Block 1 class tests: one or more class periods, at the discretion of the subject teacher.

February : 1 hour

Summer Examinations: 1.5 hours

2nd Year: November, February & Summer: 1.5- 2 hours

TY: Class tests

5th Years: November, February & Summer: 2.-2.5 hours

Pre Leaving and Junior Certificate: As per State Examinations Schedule



Test Content and Reporting of Formal Examinations

- Subject teachers aim to set common tests or set common questions and to use common marking schemes
- Notwithstanding the need to provide accurate information on the progress being made by the student, teachers are encouraged, where possible, to be positive focused written with feedback.

- **Informal methods of assessment include**

Classroom tests

Online assessments

Self assessment

Peer assessment

Oral examination

Practical/ project work

Informal observation of learning progress and process

Evaluation & marking of homework

Informal analysis of students' participation and engagement

Observations of students' social development, general behaviour and organisational skills

Identifying student's learning strengths and learning needs.

Special Educational Needs (SEN): Every effort is made to accommodate students who have been approved for Reasonable Accommodation (RA) in the Junior and Leaving Certificate exams. Reasonable Accommodations involve the use of a reader / scribe or assistive technology. The SEN team endeavour to provide appropriate support for students with SEN or RA through one to one support or small groups.

Absence from exams: All students are expected to sit house exams, including Mock exams in 3rd / 6th Year. Only in exceptional circumstances and at the request of a parent, may the school make alternate arrangements for a student who is absent for an exam to take a house exam on a different day / time to the general cohort of students, and only where it is deemed not to undermine the integrity of the exams or the exams process. Exceptional circumstances may include illness that has been certified by a medical practitioner (e.g. doctor), participation in school tour, participation at regional/ national level in sports competition where representing the school or other exceptional case. Such circumstances will be decided upon by the Principal on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the relevant teacher, student and parent. Family holidays should not be taken during a period of house exams, causing a student to miss an exam, and the school may not facilitate alternate arrangements in such circumstances. For house exams, the paper is usually sent by the examination coordinator to the students house address and this is sent back to the school. In the case of Mock exams, the mock paper is sent separately to the class group.



2 GUIDANCE COUNSELLING ASSESSMENT

Definition

Guidance assessment **may** include formal assessments such as psychometric tests or standardised measures of aptitude, ability and criterion referenced attainment in reading and maths; the monitoring of performance in school academic tests; and other data obtained using standardised procedures, diagnostic tools and self report measures; and informal assessment with individuals or groups such as inventories, interviews, checklists, questionnaires.

Purpose

- **Tests used in guidance counselling** provide information relating to the student's performance /behaviour in **specified domains** in order to support the student's identification and integration of strengths, values, interests, ability, aptitude, personality and behaviour in her/his personal/social, educational and vocational decision making and development.
- To identify students' performance **in standardised criterion referenced attainment, e.g., science, reading and mathematics**, for tracking for literacy and numeracy performance; and to support educational guidance counselling with individual students.
- To identify students who demonstrate a high level of academic ability for referral to the Academic Tracking Team for monitoring and motivation to achieve their academic potential.
- To identify students who may require additional support and for referral to the Learning Support Teacher for possible further diagnostic screening.
- To provide the school with accurate information regarding the ability and aptitudes of students.

Procedure and Administration

- The guidance counsellor uses only those instruments for which s/he has obtained training in and in compliance with the code of ethics of his/her professional body.
- Assessment includes the administration, interpretation and reporting of performance.
- Where possible, the use of computerised assessments is preferable.

Reporting

- Reporting on psychometric assessments with first year students occurs through the additional parental report available on request. First year students do not receive individual feedback on psychometric assessment performance.
- For aptitude assessments, the Guidance Counsellor endeavours to provide students with individual feedback in line with the NCGE guidelines on feedback.
- A summary of findings from group administered assessments (e.g. incoming first years) will be reported to teaching staff, management and learning support to inform classroom teaching and learning.
- Where available, individual student reports garnered from psychometric assessments will be stored on the students' profile on the school's VsWare system.
- In the event that a report is required by another external professional, this will take the form of a written interpretation of the student's performance drafted by the guidance counsellor, taking into consideration other educational, personal and socio-environmental factors which may affect a student's performance.
- Reporting on student performance in psychometric assessments to parents will be arranged on request where resources and allocation of time permits it.



Annual assessment procedures by the Guidance Department **may** include but are not limited to

1. 1st Year

a) Assessment of general reasoning / ability to all incoming students in order to:

- Facilitate educational decision making and subject choice
- Provide an initial baseline for future guidance intervention
- Identify students performing at or below the 10th percentile

2. Standardised Maths, Reading and/or Spelling to

- identify students in need for further investigation or screening and/or for referral to Learning Support
- provide a baseline for literacy and numeracy initiatives in the context of whole school development

2. 2nd Years

DPPT Maths, DPPT Read and DPPT Science computer based assessment to facilitate tracking of student performance and comparison with in house test attainment, school literacy and numeracy strategies, and to support educational counselling. These DPPT assessments will be administered when nationally funding is made available to do so. Otherwise it is at the discretion of school management and the Guidance Counsellor to prioritise groups and resources for assessment.

3. 3rd Year/ TY: Aptitude assessment

- To facilitate the student's senior cycle subject selection process

4. Senior Cycle: Vocational guidance related assessments to support student post leaving educational and vocational decision making (career inventories).

5. New students to 2nd, 5th and 6th Year Assessment of ability and/or aptitude to:

- Identify general reasoning, strengths and potential
- Support student educational and vocational decision making
- Transfer students will agree to participate in appropriate guidance assessment as part of the enrolment process

Criteria in relation to the selection of Assessment Instruments and Tests

- The responsibility for the selection of materials and resources for guidance assessment and testing lies with the Guidance Counsellor, in consultation with management with regard to available budget.
- Tests must be fit for purpose, recently constructed and normed for the target population.
- As testing and assessment is a core competency of the guidance professional, adequate provision is made in the annual school budget for the future purchase of test materials and resources.
- The Guidance Counsellor identifies and discusses with management on an ongoing basis, the future guidance resource needs for the school in relation to testing.



3 ASSESSMENT for LEARNING SUPPORT

DEFINITION

Assessment involves evaluation of student *learning support needs* derived from formal and informal sources as well as diagnostic screening. Formal assessment sources would include student specific information derived from formal criterion-referenced tests of attainment, for example, performance in reading and maths received from the guidance counsellor; psycho educational assessment by the school's psychologist or other external psychologist or diagnosing professional; monitoring of performance in in-school academic tests; other learning support diagnostic tools and informal methods to inform the diagnostic process.

A diagnostic test provides specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example word identification skills or an understanding of number concepts. The diagnosis of learning support needs is intended to derive information for supporting a referral for psychoeducational screening, discussion with management in relation to further learning resources and for the development of individual educational plans (IEPs)

PURPOSE

- To inform consultations with school management in relation to the selection of students for additional teaching support and services
- To inform consultations with the school's psychologist and other internal and external support services where necessary
- To identify the student's learning strengths and needs in preparation for the development of an individual education plan (IEP). IEPs for an individual student may deal with such areas as literacy, mathematics, social development, and learning needs in other areas of the curriculum

ADMINISTRATION

- The Learning Support Teacher uses only those tests for which s/he has received training, according to the licensing guidelines of the registering body and in keeping with the code of ethics of the relevant professional body
- The Learning Support Teacher is responsible for the administration of screening instruments, the processing of screening tests results and the interpretation of test performance.
- In general, screening tests are administered individually

Criteria for the Purchase of Tests

- Screening tests which provide norm-referenced information will be up to date, fit for purpose and normed for the relevant target population.

4 CLAUDINE CENTRE ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE

Assessment in the Claudine Centre is necessary to provide information that will lead to the development of Individual Education Plans (I.E.P's) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Assessment will only be carried out on students who have been allocated a place in the Claudine Centre by the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO). Written consent from Parents is a requirement. The focus is on identifying student's strengths and building on those, while also acknowledging challenges and developing strategies to deal with them.

DEFINITION

Informal Assessment

- This type of assessment includes such areas as observation, interviews with parents, teachers and the student themselves, questionnaires and checklists. Observation by SNA and teaching staff provides vital baseline data that can then be used to develop targets and IEP's. Social Skills are also assessed on a regular basis.
- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is the process of systematically applying interventions based upon the principles of learning theory to improve socially significant behaviours to a meaningful degree, and to demonstrate that the interventions employed are responsible for the improvement in behaviour. Informal observations and checklists will provide data for the implementation of ABA strategies.

Formal Assessment

- TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile (T.Tapp) is a universally recognised assessment for students with ASD. It contains 216 assessments in the following areas; Vocational skills, Vocational Behaviours, Independent Functioning, Leisure Skills, Functional Communication and Interpersonal Behaviour. It provides school personnel with a means of screening students to identify their particular needs and strengths.
- The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABBLs) and the Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Programme (VB-MAPP) are other assessment tools suitable for younger students but elements of these may be used where necessary.
- Progress Reports may be requested from Class Teachers to assess how a student is doing academically.
- Previous assessments from other professional agencies are requested once a student has enrolled in the Claudine Centre. These include Educational Psychologist Reports, Occupational Therapist Reports, Speech and Language Reports, Behavioural Assessments and reports from previous schools. This multi-disciplinary approach provides an overview of the individual student and forms a baseline on which future plans and assessments can be built.



ADMINISTRATION

- Assessment in the Claudine Centre will only be carried out by personnel who have obtained the necessary training as provided by the Special Education Support Service (SESS) or other accredited body (e.g. St Angela's College, Sligo; Middletown Centre for Autism, Armagh)
- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) may assist in the delivery of assessments such as T.Tapp, and in obtaining data on students in the mainstream setting that will provide observational information that can help develop targets.
- Personnel involved in assessment should be mindful of confidentiality issues at all times. Assessment data and reports will not be passed on to other professionals outside the school setting without parental consent.
- A student centred approach is followed. Each student is assessed on an individual basis and according to their individual needs.

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The school's psychologist, at the request of and in consultation with Management, the Learning Support Teacher, the Guidance Counsellor, or The Claudine Thevenet Centre, may carry out a variety of tests with individual students in the course of the academic year. The voluntary participation of the student concerned, along with the written consent of parents/guardians is respected.

MANAGEMENT

- Mindful of professional and ethical practice for the carrying out of standardised and psychometric testing, parental/guardian consent is obtained on the school's enrolment form, for the participation of their son/daughter in in-school non-academic testing
- There is transparency and whole school awareness in relation to testing training, competency and accreditation, and a recognition of professional boundaries in relation to administration, processing and reporting
- The school makes budgetary provision for future purchasing of resources in consultation with the relevant department, in order to provide for future test stock

RELATED POLICIES

As assessment is a core activity in most departments within the school system, there will be links to all policies. Assessment has particular links with policies related to

Individual Academic Subject Policies

Teaching & Learning

School and State Examinations

Learning Support Policy

The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

The Guidance Plan / Whole School Guidance

The Claudine Thevenet Centre

RESOURCES

1. www.pdst.ie

2. http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0070_2014.pdf

Guidance for post-primary schools on the provision of resource teaching and learning support **Circular No 0070/2014**

3. www.ncca.ie

NCCA: *Assessment in Post-Primary Schools*

4. http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guidelines.pdf

Inclusion of students with Special Educational needs. 2007

5. <http://ptc.bps.org.uk/sites/ptc.bps.org.uk/files/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Information/Psychological%20Testing%20%20A%20Users%20Guide.pdf>

BPS: *Psychological Testing – A Users Guide*

