International School of Tallinn

Assessment Policy

International School of Tallinn

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Assessment Policy
Why do we Assess?

Philosophy
At International School of Tallinn (IST), we believe assessment is one of the most important tools we use to inform planning and practice, guide instruction and lead to improved student learning. Assessment is the key component that allows us to effectively differentiate the curriculum, personalize learning, and deliver the curriculum to a student's zone of proximal development. We believe that the best assessment is ongoing, relevant and authentic and should include all stakeholders.

At IST, we focus on taking action while balancing our lives as we become life-long learners. We give importance to the development of skills and attitudes that help us to be inquisitive, communicate, and reflect upon the world.

Definition of Assessment
Assessment involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process. *(Making the PYP Happen, 2020)*

Assessment Policy in the Primary Years Programme (PYP)
Rationale
Assessments are considered to be an integral part of teaching and learning at IST, ensuring the child's overall academic, social and cultural development in the programme. Assessment policy at IST is aligned with IB assessment philosophy and informs the importance of assessments to all the stakeholders involved. The main objective of assessments at IST is to provide students with feedback on their learning, in order to allow students to learn and improve further. At IST we believe that each child is unique and a balanced approach is applied to assess their capabilities in order to quantify the skill set attained by a child at the different stages of the learning cycle. Evaluation is done through varied parameters and is communicated to the stakeholders transparently in order to understand and enhance the learning outcome needed in the due course of time.

Assessment Aims

The Assessment Policy aims to have students' knowledge enriched through the journey of exploration, ensuring that they acquire the required skill set and compiling it so that they reflect the learning outcomes in their own way.

● It ensures the assessment is integrated into the curriculum transaction.

● Students are encouraged to reflect upon their learning through varied formative and summative assessments.

● Helps to keep a track on the progression of each student's learning outcomes.

Components of Assessments in the PYP

The assessment component in the school's curriculum is divided into three closely related areas.

•Assessing – How do we discover what the students know and have learned.

•Recording – How do we choose to collect and analyze data.

•Reporting – How do we choose to communicate information.

Assessing
Forms of Assessment

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment provides information that is used in order to plan the next stage of learning. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked and function purposefully together, while aiming to promote learning by giving regular and frequent feedback. This helps learners to recognize the criteria for success, to foster enthusiasm for learning, to develop the capacity for self-assessment, to engage in thoughtful reflection, and to deepen knowledge and understanding.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment aims to give students and teachers a clear insight into each student's understanding. Summative assessment is the culmination of the teaching and learning process and gives the students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. It measures understanding of the Central Idea and promotes students toward action.

The IB learner profile is transparent in the classroom, and evident in the general language of the school. Teachers might use informal observations to give feedback to students, but actual assessment is done as self-assessment. The students should reflect on their development on regular basis on targeted or selected aspects of the profile. This reflection will vary according to age group and language abilities.

Assessment should effectively guide students through the five essential elements of the PYP curriculum: understanding concepts, acquisition of knowledge, the mastering of skills, the development of attitudes, and the demonstration of action as a result of learning.

Recording

The teachers use a range of methods and approaches to gather information about a student's learning. They record this information using a variety of strategies and tools.

Assessment Strategies and Tools for the PYP
Strategies
Observation

All students are observed regularly, ranging from group to individual observation. Observations will be particularly useful when assessing some attitudes and/or skills.

Open-Ended Task

This strategy allows teachers to present students with a stimulus and ask them to communicate an individual, creative response.

Performance Assessments

This form of assessment meets the individual learning styles of each student and requires the use of many skills. Performances of understanding may take the form of a composition, a research report, a presentation, role-play, or a proposed solution.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios can be used to record learning achievements. Pieces of work are chosen that show level of knowledge and understanding, and that demonstrate skills and attitudes.

Process-Focused Assessment

Through observation, a system of notetaking and record keeping is created that minimizes writing and recording time: checklists, inventories, and narrative descriptions.

Process Journals

The use of process journals allows the teacher and student to communicate about the processes of learning and can be used for meaningful and purposeful reflection.

Selected Responses

Tests and quizzes are the most familiar examples of this form of assessment. The answer might be a brief written answer, a drawing, a diagram, or a solution.

Tools

Exemplars

These are samples of student work that serve as a benchmark for each achievement level in a scoring rubric.

Checklists

These are lists of information, data, attributes, or elements that should be present in student work. A mark scheme is a type of checklist.

Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records are brief written notes based on observations of students. "Learning stories" are focused, extended observations that can be analyzed later. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.

Continuum

These are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a learning process.

Rubrics

Rubrics provide an established set of criteria for rating students in all areas. The descriptors inform the assessor of the characteristics or signs to look for in students' work and then how to rate that work.

The Exhibition

PYP 5 students participate in a culminating project. The PYP 5 exhibition requires that each student demonstrates engagement with the five essential elements of the PYP program—

knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action. It is also an opportunity for the students to exhibit the developed attributes of the Learner Profile. The exhibition takes place under any of the six transdisciplinary themes, at the discretion of the

school. For further details of the PYP exhibition, see pages 53 and 54 of "*Making the PYP Happen".*

Reporting

Reporting on assessment is about communicating what students know, understand and can do. Reporting may take many forms including conferences and written reports.

Effective reporting should:

● Involve parents, students and teachers as partners.

● Reflect what the school community values.

● Be comprehensive, honest, fair and credible.

● Be clear and understandable to all the parties.

Anecdotal notes

PYP teachers are expected to keep anecdotal notes on every student and record their observations. Accurate observations help meet the needs of individual students and facilitate curriculum planning. These observations are ongoing, focused, and varied.

Assessments that indicate level of prior knowledge, as well as formative and summative assessments, are used to inform the teacher and student of the next stages of learning. Opportunities for self-assessment and peer assessment will be given.

Documenting progress in the Units of Inquiry
Each Unit of Inquiry involves prior knowledge assessments, other formative assessments, and a summative assessment to ensure understanding of the Central Idea. Many different tools such as checklists, rubrics, and thinking routines are used to document learning and progress. Students are also expected to engage in reflection and self-assessment in relation to attitudes and the Learner Profile, which will be kept in the student's assessment folder.

Documenting progress in single-subject areas
Each single-subject area has developed appropriate assessment tools to be used with students in the PYP, reflecting both talent and progress. Assessment in single-subject areas reflects the same principles as those in the Units of Inquiry.

Inclusive Assessment

International School of Tallinn acknowledges the variety of abilities and the individuality that exists in the academic, personal, and social aspects of development. Differentiation of instruction, considered exemplary practice in all circumstances, is one manner of dealing with learning exceptionalities. Inclusive assessment techniques may be appropriate in some instances for students with identified and documented learning needs.

International School of Tallinn

Assessment and Report Format

PYP Descriptors	ManageBac Descriptors	Estonian Grading Equivalence	Explanation of Descriptors
Mastering	M	5	The student achieves the learning intentions independently and consistently, with high-quality and mastery, during the process of learning in a variety of different contexts.
Expanding	E	4	The student achieves the learning intentions with good quality and independence during the process of learning.
Progressing	P	3	The student occasionally achieves the learning intentions and meets some of the expectations throughout the learning process.
Developing	D	2	The student often requires support and demonstrates limited comprehension while aiming to achieve the learning outcomes.
Beginning	B	1	The student struggles and needs significant support during the learning process. They are often unable to successfully complete the given task.

The Written Report

Determination of grading levels for formal reporting purposes will reflect student performances on formative and summative assessment tasks. Student grades will reflect their most consistent level of achievement, usually their most recent level of achievement at the time of reporting. Teachers will write personal/social comments about each student, making reference to the IB Attitudes and the Transdisciplinary Skills.

IB Attitudes

- Appreciation
- Commitment
- Confidence
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Independence
- Integrity
- Respect
- Tolerance

Transdisciplinary skills

- Thinking skills
- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Self-management skills
- Research skills

Conferences

Conferences are designed to provide an overview of the child's learning and progress, to discuss learning targets, and to highlight areas of success.

- Parent–teacher occurs at the end of the first trimester
- Parent–teacher–child occurs at the end of the second trimester
- Student led occurs at the end of third trimester.

* The student-led conference is an opportunity for the child to take responsibility and reflect on their learning via teacher guidance. The student identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Parent(s) and teacher(s), where needed, collaborate with the student in order to determine how they can best support their learning.

** Please refer to the Pupil's Progress Review document for complete explanation on conferences.

Student informal

Daily, ongoing feedback from teacher to student and student to teacher. This enables reflection and further refinement of skills and understandings, thereby, supporting student learning and teacher planning.

Parent informal

These opportunities occur informally throughout each year. They are designed to be constructive and as needed. Parents are encouraged to make appointment times if significant issues need to be discussed.

Assessment Policy in the Middle Years Programme (MYP)

Rationale

IST's mission is to impact education at large and build a reflective foundation for life. Learning at IST rests on three strong pillars, namely personal, social and emotional development of a child, developing critical thinking skills of the child and maintaining academic rigour to strive for excellence. We believe in fostering creativity that is vital in all spheres of life and critical in the middle years and needs to be sustained with rigour and discipline. This is where assessments become pivotal in promoting lifelong education and learning for our global citizens in the making. They are meant to provide information about students' performance in the areas of both strengths and challenges. An assessment should also provide information on the efficacy of the programme. Assessments will focus on the knowledge and cognitive understanding of the children, their ability to analyze and assimilate information and instructions, and express their opinions and feelings at different stages of the learning process.

Assessment Aims

- Support and encourage learning and progress towards meeting district, IB/MYP criteria and certificate, along with other state standard requirements for graduation and career readiness.
- Provide feedback to students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders on student progress in learning and effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.
- Promote critical and higher order thinking skills, deep and authentic understanding of content, inquiry into real world contexts, and positive attitudes towards lifelong learning.
- Reflect international mindedness of program through Global contexts.
- Support holistic development of whole student through learner profile and ATL.

Principles of Assessment

- Stakeholders have a clear description of how student learning is being assessed.
- Students have a clear description of how student learning is being assessed.
- Students will be able to show their learning in a variety of ways.
- Assessments will be provided to facilitate teaching and learning based on IB rubrics and task specific clarifications.
- Timely feedback is given for future learning.

Components of Assessments in MYP

The assessment component in the school's curriculum is divided into these closely related areas.

•Assessing – How do we discover what the students know and have learned.

•Recording and Reporting – How do we collect and choose to communicate information.

Assessment
Forms of Assessment

Assessment in the MYP is an integral part of learning, involving students in self-assessment and providing feedback on the thinking strategies and processes as well as the outcome. The MYP requires teachers to organize **continuous assessment**, over the course of the program, according to specified criteria that correspond to the objectives of each subject group. (*MYP Principles and Practice*)

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments provide teachers and students with insights into the ongoing development of knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes according to International Baccalaureate expectations. Though effective formative assessment, teachers gather, analyses, interprets and uses a variety of evidence to improve student learning and to help students to achieve their potential. Student peer and self-assessment can be important elements of formative assessments plans.

Summative assessment

Summative assessments provide evidence for evaluating student achievement using required MYP subject-group specific assessment criteria. These are "generally aimed at determining the level of achievement of a student at the end of a course of study" or a unit of study within a course according to International Baccalaureate (IB) expectations. Summative assessments may include timed writing, essays, creation of solutions or products in response to problems, projects, investigations, performances, research, and examinations.

MYP teachers will **create summative assessments task sheets using a standard form**. Task sheets explain the assessment and include subject-specific criteria that clearly identify what students need to do to reach the objectives of the task.

Academic Integrity

The student is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all work submitted for assessment is authentic, with the work or ideas of others fully and correctly acknowledged. The student shall sign a consent form stating that each internal assessment submitted by them is their own piece of work. IST Academic Integrity policy states that we use MLA (Modern Language Association) Style across all subjects and grade levels. Teachers will consistently teach how to cite using MLA.

Differentiation for assessments

Being an inclusive learning environment differential assessment task would be provided to learners with special needs. Provide students with opportunities throughout the school program and report that progress to relevant stakeholders. Ensure teaching practices and learning opportunities provide students with diverse needs, access to their mandated curriculum. Every student gets an opportunity to study in this environment of IST.

Assessment Strategies and Tools for the MYP

Assessments may include, but are not limited to:

- Written assignments
- Oral presentations
- Experiments
- Projects
- Debates
- Exhibitions
- Essays
- Performances
- Tests
- Research papers

These can be both in the formative and in the summative assessment, which includes peer and self-assessment. The formative and summative assessments are both explained in class and recorded in Managebac.

Each MYP subject has a list of objectives featuring the essential skills and knowledge that the students are expected to develop over the course of the program. Each subject-specific objective corresponds to the four equally weighted assessment criteria: A-D.

Each subject area has a unique definition of the aforementioned assessment criteria.

	A	**B**	**C**	**D**
Language and Literature	Analyzing	Organizing	Producing text	Using language
Language Acquisition	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Individuals and Societies	Knowing and understanding	Investigating	Communicating	Thinking critically
Sciences	Knowing and understanding	Inquiring and designing	Processing and evaluating	Reflecting on the impacts of science
Mathematics	Knowing and understanding	Investigating patterns	Communicating	Applying mathematics in real-life contexts
Arts	Knowing and understanding	Developing skills	Thinking creatively	Responding
Physical and Health Education	Knowing and understanding	Planning for performance	Applying and performing	Reflecting and improving performance
Design	Inquiring and analyzing	Developing ideas	Creating the solution	Evaluating
MYP Projects	Investigating	Planning	Taking action	Reflecting
Interdisciplinary	Disciplinary grounding	Synthesizing and applying	Communicating	Reflecting

Terminology

MYP Achievement levels

Achievement levels associated with criterion A, B, C, D as featured in MYP subject guides. Each criterion can be awarded between 1-8 achievement levels spread across four bands.

MYP Grades

Based on the achievement levels from the four assessment criteria, the holistic grade is determined as a number out of 32 from which a grade from 1-7 is derived, with 1 as the lowest and 7 being the highest possible grade.

Teachers adopt a 'best-fit' model when using the achievement level descriptors. If a student demonstrates sufficient characteristics from a given band, the student will be awarded an achievement level that reflects the collected evidence of learning "To inform the final achievement level in each criterion, teachers must gather evidence from a range of assessment tasks to enable them to make a professional and informed judgement" (From Principles to Practice, P92).

Standardization

Aim: Standardizing ensures a common understanding of the relationship between achievement levels and performance.
Teachers standardize their understanding and application of criteria before deciding on achievement levels.

Standardization of MYP assessment is best achieved by:

- The use of common assessment tasks.
- Shared assessment between the teachers involved.
- Regular communication between the teachers.

Standardization Procedures

- Collaborative meeting at individual times based on requirement of different grade level teachers teaching the same subject to arrive at a common understanding of the assessment objectives.
- Consensus between two different viewpoints/perspectives with respect to task specific requirements reached before deciding on the final achievement levels.
- Programme coordinator organizes meetings among teachers for standardization validity.

Recording and Reporting grades

During the academic year, students' performances in each subject-area both formative and summative will be reported in ManageBac by the subject-area teachers. A written report will be generated through Managebac 3 times a year. This report will include the IB attitude and Approaches To Learning (ATL) skill comments about each student. The criteria-based grades will be converted into IB grades on the scale of 1-7.

MYP Grade Boundaries	Estonian grading equivalence	MYP descriptor
1 (very poor)	1	Minimal achievement
2 (poor)	2	Very limited achievement
3 (mediocre)	2	Limited achievement
4 (satisfactory)	3	A good general understanding
5 (good)	3	Consistent and thorough understanding and occasionally demonstrating originality and insight
6 (very good)	4	Occasionally innovative work
7 (excellent)	5	Consistent and thorough understanding with frequently innovative work

Assessment periods from Pre-School to Grade 9

Trimester 1		Trimester 2		Trimester 3	
Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Ongoing formative throughout each unit					
One summative at the end of each unit					
	Parent–Teacher Conference		Parent–Teacher–Child Conference (all teachers available)		Student-led Conference
	Written Report		Written Report		Written Report

MYP Grade 10 Specifics

Currently the MYP Grade 10 students will not receive a report card after every trimester but instead, at the completion of the course, the students will receive a subject-specific written report.

Please refer for the above-mentioned details related to Grade 10 specifics in the Secondary Report deadlines for High School (study report deadlines for grades 10-12)

Conferences

The purpose of conferences is to share valuable information about the student's progress. Parents, students and teachers are all valued partners in the reporting process.

* The student-led conference is an opportunity for the child to take responsibility and reflect on their learning via teacher guidance. The student- led conference is held at the **end of the last term**. The student identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Parent(s) and teacher(s), where needed, collaborate with the student in order to determine how they can best support their learning.

Conferences are very useful tools to communicate learning and progress of students to their parents. These meetings are used by teachers and parents to apprise each other about the child's individual strengths and weaknesses and the way forward. Informal and formal interactions take place throughout the year. Students receive feedback on their assignments. For **informal** meetings parents are encouraged to make appointment, if significant issues need to be discussed.

** Please refer to the Pupil's Progress Review document for complete explanation on conferences.

Additional Estonian graduation requirements

The below mentioned table applies to the academic year **2020-2021** as stipulated by the Ministry of Education in Estonia

Study report grade deadlines for grades 10-12

Please note that the study report deadlines for 12th grades are **in parenthesis and bolded**.
The reason why 12th graders would need to be graded earlier is because they have Estonian National Exams starting in April, so most of the courses would have to be done by then.

	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4	Course 5
1 lesson per week	June 11 *(May 11)*				
2 lessons per week	January 22 *(January 15)*	June 11 *(May 11)*			
3 lessons per week	November 27 *(November 20)*	March 12 *(March 5)*	June 11 *(May 11)*		
4 lessons per week	November 6 *(November 6)*	January 29 *(January 15)*	April 2 *(March 19)*	June 11 *(May 11)*	
5 lessons per week	October 16 *(October 16)*	December 11 *(December 4)*	February 19 *(February 5)*	April 16 *(March 26)*	June 11 *(May 11)*

Explanation: Each subject-area meets a different frequency based on the regulations sets out by the Ministry of Education in Estonia. For example, mathematics meets 5 times a week and will receive 5 written reports throughout the school year. Language acquisition which meets only 3 times per week would receive 3 written reports throughout the school year.

The Republic of Estonia requires additional assessments at the end of **9th** and **12th** grade years.

The **specific requirements for grade 9** are as follows:

- Completion of the national examinations in English language, Mathematics, and Estonian as a foreign language.
- Completion of the Creative Work project

The **specific requirements for grade 12** are as follows:

- Completion of the national examinations in Mathematics, English language, Estonian as a foreign language, and a school-designed assessment of an additional subject-area of the students' choice
- Completion of the Extended Research project

Both 9th and 12th examinations will be conducted at the school premises under the supervision of an appointed examination committee chosen by the Director of the school.

The 9th grade examinations and 12th grade exam chosen by the students are assessed, recorded and reported in ManageBac by the specific subject-area teachers. The 12th grade Mathematics, English language, and Estonian as a foreign language exam are assessed externally by randomly chosen subject specialists.

The Creative Work and the Extended Research projects are assessed by the staff and their peers. The results are reported and recorded in ManageBac.

Conference in High School/DP

Conferences will be held twice per school year: in January and in June. The main reason for the conferences in the DP programme is for the student to reflect and present his or her progress in learning.

The conferences will be student-led, which means that the student will be leading the reflective conference between the homeroom teacher and the parent. The student will before be given certain guidelines on how to prepare for the conference.

During the conference, the students' progress of learning will be reflected upon and a set of goals will be made.

Regulation of homework/assignment during holidays

·   As per IST policy, echoing the Estonian law, homework/Assignment will not be given over the school break or on holidays (please see exceptions below).
·   No assessment should be due on the first day back from any school break.
·   If we have a week off from school, no assignment can be due during any point from the last day of school before the break, until the second day after returning from the break.

There are a few exceptions to what is stated above:

i.   If there is apparent need from the school's side due to a student being behind and desperately needing to catch up, then work can be given and completed over a school break.
ii.   If a student is new to IST and needs to complete some tasks quickly to be on track with the rest of the class, this is understandable.
iii.   If exams are coming up and the students need to complete something urgent, this is also acceptable.

Lastly, should a teacher assign a homework assignment, it is permitted for the task to be due on a day when the teacher does not have the students.

At IST, we care for the well-being of our students and understand that holidays and breaks are meant for rest and recuperation.

Alignment with other policies

International School of Tallinn's assessment philosophy and policy align with our values and policies as outlined below. In all these policies and positions, the student is central.

…to our Academic Integrity Policy

Our Academic Integrity Policy is essentially about the process of acquiring and processing information. The Assessment Policy aligns with our Academic Integrity Policy because we set clear objectives for the process of acquiring and using information – objectives which we also assess in accordance with our Assessment Policy.

…to our SEN Education Policy

Our Assessment Policy aligns with our Special Education policy because our Assessment Policy applies to all our leaners - regardless of their learning abilities. Differentiation is applied in designing the summative task. Our SEN Policy aligns with our Assessment Policy in that students are supported, where possible, in showing their learning

…to our Admissions Policy

If the students continue to breach the academic honesty policy, further steps would be taken by the school. Please refer to the admission policy for further details.

…to our Language Policy

Our Assessment Policy aligns with our Language Policy in that we all assess and teach language throughout our various curricula. How a student uses academic language, for example, will have clear criteria and objectives that the student will be fully aware of and receive or generate feedback on throughout the course of their learning.

References

International Baccalaureate *Making the PYP Happen*
International Baccalaureate *The Primary Years Program – A Basis for Practice*
International Baccalaureate *MYP: From Principles into Practice*

We also gathered information from the following IB PYP school assessment policies:

Frank C. Martin International K-8 Centre
Hills International College
International School at Dundee
International School of Amsterdam
International School of Helsinki
Kunyung Primary School
Mornington Primary school
Scotch College WA
Wade King International School
The Woodlands Preparatory School
ASI International School, India

A note on the process of this document:

This policy was developed through a collaborative process which included IST teachers and administration.

IST's Assessment Policy is understood to be a working document that will evolve over time to suit the needs of our students, our school, and our development.

Policy Review

Created   *April 2018*
Last Revision   *August 2019*
Latest Revision *January 2021*