

Continuum of International Education: The Principles of IB Assessment

Assessment in all three programmes must support and encourage effective teaching and learning in the classroom. It should be based on professional judgment and should reflect the intercultural dimensions of the programmes. Assessment is aimed at determining the learners' levels of understanding. Therefore, it is essential that teachers determine from the beginning what kind of assessment will allow learners to show that understanding.

There are key principles of assessment that are common to all three programmes	Current State	Desired State	Actions for Moving Forward
Assessment is integral to planning, teaching and learning.			
The assessment system and assessment practices are made clear to students and parents.			
There is a balance between formative and summative assessment.			
Opportunities for peer and self-assessment are planned for.			
Students' current knowledge and experience are assessed before embarking on new learning.			
Students are provided with feedback as a basis for future learning.			
Reporting to parents is meaningful.			
Assessment data is analyzed to provide information about the teaching and learning, and the needs of individual students.			
Assessment is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.			
Meet the needs of students at particular ages and stages of development.			
Incorporate national requirements that schools may have to abide by.			
Meet the requirements of higher education institutions around the world.			

Developing an Assessment Policy

There is a written assessment policy in place that is available to all sections of the school community. - *Programme standards and practices*

It is a requirement that every IB World School has an assessment policy that reflects the school's philosophy and position on assessment. Developing an assessment policy is often the catalyst for schools to focus on their philosophy for assessment and to achieve a common understanding of their aims and objectives across the programmes. An assessment policy is a written document that aims to clarify teachers' understanding of the whole assessment process within their school setting. It is not a static document but one that is constantly evolving to reflect the assessment needs of the school. Collaborative reflection is a key component of developing an assessment policy, and must involve both teaching staff and administrators. Once an assessment policy has been developed and agreed upon, it will apply across the whole school. A clear assessment policy needs to be established in the school and communicated to students and parents. It will include the following.

Purpose for assessment

- What and why do we assess?
- Principles of assessment (What are the characteristics of effective assessments?)
- Assessment practice (How do we assess?)

When creating an assessment policy, schools need to keep in mind the overall value of the collaborative process that the school community will go through. The most important thing is the collaboration that must take place within a school in order to create an assessment policy. Although producing a written document is the intended outcome, it is the collaborative nature of the process and the associated discussions that are of most value. By involving those with a vested interest, the assessment policy then truly reflects the school's philosophy (see "Leading the development of the continuum: Pedagogical leadership"). A system should also be put in place to allow regular reviews of the assessment policy.

The following questions can be used to assist a school to establish an assessment policy.

- What is the school's philosophy of assessment?
- How is the school's philosophy of assessment aligned to its mission statement?
- What practices will be agreed upon in order to fulfill this philosophy?
- What are the purposes of assessment for all the key groups within the school community (students, teachers, parents, administrators)?

Schools will find it helpful to develop agreed assessment practices as a part of their assessment policy. These are practices that are put into place within the school that address how the school assesses, records and reports student progress. The following questions can be used to help a school establish agreements on assessment.

- How should we structure assessment?
- How often should we assess?
- What do we assess?
- Who is responsible for assessment and how?
- How should assessment information be recorded?
- How should assessment information be analyzed and reported?
- How will assessment information be reported to students and parents?
- Who will have access to assessment information and where will it be located?
- How often will we review our assessment practices?
- Are there any mandatory requirements that must be satisfied?
- How will the school combine IB expectations with those of local/national requirements?

Developing a School Language Policy

A language policy is an action statement... It is concerned less with where the students in school are going, and more with how they are going to get there.
Language Policy in Schools, Corson (1999)

Every IB World School authorized to offer one or more of the three IB programmes is required to have a written language policy.

The school has a written language policy (including provision for second-language teaching and mother-tongue language support) that meets the needs of the students and reflects the principles of the programme. - *Programme standards and practices: B1.20, IB (2005)*

A language policy must	Current State	Desired State	Actions for Moving Forward
Recognize that, since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication.			
Outline how students are to learn at least one language in addition to their mother tongue.			
Describe how the development and maintenance of the mother tongue for all learners is to be supported.			
Ensure that there are practices in place to provide inclusion and equity of access to the IB programme(s) offered by the school for all learners, including those who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue.			
Recognize that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff will require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching, and on how to make sure the language policy becomes a working document.			
Consider what resources and practices are to be used to involve parents in planning their children's language profile and development.			

Developing a School Language Policy

Language stands at the center of the many interdependent cognitive, affective, and social factors that shape learning. - David Corson (1999, p 88)

A continuum of learning language, learning through language and learning about language (Halliday 1980) is woven through the three IB programmes. Learning in more than one language is considered essential to an international education and for enriching intercultural understanding. Consequently, there are language requirements, as well as language learning opportunities, built into all three programmes (see the IB document *Programme standards and practices*). The IB learner profile describes a communicator as someone who understands and expresses ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. In the PYP an additional language is introduced to students by the age of 7; MYP students must register in two languages for the MYP certificate; in the DP students must study two languages—a “best” language and a second language—to achieve a full diploma. Language, however, is not separated from overall learning. As the main tool for building our knowledge of the universe and ourselves, language is crucial for success across the whole curriculum in each of the IB programmes. Language is integral to exploring and sustaining personal growth and cultural identity; it is closely linked to the development of a healthy self-esteem and emotional well-being, both of which are necessary for successful learning to take place. Maintaining and developing the mother tongue of all learners is especially important in this respect.

As well as being the major medium of social communication, language is tightly linked to cognitive growth; it is fundamental to the processes by which meaning and knowledge are negotiated and constructed. The language of academic discourses, along with the concepts and bodies of knowledge of any one discipline are closely interwoven. The features of different discourses have been identified and are described in linguistic genre theory. A linguistic genre is a particular text type created by a specific communicative situation. As learners build understanding through transdisciplinary inquiry in the PYP, and through interdisciplinary and disciplinary learning in the MYP and DP, they move along a continuum of increasing ability to use and understand the range of academic linguistic genres in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The process of developing a language policy provides an excellent opportunity to consider how the continuum of language learning is articulated at the beginning and end of any programme, and from one programme to the next. It is also an opportunity to discover any ambiguities and contradictions in beliefs and practices within the school. The process requires that all implications for language learning across the continuum are made explicit. For example, where the host country's language is different from the language of learning in the IB programmes, consideration needs to be given to how it can be incorporated into the curriculum. Another implication is likely to be in the provision of support for mother-tongue development and maintenance for those students who are learning in another language. It might be considered whether such support could be incorporated into the programmes as the additional language in the PYP, as a language A or B option in the MYP or as a special-request language, or language A or B, in the DP. Long-term planning for language development along the continuum is important for successful learning and parents should be a part of this planning. Channels and systems of communication to keep parents informed and encourage their input should be made clear in a language policy. The conditions and practices that need to be in place for successful language learning may also have an impact on the school's admissions policy, the assessment policy, professional development and staff recruitment. The role of language across the programme continuum is crucial in nurturing the full development of each learner and fostering the values of diversity, international-mindedness and intercultural awareness. The development of an effective language policy will focus the attention of the whole school community on this most fundamental dimension of the curriculum and school life.

Developing a Special Educational Needs Policy

When considering how to support students with special educational needs across the IB programme continuum there are a number of questions that may guide the development of an effective SEN programme and a school SEN policy.

Questions to Consider	Current State	Desired State	Actions for Moving Forward
What are the local, national and international legal requirements of teachers in meeting the needs of all students?			
What is the extent of our students' special educational needs at present?			
What expertise do we already have?			
What do we already do for SEN students?			
Which testing or screening tools do we have access to?			
Which tests are our staff qualified to administer?			
Who will be responsible for notifying parents, students and teachers of testing results?			
How will we document our provision for SEN?			
How will the provision for SEN be structured, coordinated and monitored?			
How will our provision for SEN be supported by our professional development programme?			
What information should we hold on our SEN students, where should it be held and who should manage it?			
Who will have access to student files?			
How will we coordinate the passing on of information at transition stages—changing schools, moving from one IB programme to the next?			
Where do we need to improve our provision for SEN students?			

Developing a Special Educational Needs Policy

In conclusion, the transitory nature of many students participating in IB programmes places additional pressure on schools to provide the most appropriate teaching and learning. Greater awareness of the ways and means to collate, maintain and communicate useful data about students is essential to meaningful progression along the IB programme continuum whether it is within schools or between schools.

Developing an inclusion policy

Teachers will find that their students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of academic, physical and other needs. Some of the students may have a recognized, diagnosed special educational need (SEN); other students may have special needs that have not yet been diagnosed. Examples of these special needs include:

- specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia and dyscalculia)
- language and communication disorders (such as aphasia, dysphasia and articulation problems)
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- physical disabilities affecting mobility
- sensory impairments (such as visual or hearing difficulties)
- medical conditions (such as asthma, epilepsy and diabetes)
- mental health conditions (such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders and anxiety)
- the requirements of gifted and talented students.
- What do we already do for SEN students?
- Which testing or screening tools do we have access to?
- Which tests are our staff qualified to administer?
- Who will be responsible for notifying parents, students and teachers of testing results?
- How will we document our provision for SEN?
- How will the provision for SEN be structured, coordinated and monitored?
- How will our provision for SEN be supported by our professional development?
- What information should we hold on our SEN students, where should it be held and who should manage it?
- Who will have access to student files?
- How will we coordinate the passing on of information at transition stages—changing schools, changing sections, changing campuses?
- Where do we need to improve our provision for SEN students?

Note: You will find all excerpts used in this document in the following IB publications:

- *From Principles into Practice for the MYP*
- *From Principles into Practice for the DP*
- *Towards a Continuum of International Education*

Developing an Academic Honesty Policy

Academic honesty is a set of values that promotes personal integrity and good practice in learning and assessment, and in the MYP is part of approaches to learning. The IB recognizes that academic honesty is influenced by factors that include peer pressure, culture, parental expectations, role modeling and taught skills. Academic honesty can be demonstrated through the dynamic relationship between personal, social and technical skills.

Teachers are encouraged to contribute to the development of their own academic honesty policies that show:

Key Principles	Current State	Desired State	Actions for Moving Forward
Encouragement of honesty.			
Guidelines on teaching students how to use all forms of resources adequately—including information and communication technology (ICT).			
The procedures to be followed when dishonesty is discovered.			
<p>Academic honesty is the responsibility of all schools, teachers and students in the MYP. Specific areas of academic honesty include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal skills—discussions on integrity, confidence in one’s own work, willingness to work independently, self-evaluation skills, determination to achieve individual potential • social skills—discussions on how to work collaboratively, how to contribute to a group or team, how to acknowledge work by other group or team members, peer-evaluation skills • technical skills—recognition of when others’ ideas, physical skills and/or techniques should be 			

acknowledged, which sources of information should be acknowledged, understanding plagiarism how to construct a bibliography, how to reference correctly.