



LEIPZIG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Secondary School Assessment Handbook

Philosophies, Policies & Procedures for Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning.

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L.I.S. Assessment Policy

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.

Everything we do should be designed to improve the learning of the students. The same goes for assessment – assessment tasks should be open, complex, and designed to give students maximised opportunities for success and for gaining **clear feedback** on *how they are doing* against an agreed set of standards and *how to improve*. This is called Assessment *for* Learning – it is focused on using assessments, their outcomes and the subsequent feedback **formatively**.

The secondary purpose of assessment is to obtain objective, standardised data of student performance.

Clearly, for the students to really know how they are doing against an agreed set of standards, they need to undertake common or standardised assessment. Their performance, measured against attainment criteria, should enable them to gauge how they are doing and, with expert teacher input, identify the next steps required to reach the next level.

This data is invaluable when the teacher is using their professional judgement to calculate a student's level at any time during Secondary School. The teacher is frequently required to make this judgement and indicate a current level for students, parents, and occasional external bodies (IGCSE, IBDP, transcripts for other schools).

This is called Assessment of Learning – it is focused on using assessment data **summatively** as an indicator of a student's level at a given time.



L.I.S. Principles of Assessment

Assessment should be fair.

- Utilises a variety of assessment strategies;
- Is consistent and compatible with the written and taught curriculum;
- Uses criteria that is known by teachers and students alike;
- Represents a manageable workload for teachers and students alike;
- Separates attainment from other factors such as effort or behaviour (marks are not removed for late work, for example).

Assessment should generate formative feedback.

- Uses clear criteria and exemplars (of what good would look like), scaffolding the learning process;
- Provides opportunities for students to reflect on products, processes and self-regulation;
- Uses feedback and provides opportunities for students to act upon the feedback;
- Provides opportunities for resubmission where appropriate.

Assessment should promote independent learning.

- Affords students the tools and the opportunities to peer and self-assess, and to use expert feedback, exemplars and indicators of success to set targets for independent growth.

L.I.S. Grading Policy

The practice of grading and reporting.

In order to create coherence during predetermined reporting windows into student performance, all teachers of all subjects use common symbols to indicate levels of **attainment** and of **endeavour**.

At L.I.S., we use words ranging from *Exceptional* to *Unsatisfactory* and associated descriptions to indicate a student's *Endeavour* in any subject. We use a *7-1 grading scale*, with associated descriptions of conceptual understanding and/or skills and performance, to indicate a student's *Attainment* in any subject.

The philosophy of grading and reporting.

Criterion-referenced grading (as used in IGCSE and IBDP) uses descriptions of performance across the skills and understandings of the course to decide a student's final level using a best-fit model.

The idea is that students are not a summation or an average of a learning journey, but instead are ultimately given opportunities to progress and their reported grades indicate a *best-fit estimation* of their **final consistent level**.

It is important when using data to calculate this grade that all components of the course (the skills and understandings) are considered, and that students have opportunities to improve and thus show that they have improved or mastered the task.

A student's level is calculated using a best-fit professional judgement of their final consistent level at the time of reporting, informed by 4-6 key pieces of assessment data and a teacher's professional judgement of their performance in and out of the classroom measured against the skills and understandings of the course, appropriately weighted.

L.I.S. Grading Policy

What is included in the attainment grades?

- Achievement, not behaviours.
- Evidence and data from quality assessments considered in their appropriate context (outlined previously in this document).
- The teacher's professional judgement of the student's level against agreed criteria of skills and understandings, judged holistically in all classroom work, considered in its appropriate context.

What is not included in the attainment grades?

- Group scores: only individual performance is considered summatively.
- Academic dishonesty: this is a discipline issue, and should not be dealt with by reducing grades or giving zeroes as attainment.
- Zeroes when evidence is missing or as a punishment. Zero is a score indicating that students have failed to make the minimum required level; to give zero as a punishment for a learning behaviour is misleading in terms of attainment data.

How are grades calculated?

- We emphasise the most recent attainment data when learning is developmental. We do not average learning over time.
- We do not rely on mean averages to determine students' levels. Instead, teachers consider assessment data and learning according to agreed skills and understandings professionally and with acknowledgement of the context of student's performance.

The Problems of Traditional Grading and Assessment

Two Traditional Practices:

1. Mean-averaging a student's performance over the time-span of a reporting period, by totalling the marks gained and dividing by the number of assessments. This way a student has an average percentage (or a cumulative total out of 100), and this is transferred to a level using grade boundary thresholds (90% for an A / Level 7; 80% for a B etc.).
2. Students have marks removed for late work, or are given zero for missing work. This punishment immediately affects the average grade for the reporting period, conflating the behaviour with the student's attainment in the subject.

Considering the impact of these practices:

1. When learning is developmental, there is value in reporting to students and parents how a student is doing against an agreed set of skills and understandings at a given time. It is an important check-in against common standards, and gives clear formative information for improvement. Calculating an average performance level over an arbitrary given time-period is less useful – it doesn't give clear indication of the student's consistent level at the time of reporting, and therefore is not as clear in its formative next steps – and it can be quite misleading depending upon the grading thresholds.

Consider, for example, the student whose first assessment task of four in the semester scored 66% (a C grade). This student learned a lot from the process and the feedback, and for the next three tasks scored 92%, 94% and then 98% (all A* performances). Even though this student has made dramatic progress, and has proven him/herself to be consistently of an A* level, their average is now 87% and so (with a 90-80-70-60 threshold system) only gains an A overall. The aim of teaching and learning is for the students to progress in their time with us, but in a system in which we average assessment performances the students who make most progress are penalised.

2. Traditionally, as a form of deterrent to ensure students comply with deadlines (that, in of themselves, often haven't been created with consideration of context, thus clashing with other subject deadlines, or not designed to ensure maximum opportunities for success), students are awarded zero marks for late work or for work not submitted. That zero demotivates any subsequent will to complete the task ('If I have zero anyway, what's the point of doing the work?'), and is then counted amidst the other assessment marks.

Consider a student whose four assessment marks for a semester read: 85%, 73%, 0%, and 82%. This student's average in a traditional system, not including the 0% (work



was submitted late), would be 80% (enough for a B / Level 5). However, including the 0% the average changes to 60% (a D / Level 3). This clearly doesn't give the student or the parents clear and accurate information about the student's level regarding the skills and understandings of the subject. Every piece of work assessed is considerably higher, but, because one piece of work was late (a learning behaviour, and nothing to do with the skills and understandings of the subject), a totally different level is communicated. This is misleading, and therefore not a good example of effective formative feedback.

The Problem with Percentages:

While it may initially appear that our external examination boards – Cambridge IGCSE, and the IB Diploma – use % to calculate final grades, reducing all courses to a number out of 100 and producing corresponding grading thresholds accordingly, it is important to note that they *don't* in fact use %'s to calculate final grades; it is in fact the other way round.

Taking into account the different nature of the courses (Language A to Language B; Mathematics to Psychology), and different cultural values and expectations (German to English to Arabic), the examiners decide upon and describe in the level descriptors what good looks like, decide upon thresholds for each component, total them up, and adjust the final threshold if there is a peculiar anomaly in numbers of students attaining those grades.

How do we know that this is the case?

1. The examination boards use criterion-referenced grading. Recent changes to the Extended Essay grading criteria show this, in which previous numerous and reductionist criteria was reduced to just four criteria (plus one for Engagement based on a reflection pro-forma), with instructions to be more holistic according to grading with relation to overall level descriptions. In order to be more qualitative, the move is to have fewer specific criteria creating complex numerical divisions, and instead to employ a continuum of value-judgements across more limited skills and understandings.
2. An A* in IGCSE German in June 2018 was 87%; in English (the same course with the same assessment components) it was 72%. This is testament to the fact that there is no universal level of outstanding performance, but it is instead a series of common agreements of what excellent / good / adequate looks like in each different subject area and the subsequent marks awarded accordingly.
3. We know that %'s aren't used as a natural benchmark (moreover, are the consequence of agreements) because it is extremely difficult to write a test for



which ‘excellent performance’ is 90%, ‘very good performance’ is 80%, etc. And it is unfair to use a norm-referenced grading system, i.e. one in which, regardless of “objective” performance, 5% of students in a grade / year gain a Level 7, 10% a Level 6 etc.

4. Because it is even harder to believe that we can measure a student’s understanding and skill in a subject area accurately to 100 differentials, or that the complexity of learning the subject understanding and skills can be reduced to a number out of 100. The attempt at being more objective about student performance, counter-intuitively, becomes less so.
5. Because %’s, in of themselves, are inherently meaningless. One could write a test tomorrow in which everyone gained 100% or 1%. In baseball, a 20% average with the bat makes someone a very successful Major League professional. A 35% average – in school, often considered a failing grade – would make someone the best player of all time!

So, why do examination boards use %’s?

In school, where the purpose of assessment is:

1. Predominantly formative (to inform future learning);
2. To give a clear, benchmarked indication of the consistent level of performance at the time of reporting (as opposed to the average of the learning level since the last period of reporting);

And where we’re also not hampered by the external nature of report grades “counting” on student transcripts, we can be free to use professional judgement to determine grades, based on common assessment data and other holistic judgement of performance.

However, if IBDP and IGCSE are not producing levels from %’s, but instead %’s from descriptions on assessment criteria, why do they use %’s at all?

In our classes, we have students who have four pieces of assessment data for a term:

5-4-4-5

Chronology of marks alone (in a spiralling skills & understandings system) can’t determine whether this is a 4 or a 5. So we need teacher judgement of the student as well as the context of the creation of the assessment data.

In this case, it’s impossible for us to look at this data and decide, without more knowledge, whether it’s a 4 or a 5.

If this was IBDP, where they have to award objective grades with serious ramifications, they would need to know in what part of the level threshold that student performed:

2 high 5's, and 2 high 4's would suggest this be a 5.

2 low 5's and 2 low 4's would suggest it should be a 4.

The %'s, then, are just a means of objectively quantifying performance for final assessment award purposes.

Attainment Level Descriptors

| Grade | Descriptor |
|-------|---|
| | <i>At this year level the student's progress is:</i> |
| 7 | <p>Excellent A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them almost faultlessly in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis and evaluation where appropriate. The student consistently demonstrates originality and insight and always produces work of high quality.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Very Good A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis and evaluation where appropriate. The student generally demonstrates originality and insight.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Good A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations. The student generally shows evidence of analysis, synthesis and evaluation where appropriate and occasionally demonstrates originality and insight.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Satisfactory A general understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them effectively in normal situations. There is occasional evidence of the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Mediocre Limited achievement against most of the objectives, or clear difficulties in some areas. The student demonstrates a limited understanding of the required knowledge and skills and is only able to apply them fully in normal situations with support.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Unsatisfactory Very limited achievement against all the objectives. The student has difficulty in understanding the required knowledge and skills, and is unable to apply them fully in normal situations, even with support.</p> |
| 1 | <p>Poor Minimal achievement in terms of the objectives.</p> |

Professional Judgement of Student Level

Scenario 1

The student received the following scores against Criterion A: Subject Understanding:

4 – 4 – 5 – 4 – 6

Looking at the scores, I take into account the following information:

The final 6 (an outlier score) was for the most significant assignment of the semester. In this assignment, students were required to combine and connect understanding of material from more than one unit of work. The student's performance on this assignment demonstrated a very solid understanding of concepts they appeared not to have understood as well on previous assignments. I consider giving the student a '6' because of this, but on reflection, there are also some very important concepts that were not covered by this assignment, which the student has not demonstrated such a thorough understanding in previous assessments. I therefore award the student a '5'.

Scenario 2

The student received the following scores against Criterion B: Student Production:

4 – 4 – 4 – 5 – 4 – 6 – 6 – 6

Looking at the scores, I take into account the following information:

I have been working specifically on 3 sets of skills from the Student Production standard for the past semester. On all three of those skills, the student has shown consistent mastery at level '6' for the past three assignments. This skill improvement makes the earlier scores irrelevant and I believe that the consistency demonstrated in the last three assignments indicates that level '6' most accurately reflects the student's level of achievement at the time of reporting. I therefore award the student a '6'.

Scenario 3

The student received the following scores against Criterion A: Subject Understanding:

6 – 4 – 6 – 5 – 3 – 3 – 3

I look at the information and consider the following:

The set of scores related to three different topics I have taught across the semester. The final three 3s all were from assessment of the last topic taught. It seems that the student



understood previous topics quite well, but struggled with the final topic. I consider all of the topics taught across the semester to be equally important. Considering that that on two out of the three topics the student seemed to be demonstrating understanding at around the level of '5', but for the final topic the student's understanding was only a '3', I waver between whether the students should receive a '4' or a '5'. The two assessment tasks for which they received a six only assessed some aspects of the first two topics. The ones for which the students received a '4' and '5' assessed understanding of those topics in a far more connected way. I therefore believe that the '4' and '5' are the most reliable assessments of the student's understanding of the first two topics. In the end I award the student a '4'.

Scenario 4

The student received the following scores against Criterion B: Student Production:

6 – 7 – 5 – 3 – 3 - 3

I look at the information and consider the following:

I have only explicitly taught and assessed a couple of the skills in the Student Production standard this semester, so the assessment tasks are not dealing with widely different skills. In considering why the student's performance seems to have declined so markedly, I think about the nature of the assessment tasks. Though the skills assessed were similar across most of the tasks, the later tasks required the students to apply their skills in more complex contexts. These more complex contexts are what you consider to be the kinds of contexts students at this grade level should be able to deal with. I therefore decide to award the student a '3'. However, while the decline is not as marked, some other students in the class also seem to have performed better on the earlier assignments than the later ones. I make a note to myself to consider whether the earlier assessment tasks should be made a little more complex in future.

Separating Learning Behaviour & Attainment

Conflating Learning Behaviour and Misdemeanours with Attainment:

It is typical in schools to penalise students' attainment grades for other misdemeanours, such as submitting work later than a deadline or even not submitting it all when a threat of a zero is given for the work.

As previously explained, threatening or awarding a zero to a student for struggling to submit work is counter-productive. It is demotivating, especially in a system in which grades are averages of performance, making it impossible for students thereafter to gain an overall grade of which their attainment level merits. It also doesn't take into account a student's individual context (was their situation considered when making the deadline, or was it a 'one-size-fits-all' deadline with no prior conversation or negotiation?), nor does it make them independent learners, who understand the need for deadlines, the requirement to meet them, and the fair consequences if they don't. Finally, in terms of feedback, it neither tells the parents the student's level, nor that they have issues of organisation and other negative learning behaviours, instead just giving information that blends those two situations (by reporting that a Level 6 student with a zero or two is a Level 3 student).

Therefore, it is imperative that we don't confuse the level of a student's skills and understandings with their endeavour. *What this means:*

Students should not be awarded 0 for late or incomplete work, or have this pastoral issue affect their report grade;

Students should not have marks taken off work for that doesn't meet formal requirements (unless they were part of the criteria);

Students should not be given "F" (for fail).

Instead, students should simply miss out on the opportunities for feedback (in the drafting process), or be awarded *Insufficient Evidence* if they do not submit work. There are other behavioural consequences, too, but enough *IE* 'grades' would lead to *No Grade* on a report card.

Endeavour Descriptions

By contrast, we have a set of Endeavour Descriptions that we report on at the same time that we report Attainment grades. Endeavour is also reported upon at other times in the school year, considering in-class Engagement and Task Completion.

Endeavour is a combination of

- Behaviour (respect for teachers, fellow students and subject)
- Participation (being engaged, being prepared, having materials)
- Effort (work completion, doing homework, taking notes, studying for tests, using the language of instruction)

| Grade | Grade Descriptor |
|----------------|--|
| EXCEPTIONAL | Student exceeds expectations. Is an example to others in terms of behaviour, participation and effort. |
| GOOD | Student meets all expectations. Shows good behaviour, participates actively and works hard. |
| SATISFACTORY | Student mostly meets expectations. Student fully meets expectations in two out of three aspects, but there is room for improvement in the third. |
| INCONSISTENT | Student does not always meet expectations. There is room for improvement in two out of three of the aspects. |
| UNSATISFACTORY | Student does not meet expectations. Student is not meeting any of our expectations. |



Procedures and Consequences for Missing Assignment Deadlines

Given the assumption that any assignment for this procedure is a valid assessment with clearly outlined learning objectives and a reasonable initial deadline (as opposed to routine, daily-practice, homework tasks), in the event of failure to meet the assignment deadlines:

1. A new deadline is arranged with the student. This should give the student every opportunity to complete the work without initial sanction, but the new deadline is at the teacher's discretion with regard to time and the amount of further assistance or support given. Students who inform teachers before the original deadline that they are having problems or who have genuine mitigating circumstances may, as always, be given extensions at the teacher's discretion.
2. Should the work still not be turned in, the Head of Department should be informed and would be expected to speak to the student. The student will attend a make-up session at break or lunch time with the teacher or the Head of Department as appropriate or agreed by the two professionals. Alternatively, the student should attend an Academic Supervision study hall (or be registered in Homework Club if necessary). For Learning Support students, the Case Manager should be informed at this point.
 - Should students be required to attend after-school Academic Supervision, teachers should:
 - Email the student with the student's parents in copy, and the Head of Department and Assistant Principal in blind copy, indicating the need to attend the study hall or Homework Club (as appropriate) and the reasons why;
 - Enter the student's name onto the Academic Supervision spreadsheet;
 - Ensure that the student and the AS supervisor know what work is required;
 - After this study hall session, students are expected to submit the final work to the teacher at an agreed time (within 48 hours of the study hall date).
3. For students who fail to show up to the Academic Supervision session, this will be followed up by the Assistant Principal as a serious next level of intervention. The consequences may include, but are not limited to:
 - A meeting with the student's parents to discuss implications;
 - Removal from extra-curricular programmes and other privileges (such as the ability to 'come and go' between lessons for IBDP students);
 - A contractual period of probation for academic issues.

For those students (identified in Stage 3) who still have not submitted work, this will be followed up by the Assistant Principal in conjunction with the Secondary Principal. The student will also receive a *No Mark* as a grade for said assessment. Ultimately, their report card may also have no mark, since there is insufficient evidence to calculate a grade.