Carrickfergus Grammar School	Assessment and Feedback Policy
Date ratified	2020
Date implemented	2020
Date to be reviewed	2022
Consulted	Governors, Staff, Parents, Pupils

VALUES

At Carrickfergus Grammar School we aim to offer a world-class education. It is the purpose of this school to provide an educational environment suited to all of the students entrusted to its care, with the highest of aspirations and expectations for all. The school will seek to promote a disciplined, well-ordered, caring and supportive environment, where staff and students can work and learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect and without fear of interruption or learning being hindered, so that each and every student achieves the highest level of academic, intellectual, personal, physical and social development of which he or she is capable.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the policy is to create a shared understanding of the principles underpinning robust assessment and feedback at Carrickfergus Grammar School. Such shared understanding should encourage the implementation of consistent strategies based on agreed best practice, which in turn will allow each student to achieve his/her potential. The policy is centred upon emerging research in relation to assessment and feedback as well as the school's own current understanding of best practice with assessment.

It is the view of Carrickfergus Grammar School that effective learning and teaching, robust assessment systems and curriculum design are inextricably linked. This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with the school's Learning and Teaching Policy, as assessment opportunities filter through the school's identified 6 Principles for Learning and Teaching – implicitly and explicitly. Teachers gauge, measure and feedback on student progress - formally and informally - at many junctures and on many levels; from responses to effective questioning, feedback from low-stakes formative testing (retrieval practice) and classroom observation through to summative examination contexts.

This school believes that curriculum design is strongest when it forges coherent progression models for each subject area, framed around agreed long-term aims. Assessment will play a key role in measuring student progress within these models in the short, medium and long terms. For example, frequent low-stakes formative assessment will assist teachers in making judgements regarding the progress of students against the short-term aims of progression models.

It is the view of this school that assessment is most robust when formative, summative and standardised assessments are integrated to form a coherent and reliable system to measure student progress, enhancing student ownership of learning and self-improvement in the process.

BELIEFS

Carrickfergus Grammar School believes that:

- assessment and feedback must be fit for purpose, timely, manageable and designed to move students forward in their learning;
- an effective and accurate curriculum progression model is the foundation for a robust assessment system;
- a progression model should be constructed on the basis that strong subject knowledge is a prerequisite for skills development, as skills are typically domain-specific;
- high-level subject knowledge - when embedded in long-term memory – will strengthen students' ability to think deeply within respective domains, as it facilitates automaticity, creates mental models and allows for memorisation strategies such as 'chunking' – thus freeing up working memory when necessary to think deeply and expediting the journey towards mastery;
- assessment plays a vital role not just in measuring progress, but also in the process of transferring knowledge into long-term memory, through self-testing, formative assessment and other measures. In this way, testing does not just measure students' understanding; it helps develop understanding;
- progress in short-term and long-term progression model aims is best measured through an integration of formative, summative and standardised assessments;
- an assessment system should aim to enhance student ownership of learning and strengthen students' ability to implement self-improvement strategies.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

As a school, we believe that formative assessment helps to identify next steps for both the teacher and student. In this way, it is synonymous with the notion of 'responsive teaching'. To be most effective, formative assessment must be:

1. **specific**
2. **frequent**
3. **repetitive**
4. **recorded (if applicable) as raw marks**:

1:
Specific questions allow teachers (in the style of 'responsive teaching') to diagnose exactly what a student or class' strengths and weaknesses are, and where misconceptions may have arisen. It facilities the process of identifying what to do next in the classroom. Carrickfergus Grammar School believes that formative assessment is also effective when it is low-stakes and quick, in the form of daily recap within lessons and in students' own time. The school believes in the power and potential of retrieval practice as one of the most effective tools to bridge the gap between performance and real learning.

In this regard, we promote the use of formative testing such as well-designed multiple-choice questions or factual knowledge recall questions as a means of daily recap at the commencement of lessons.

Well-designed, weekly low-stakes or no-stakes tests which challenge students and test their understanding may also be used in order to identify progress towards mastery. Questions may be an extension of deliberate practice activities undertaken in the classroom during the teaching of curriculum content.

In line with Bjork's desirable difficulties, weekly low-stakes tests, in particular, may not only quiz knowledge derived from recent teaching, but should also include the spacing and interleaving of curriculum content which was taught some months or years ago. (see Learning and Teaching policy).

It is also this school's belief that such formative assessment will allow for feedback to students to be responsive, timely, fit for purpose and manageable as regards teacher workload. Feedback may be given at an individual, group or class level.

2:

Research indicates that the act of recalling information from memory actually helps to strengthen the memory itself. This is called the retrieval effect. This is why testing – no matter what the overarching curriculum aim – is such a powerful tool. Research indicates that self-testing / self-quizzing is a more effective revision technique than simply re-reading material. This lends significant weight to the rationale for increasing the **frequency** of formative testing. Frequent testing of curriculum content strengthens the validity of formative assessments. Research is also identifying links between well-designed multiple-choice questions and the retrieval effect.

3:

In line with above, the formative testing of curriculum content should ideally be spaced and distributed to allow for the benefits of the retrieval effect to become most palpable. This means that content should be **repeated** in a low-stakes testing capacity over days, weeks, months and even years.

4:

Unlike summative testing, formative testing should neither aim to create a shared meaning nor should it aim to distinguish between candidates from a larger domain. The aim of formative testing is primarily for the teacher to identify what to do next. Therefore it must be responsive, and must be freed from the restrictions imposed by grades. Recording grades risks the danger of forcing formative assessment into a summative structure.

However, the school acknowledges that there may be worth in recording simple **raw marks** with question-level detail, as it may add to our understanding of how students' progress and facilitate the identification of next steps in teaching.

Feedback from formative assessments will aim not just to outline deficiencies, but also to clarify what needs to be done to improve future learning.

Feedback may take the form of written comment on classwork or homework books, tests or quizzes, but may often take other guises, including:

- whole-class oral feedback by the teacher on strengths and areas for improvement;
- whole-class critique by the teacher using a visualiser;
- instant teacher feedback following the use of mini whiteboards;
- teacher intervention when checking individual student work in class;
- online multiple-choice questions with instant feedback (such as the www.ixl.com system for English and Maths);
- the use of modelling techniques to benchmark brilliance and to

address misconception;
- exam percentages or grades reported with a rubric.

Feedback following formative assessment, no matter in which form it is given, will aim not just to outline deficiencies, but also to clarify what needs to be done to improve future learning.

Examples of online formative assessment used at Carrickfergus Grammar School include:

- www.ixl.com
- the MyMaths Programme
- Quizlet
- ExamPro
- CCEA Topic Tracker

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Summative assessment aims to give a shared meaning of student performance. The terminal summative examinations undertaken at Carrickfergus Grammar School are GCSE and 'A' Level examinations. Performance in these examinations gives employers an indication of a person's developed cognitive ability within a particular subject. GCSE and 'A' Level examination questions typically 'sample' from a large domain of a subject's content in order to arrive at a judgement regarding a student's ability. Summative typically distinguish between students through percentages and / or grades (and most recently a numeric scale of 9 to 1 for some GCSE examinations).

In Carrickfergus Grammar School, students sit summative examinations twice per year at Key Stage 3. From Key Stage 4 upwards, students sit one set of summative (mock) examinations, followed by external modules at GCSE and 'A' Level standard. These take the form of formal examinations in December / January / March (Year 11), May and June. These examinations typically take the form of standard tasks (the same tasks undertaken by all students) in standard conditions, i.e. in a formal examination setting. Such assessments sample from the domain of subject content in order to distinguish between students, and often include domain content from previous years. Assessments may be based on two models:

- the difficulty model (whereby questions get increasingly difficult and complex as the test progresses);
- the quality model (this includes essays, performances etc where students may have responded to the task in different ways)

Students receive a percentage score for their summative assessments at Key Stage 3. The year group average will also be recorded on reports to elucidate the meaning of a student's score. From Key Stage 4 onwards, students receive grades. The MAG (Minimum Acceptable Grade) and Target Grade are also noted on the report for comparison.

Parents will receive 1-2 data-based reports (including scores from assessment trackings in October and March) and one comment-based report each year, outlining their child's performance.

Feedback following summative assessment will aim not just to outline deficiencies, but also to clarify what needs to be done to improve future learning.

Carrickfergus Grammar School undertakes significant analysis of student results following each set of summative examinations and / or external GCSE and 'A' Level examinations, including:

- a regression analysis model at Key Stage 3 which compares students' scores in a range of subjects with their scores from standardised assessments;
- CAT testing;
- YELLIS and ALIS value-added;
- SIMS residuals;
- Fischer Family Trust data;
- CCEA Analytics;
- E-AQA enhanced results service;

Examples of summative assessment used at Carrickfergus Grammar School include:

- mock GCSE papers;
- curriculum-linked summative test/exam papers;
- end-of-unit tests.

STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS

Standardised assessments with scaled scores provide teachers with information about how students compare to their peer group nationally on some important academic measures. These assessments are helpful in diagnosing weaknesses, areas for development and setting targets. Typically, these assessments are non-curriculum linked, and provide a snapshot of developed ability in domains such as literacy, numeracy and spatial awareness. Such assessments can provide useful information regarding the nature of scaffolds needed in the classroom and required intervention

processes to progress students in literacy and numeracy skills.

Before entering the school, students sit a battery of standardised tests. These tests are then repeated at more advanced levels each year in order to ascertain progress. Carrickfergus Grammar School uses standardised assessments in order to distinguish and define types of achievement:

- **High** achievement - students who score 115 or above in a range of 3 simultaneous standardised literacy and numeracy assessments;
- **Over** achievement – students who score significantly higher in standardised literacy and numeracy assessments when compared with the non-verbal standardised score. 'Significant' is normally defined as anything higher than the mean standard deviation for the year group in standardised assessments;
- **Low** achievement - students who score 90 or below in a range of 3 simultaneous standardised literacy and numeracy assessments.
- **Under** achievement - students who score significantly lower in standardised literacy and numeracy assessments when compared with the non-verbal standardised score. 'Significant' is normally defined as anything lower than the mean standard deviation for the year group in standardised assessments.

Results from summative examinations are put through a regression analysis – thus giving a standardised scaled score - in order to compare against the results from standardised assessments.

The calendar on the following page outlines the type and frequency of assessments used at Carrickfergus Grammar School.

Assessment Calendar

Year Group	Test	Time
Year 8	CAT 'D'	June of P7
Year 8	SWST 11	June of P7
Year 8	NGRT	June of P7
Year 8	PTE 11	Collected June of P7
Year 8	PTM 11	Collected June of P7
Year 8	English / Maths Assessment Tracking	October of Year 8
Year 8	Summative Exams 1	December of Year 8
Year 8	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 8
Year 8	Summative Exams 2	June of Year 8
Year 9	SWST 12	August of Year 9
Year 9	PTE 12	August of Year 9
Year 9	PTM 12	August of Year 9
Year 9	CAT 'E'	August of Year 9
Year 9	English / Maths Assessment Tracking	October of Year 9
Year 9	Summative Exams 3	December of Year 9
Year 9	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 9
Year 9	Summative Exams 4	June of Year 9
Year 10	SWST 13	August of Year 10
Year 10	PTE 13	August of Year 10
Year 10	PTM 13	August of Year 10
Year 10	CAT 'F'	August of Year 10
Year 10	English / Maths Assessment Tracking	October of Year 10
Year 10	Summative Exams 5	December of Year 10
Year 10	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 10
Year 10	Summative Exams 6	June of Year 10
Year 11	SWST 14	August of Year 11
Year 11	PTE 14	August of Year 11
Year 11	PTM 14	August of Year 11
Year 11	CAT 'G'	August of Year 11
Year 11	YELLIS	August of Year 11
Year 11	Assessment Tracking all subjects	October of Year 11
Year 11	Assessment Tracking all subjects	December of Year 11
Year 11	Summative (Mock) Exams	March of Year 11
Year 11	External Modules	May / June of Year 11
Year 12	Assessment Tracking all subjects	October of Year 12
Year 12	Summative (Mock) Exams	January of Year 12
Year 12	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 12
Year 13	ALIS	August of Year 13
Year 13	Assessment Tracking all subjects	October of Year 13
Year 13	Summative (Mock) Exams	January of Year 13
Year 13	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 13
Year 14	Assessment Tracking all subjects	October of Year 14
Year 14	Summative (Mock) Exams	January of Year 14
Year 14	Assessment Tracking all subjects	March of Year 14

At Key Stages 4 and 5, standardised assessments provide predicted minimum GCSE grades (MAGs) which are used to set targets in Years 11, 12, 13 and 14 with students (TAGs) and to identify value-added at a subject level following terminal examinations.

CONCLUSION

Carrickfergus Grammar School believes that assessment acts as a bridge between teaching and learning. Assessment is most effective and robust when formative, summative (difficulty and quality models) and standardised assessments are integrated coherently. It is built upon the foundations of a strong curriculum progression model with clear short-term and long-term aims.

Carrickfergus Grammar School will continue to negotiate, define and refine its own shared understanding of effective assessment through professional development undertaken in the 2020-2023 School Development Plan. In particular, the school will focus on formative assessment techniques, predominantly retrieval practice, distributed practice (spacing) and interleaved practice leading to the embedding of knowledge in long-term memory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Birbalsingh, Katharine: 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers' (2017)

Brown, Peter: 'Make it Stick – The Science of Successful Learning' (2014)

Christodoulou, Daisy: 'Making Good Progress? The future of Assessment for Learning' (2016)

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Willingham, Daniel: 'Why don't Students like School?' (2009)