

# West African College of the Atlantic

## Assessment policy

The school administration and the teachers have consulted the following IB documents when developing this policy:

- *Guidelines for developing a school assessment policy in the Diploma Programme* (2010)
- *Diploma Programme assessment: principles and practice* (November 2010).

### **Philosophy and principles of assessment**

*Formative and summative assessment* : at all levels WACA recognises and practises formative ( to improve learning) and summative (to determine levels of achievement). These assessments are aligned with the demands of each subject and the teacher makes sure that they are reliable and appropriate for the different classes and, as necessary, for students with special needs.

*Communication with parents*: parents must sign a copy of each test corrected by the teacher who checks the signature and who explains again to the class those aspects of the syllabus which have not been well understood, according to the test results. At the end of lessons each day teachers are available to help students with difficulties.

Parents receive a mid-term report and one at the end of each trimester to indicate their child's progress – six official communications per year. There is an individual parent-teacher event once a term (the student can be present). Parents are, of course, invited to arrange meetings with the administrators or teachers as they wish during the year.

*Assessment methods*: depending on the nature of the subject, teachers are encouraged to use a variety of assessment strategies such as written and oral tests (listening comprehension, speaking languages, oral presentations in TOK, literature, *viva voce* for the Extended Essay), practical work in the sciences, group work, participation and reactions in class, develop projects and dossiers and written assignments for internal evaluation in the IB,... Assessments should be based on critical analysis and on problem solving rather than on memorisation and the repetition of knowledge. A good test asks students to apply knowledge and skills acquired to new situations which can lead to creative problem solving. At the level of the IB diploma criterion-based (rather than norm-based) assessment is used; detailed descriptors for each criterion are to be found in all subject guides.

Students in the higher classes practise self-evaluation and peer- assessment, above all for essays in subjects such as TOK, literature and history. For the Extended Essay and internal assessment of the IB diploma programme, the students exchange their work with a friend who grades while checking the descriptors for each criterion. This is very instructive for the students.

*Summative assessment*: this occurs at the end of each term in all classes where there is an end-of-term examination in each subject which counts for 50% of the term's mark, and the tests and tasks done throughout the term count for the other 50%. The examination at the end of the first and second terms covers the work of each term, and the Term 3 examination covers the work of the whole year. Students must have the ability to remember what they have learned and acquired, to adapt and apply this knowledge and skills to new questions and situations.

Entrance tests for new students wishing to enrol in any grade are summative assessments in French, English, and mathematics. The tests correspond, of course, to the different class levels from Grade 7 to Grade 13.

*Assessment for a student who has not yet mastered one of the vehicular languages of the school:* a beginning student in French, starting in Grade 7, will have extra classes outside regular lessons and during the first year will be evaluated as someone who is taking French as a foreign language and not the same as other students who are taking French as native speakers. Moreover he/she will not lose marks for language errors associated with vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation in the subjects taught in French provided that the teacher can understand what the student wishes to express; the student will be judged therefore on the content of his/her knowledge and skills, and not on their language performance. In Grade 7 students start English from zero – assuming no prior knowledge. The same principle applies for a student who has enrolled in the higher classes and who does not have a very good command of English.

*Assessment for a student with physical or mental incapacities:* In discussion with his/her doctor and parents, the school adopts an approach to assessment which will best suit the particular case, so that the student has objectives which are achievable and therefore likely to produce more positive assessment results according to the criteria which have been established. For dyslexia, ADD (attention deficit disorder), and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) the school works in collaboration with a psychologist and gives more time to these students to finish tests and other assessment tasks.

### **Marking (Grading)**

From Grade 7 to Grade 11 the final term mark for each subject is out of a maximum of 20. Teachers see to it, as far as possible, that marks across subjects reflect the same value. To move up into the next class at the end of the school year the student must normally have an average mark of 12 out of 20, which represents a “quite good” result. A “good” result is indicated by marks of 13-15, and “very good” is for marks of 16 and more. A very small number of students with insufficient marks repeat their class for another year; in most cases, they improve their knowledge and skills and develop a sounder base for moving up into the next class grade. Parents are always asked to come to the school to discuss the case of a child who needs to repeat a grade.

In Grades 12 and 13 the final term mark is out of a maximum of 7 in conformity with the IB marking system. Students in Grade 13 undertake a “mock IB examination” in February. Teachers use questions from former examination papers as well as their own questions to create the “mock examination” as well as the terminal examinations for students in the IB diploma years. The school has established an unofficial conversion table, based on experience of the IB and French systems, to transfer marks out of 7 to a mark out of 20; this is necessary for the Senegalese Ministry of Education which gives scholarships for results above a certain level in Grade 13.

Since WACA offers the IB diploma qualification only, at the end of Grade 13 there is no need to adapt or integrate assessment procedures for other qualifications such as the Senegalese baccalaureate (which resembles the French baccalaureate).

A “class council” per class meets at the end of term to discuss progress of each student. The teachers of all subjects for a particular class are present; the meeting is organised by the teacher responsible for the class and chaired by the Deputy Director of the school. This “class council” decides on who should receive congratulations or cautionary comments in relation to student’s results, and it decides on whether a student moves up into the next grade at the end of the school year.

The behaviour and participation of students is noted in the term and mid-term reports (in the “mark books” – see below) for each subject using A= excellent to E= serious problems.

### **System for recording and communicating marks**

All marks for the final term reports are recorded by computer and go into each student's electronic file. The school uses an application which calculates the average of the student and the class for each subject. This is transcribed by hand on to the report by the teacher who also adds a comment.

a) *Registers of marks (grades)*

For the marks from tests (end of October, mid February, mid May) the teachers complete the class registers for their subject. For end-of-term reports (December, March, June), they give their marks to the IT teacher who transfers them to the electronic system for the calculation of averages.

b) *"Mark book" (Carnet de notes)*

The marks from the Register for each class are transferred to the individual mark book of students by the teacher responsible for each class and the students give their mark book to their parents each mid-term.

c) *Term report*

Students receive this report on the last day of term. Students are marked out of 20 in all subjects except for the IB diploma programme where they are marked out of 7. The final term mark for each subject is made up of: 50% tests (two minimum per month) and tasks accumulated throughout the term and 50% for the end-of-term examination. The reports are distributed to the students who must come back the next term or year with the report signed by at least one of the parents or guardians.

### **Planning assessment**

Teachers keep a dairy notebook ("cahier journal") for each of their subjects where they briefly indicate the content of each lesson and fix a copy of the assessment tasks into the note book. In that way the internal assessment is documented during the term. The formal end-of-term examinations are kept on file by the school administration.

For the IB diploma programme the teachers provide a plan of content coverage in their subject over the two years (Grades 12 and 13) including the dates planned for assessments: the dates of practical work in the sciences, of essays, of the recording of oral examinations and presentations in languages, TOK, etc.

### **Homework**

Students keep a homework diary ("cahier de texte") in which they write homework assignments. Some of these count towards the term's mark, but normally it is tests done in class that count. Each student also has a liaison diary ("carnet de liaison") for communication between the school and the parents; teachers or the school administration can enter comments on behaviour, assessment results, or general information and the student must return to school the next day with the parent's signature to verify that they have read the entry.

### **Policy development and communication**

It is the Deputy Director of the school who is responsible for developing and reviewing this policy in collaboration with the IB Coordinator, the computer teacher (who has developed the system for recording grades), a Senegalese teacher and a native English speaking teacher. After, the draft policy was distributed to all teachers inviting comments which led to the current document.

This policy affects all students who are aware of it, from the moment they arrive at WACA. The prefects committee – two representatives elected by their peers per class (so 14 students) – is invited to discuss this policy once a year and to confirm it or suggest amendments.

This policy is available publicly on the school's web site  
<http://www.waca-school.com/index.php>

Several items on the agenda of the first meeting of teachers each school year are dedicated to making sure that everyone knows this policy and inviting comment. The teachers responsible for each class must speak about it to the students from the first time they meet their new class at the beginning of the school year.

#### **Links with other school policies**

There are links between this assessment policy and the following policies:

- The language policy concerning the initial assessment of students with a lack of knowledge of French, or in the classes after Grade 7, of English.
- The academic honesty policy where the student must exercise integrity and moral rectitude while undertaking all the work and tests so that he/she does not give himself/herself an unfair advantage over his/her classmates.
- The school admissions policy where students wishing to enrol must undergo entry tests in French, English and mathematics.
- The special educational needs policy where students suffering from any incapacity have the right to an individualised assessment procedure aimed at attainable objectives and therefore more motivating for them while at the same time respecting the academic level of others.

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