



Assessment and Feedback Policy

May 2023



A framework for assessment – ECC May 2023

1. Introduction: Assessment aligned with curriculum and pedagogy

In recent educational history, it has very often been the case that assessment has become broadly synonymous with data and reporting. In many cases, assessment has become the servant of number-crunching and spreadsheets, often in the pursuit of ‘proving’ students or groups of students are making progress. The real purpose of assessment – understanding and supporting students’ learning and planning how to improve it – has, to varying degrees, been obscured. This framework sets out the principles and practice for a trust-wide approach to assessment which meets this core purpose.¹

As Sweller, Ayres and Kalyuga have said, **learning is defined as knowing more and remembering more** and as an alteration in long term memory - if nothing has been remembered, then nothing has been learned.² The primary purpose of assessment, therefore, is to understand the extent to which students *know more and remember more of the curriculum* they have experienced, and whether what they know is *flexible and secure in long-term memory*.

2. Aims and objectives

This framework has several important objectives, the most important of which is that assessment must be fit for purpose, in all contexts and domains. This framework achieves this by ensuring³:

- **A close link between assessment, curriculum and teaching.** Assessment is primarily about how well students are learning the intended curriculum. The outcomes of assessment should always influence decisions about teaching and the design of the curriculum.
- **Assessments are valid, reliable and used to help students to learn better.** Assessments should be designed to provide insight into students’ learning – it should never be ‘data-led’. However, assessment will be robust enough to provide valid and reliable information across different teachers and different cohorts or classes.
- **Reporting is meaningful and valid.** Where assessment outcomes are reported, these measures will be valid, meaningful and easily understood. A valid assessment will always measure what it purports to measure – it will not be used to generalise or distort.
- **Assessment methods must be efficient and not increase staff workload.** The outcomes from most formative assessments should not need to be recorded formally. There should not need to be more than three formal summative assessment points per year. Approaches to marking should be designed to ensure impact on learning and reduce the burden on staff.
- **End of key stage (and, where appropriate, end of year) assessments will be appropriately benchmarked.** At the current time KS3 and KS5 assessments are not formally benchmarked across our trust however KS4 mocks are.

3. Core principles

- **The primary purpose of assessment is to provide valid and reliable information about whether students are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** Assessment should always provide information about whether students can remember, in long-term memory, what they have learned. A further purpose of assessment is to provide information about the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy and how these can be improved.
- **Progress is defined as the extent to which a student or students have learned or are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** The curriculum is the progression model. It sets out

¹ This framework was initially drafted by E-ACT and reviewed by Prof. Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment, and incorporates his feedback.

² Sweller, J., Ayres, P., Kalyuga, S. (2011)

³ See Evidence Based Education, *The Four Pillars of Assessment*.

what we want students to learn, and therefore their 'progress'. If students are successfully learning the curriculum they must be making progress. Progress cannot be measured or 'proved'.⁴ Attempting to do so often sets up perverse incentives or practices such as teaching to the test.

- **There must always be a very close link between the curriculum and assessment.** Effective assessment will help teachers and students to pinpoint and diagnose any gaps in learning. In particular, assessment should always focus on the most important 'building blocks' - or components - on which future learning will be developed. Strong curriculum will set out clearly these key building blocks, and how they are sequenced to develop secure knowledge and understanding over time. The 'composite and component' approach to curriculum design will often support the most effective assessment practice.
- **Assessment should exploit the benefits of assessment on learning and memory.** The approach to assessment should always seek to make use of the 'testing effect'. Research has shown that regular assessment, if used in appropriate ways, strengthens long-term memory and recall.

4. Summative and formative assessment

- **Summative or cumulative assessments information should be gathered at least at three points during the year, which includes an end of year assessment.** Subject domains can, of course, also use summative approaches more frequently at other times (for example, at the ends of sequences or units of learning). Summative assessments should be designed to evaluate students' learning (of the curriculum) since the beginning of that unit, sequence or term/year, along with any content taught previously and considered essential to support current and future learning. We should note that there are often limitations in using summative assessments for diagnostic purposes.⁵
- **At other times, regular formative assessment will be the main approach.** The main aim is diagnostic and remedial: to identify whether important learning has been securely mastered and fluency achieved, with a focus on the most important building blocks (components) for future learning (as noted in the core principles, above). From lesson to lesson, this will only rarely take a 'formal' test-based format. There is no need to record or aggregate 'data' from such formative assessments, other than information the teacher feels necessary. Formative assessments will be 'low stakes' and will in the vast majority of cases, take the form of a 'low stakes test' focussed on retrieval.⁶ Teachers will deploy a range of strategies to gauge students' fluency and mastery of key knowledge and understanding. The impact of formative assessment will be evident through students' improved understanding and mastering of the curriculum.
- **The development of high quality assessment approaches is essential.** For example, research has shown that a high volume of high quality questions is a significant factor in effective assessment which supports improved learning. These questions are particularly effective in 'challenging, flushing out misconceptions, stimulating thought and so on. Teachers should design learning sequences – engaging with content – but at the same time think of high quality questions and the answers which would indicate the depth of understanding which is being aimed for.'

5. Tracking and reporting - Key Stage 3

- **National reporting measures, such as GCSE grades, should never be used to track students' attainment or progress.** It can be useful on occasions that certain features of GCSE style questions may be appropriate at KS3 may feature in assessments, for example 'command verbs'. This is because familiarity with test instruments is known to be a significant factor in students' performance in external tests and

⁴ Attempting to measure learning is inherently flawed (it is too complex) and very often reductive (applying a single numeric metric narrows our view of what has/has not actually been learned).

⁵ For example, summative assessment is often highly composite, so unless very skilfully interpreted and assessed, can lead to generic remedial action.

⁶ See Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction

examinations. However the use of 'flight path' methodology is faulty and has been demonstrated to lack validity as well as building in low expectations for many students.^{7 8}

- **Subjects should report on the extent to which students have successfully learned the intended curriculum.** To do this, each subject should make an assessment at three points in each academic year. Each assessment point should be synoptic (that is, assessing students' learning since the start of the year or key stage), and subjects are free to design the most suitable assessment tools for this purpose.

In order to do this, teachers should formally assess every student each term. The outcome of this needs to be centrally recorded in SIMS.

This assessment should draw primarily upon the teacher's knowledge of each student, through the range of formative and summative assessment approaches used.

6. Tracking and reporting - Key stages 4 and 5

- **In Key Stages 4/5, public examination grades (e.g. GCSE or A-level/equivalent) should be used to track students' attainment.** While formative assessment should continue to concentrate on the diagnosis and remediation of students' gaps in learning, summative approaches should make good use of examination questions and formats. This not only increases students' familiarity with examinations, it also ensures students receive feedback about the standards they are reaching. Subjects should therefore make sure that the summative assessments used for tracking and reporting purposes are moderated and benchmarked sufficiently to ensure reliability and validity. These will usually take the form of 'mock' exams. These take place in the summer term of Year 10 and then the Autumn and Spring Terms of Year 11.

7. Targets

- **Individual student targets should not be used in key stage 3.** There is considerable evidence of the negative impact of target setting on students' achievement and expectations of themselves, as well as teachers' expectations. Targets at a student level often lack validity and reliability and are sometimes derived from the inappropriate use of baseline measures.⁹
- **At key stages 4 and 5, students may be given individual targets based on examination high-expectations of all students.** The use of individual (and cohort) targets must not distort or unduly narrow the focus of the curriculum or teaching. This is particularly the case after mock outcomes and must be bespoke to each student and subject. Flight Path models such as ALPS or FFT will not be used routinely with students or parents/carers.

8. Benchmarking

- **There should be a single end-of-year assessment for each subject.**¹⁰ The end-of-year assessment should cover the curriculum content taught over the academic year. Subjects are free to devise assessments themselves, or to draw on test items from other sources (eg GCSE examinations). A key purpose of this assessment is to check the 'reasonableness' and consistency of in-year teacher assessments. Internal moderation of the end-of-year assessments should be undertaken using an appropriate sampling method. Reporting of end-of-year assessments in KS3 will use a common percentage

⁷ <https://learningspy.co.uk/assessment/how-do-we-know-students-are-marking-progress-part-1-the-problem-with-flightpaths/>

⁸ <https://researchschool.org.uk/public/docs/Dawn-Cox-Why-are-you-using-marks-and-grades-rEDlpswich19.pdf>

⁹ <https://bennewmark.wordpress.com/2017/09/10/why-target-grades-miss-the-mark/>

¹⁰ At other points, assessments may vary – for example, where students in different sets may follow different curricula.

approach. (See Appendix A) In Year 10 and Year 12, reporting should use the appropriate public examination scale.

- **At the end of key stage 3, subjects could make use of external assessments which assess students against National Curriculum expectations.** The main purpose is to validate the reliability and validity of teacher assessments. Students completing Key Stage 4 will, of course, take national examinations. Results from past examination series should be used to judge the effectiveness and reliability of summative assessments used in-year.

9. Accountability and workload

- **Accountability will be through existing review structures** These will consider whether curriculum intentions are appropriate and if assessments of students' learning are suitable and valid. Assessments will not be used in isolation to reach judgements about students' progress or attainment.
- **Assessment approaches should be implemented in ways which reduce staff workload.** For example, assessments made in KS3 should not be translated to other measures, such as GCSE grades, which would require the design and use of suitable criteria. Similarly, assessment in all key stages should draw heavily on information from informal, formative and summative assessments. There is no need for staff to routinely record information from informal assessments.
- **Approaches to marking should be impact evidence based.** Subjects should review their approaches to marking to ensure they are not increasing staff workload. For example, students' routine work should not normally be marked. Instead, subjects should identify a suitable number of assessment tasks which will be teacher-assessed. The purpose of teacher marking is to help the teacher understand gaps in learning for individual students or groups of students. Feedback to address these gaps should be provided as promptly as possible. It is not always necessary for such feedback to be written, or a record to be kept that feedback has been provided – evidence of improvement in students' learning or quality of work will usually be sufficient. For most purposes, responsive teaching, including through whole-class, or individual, verbal feedback is normally the most effective strategy.

Appendix A: Summary of timeframe and reporting

Year	When?	Content	Output
7	End of Year	All CREs	%score student/class/year
8	End of Year	All CREs*	%score student/class/year
9	Spring Term (2024)	All CREs*	%score student/class/year
10	Summer Term	Mock 1	Grade and percentage
11	Nov/Feb/Summer	Mock 2/3 Exams	Grade and percentage
12	Spring Term/Summer	Mock 1/Exams	Grade and percentage
13	Nov/Feb/Summer	Mock 2/3 Exams	Grade and percentage