

Assessment Policy

Mercyhurst Preparatory School

Philosophy

We are committed to creating a community of scholars, that is, a community in which all students consistently strive for their personal best. We believe that it is the responsibility of the Mercyhurst Preparatory School community to offer a rigorous, challenging, and intellectually and personally stimulating curriculum that aligns with the expectations and standards of Pennsylvania, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and the International Baccalaureate Organization. We believe that the role of assessment is to provide appropriate and timely feedback to teachers, students, and parents so that all may work together to guide our students in reaching the aforementioned standard of personal best. It is the expectation of Mercyhurst Prep that all students and teachers approach assessment with integrity.

What is assessment?

According to the IB document *Assessment Principles and Practices*, “assessment is a term used to cover all of the various methods by which student achievement can be evaluated.”

Assessment instruments may include, but are not limited to quizzes, examinations, extended practical work, projects, portfolios, cooperative tasks, presentations, exhibitions, laboratory experiments, discussion, oral interaction with peers and/or teacher, essays and research papers.

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It is an integral part of the planning, teaching, and learning process. Relevant, fair, authentic and varied assessment is needed to support curricular goals and to encourage and stimulate student learning. Research shows that the most effective grading practices provide valuable feedback designed to enhance student growth and performance. First and foremost, assessment is important because it drives student learning.

Assessment should be both formative and summative. The former includes daily checks for understanding and can take a variety of forms. The purpose of formative assessment is to provide a steady stream of information about individual and whole group mastery levels so that this information may be used in further planning of learning activities, differentiating instruction if appropriate, and providing timely feedback to the student so that s/he may improve in mastery of skill and/or content. Examples of formative assessment include but are not limited to daily homework, journaling, labs, practice exams, skills exercises, class discussion, quizzes, group and pair activities, peer evaluation and teacher-supported self-evaluation. Very recently, IB has identified three approaches to effective formative assessment designs: formative assessment as practice, as scaffolding, and as holistic learning experiences. MPS will continue to explore and implement these emerging approaches. (*IB Diploma Programme: From Principles into Practice; IB Teaching and Learning Informed by Assessment in the Diploma Programme*)

Summative assessments are those assessments that are administered at the end of a unit of study and are designed to allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the content and skills studied. The scoring of summative assessments will utilize detailed assessment descriptors such as MPS/IB grading criteria and rubrics.

Examples of summative assessments include but are not limited to exams, projects, some labs, presentations, portfolios, standardized tests, exhibitions and essays. (*IB Assessment Principles and Practices*)

IB assessments are criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced. This means that a rubric is used to judge each student's work in relation to identified standards and criterion formulated by the IB and found in IB subject guides rather than against the work of other students. (*IB Assessment Principles and Practices*)

Purposes of Assessment

To encourage appropriate student learning

To monitor and evaluate student progress towards meeting Pennsylvania, Middle States, and IB standards

To provide feedback to students, parents, teachers and administrators

To assist in incorporating best practices

To foster positive attitudes toward learning

To support teacher effectiveness

To evaluate appropriate course placement

To assist in curriculum review

To develop and promote critical thinking skills

To develop international minded students who conscientiously practice the *IB Learner Profile* characteristics:

- **Inquirers:** They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
- **Knowledgeable:** They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
- **Thinkers:** They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
- **Communicators:** They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
- **Principled:** They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
- **Open-minded:** They understand and appreciate their own culture and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other

individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

- Caring: They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
- Risk-takers: They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.
- Balanced: They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.
- Reflective: They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

Principles of Assessment

Assessment is very important because it drives student learning, teacher planning, and curriculum revision. Administrators, teachers, the IBC, students, and parents must work together to enable students to maximize their potential.

(Portions of the following bulleted lists were originally adapted from the assessment document of Scotts Valley High School, Scotts Valley, California, with permission from that institution)

Effective assessment encourages **students** to:

- Set goals for success
- Be independent thinkers
- Demonstrate understanding of material
- Utilize a variety of learning styles
- Be self-motivated
- Develop good time management skills
- Reflect on their strengths and on areas needing improvement
- Be life-long learners (*MPS Belief Statement*)
- Be people of integrity (*MPS Academic Integrity Policy, MPS Graduate Profile*)

Effective assessment encourages **teachers** to:

- Analyze assessment data to identify student needs
- Provide for a variety of multimodal assessments, both formative and summative
- Recognize student strengths and learning styles
- Employ assessments in accordance with Pennsylvania, Middle States, and IB guidelines

- Focus on student learning outcomes
- Provide timely written and oral feedback with concrete and specific details
- Make students aware of criteria required to produce a quality product
- Apply criteria fairly and accurately
- Guide students to improvement positively and constructively
- Keep clear and detailed records
- Clarify, model, and encourage academic integrity (*Academic Integrity Policy*)
- Post summative assessment results to *Power School* in a timely fashion so that students and parents may be aware of student progress

Effective assessment encourages **parents** to:

- Monitor assessments and student progress
- Communicate productively with their children regarding their academic progress
- Correspond purposefully with teachers, guidance counselors, the IBC and administrators
- Work with school personnel to best support the learning of their children

Effective assessment encourages **administrators** to:

- Provide time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and review assessment data
- Provide training and PD opportunities for new teachers
- Offer in-service and PD workshops on assessment best practice and strategies
- Encourage teachers to share best assessment strategies and provide a forum for an open conversation among teachers and administrators
- Study assessment data to develop strategies to improve student achievement
- Help teachers to recognize and develop valuable and fair assessments
- Use data to recognize curriculum strengths and weaknesses
- Work with teachers to review and revise curriculum and assessments when appropriate

Communication of Assessment Policies

Students and parents are made aware of both the MPS and the IB assessment criteria by:

- Teachers' syllabi
- Teachers' instruction
- Guidance meetings with student and/or parents
- Informational materials distributed in grade 9
- Informational meetings with the IBC held in grades 10, 11, and 12
- Scheduling meeting with the IBC and/or counselors in grades 10 and 11
- Individual meetings with students and parents
- Open House
- MPS Website

Grading

Mercyhurst Prep expects all students to meet or exceed minimum academic standards for their own benefit and that of the entire school community. (*MPS Student Handbook*)

In all IB courses, the IB grading scale is applied using IB assessment criteria and rubrics as specified in each IB subject guide. Performance in each IB subject is graded on a scale of 1-7 according to the DP grade descriptors, with 7 being the highest grade. For TOK and EE, grades are awarded on a scale from A to E, with A being the highest grade.

The IB grading scale is applied in conjunction with and in addition to the standard MPS grading scale listed in the MPS Student Handbook.

MPS Grading Scale

A	93-100%
B+	90-92%
B	85-89%
C+	82-84%
C	75-81%
D	70-74%
F	69 - Below

Incomplete Grades: Designation of incomplete (I) on a report card indicates coursework not completed due to unusual or unforeseen circumstances. Students have two weeks after the end of the term to submit such work for credit. Extenuating circumstances will be handled on an individual basis when deemed necessary. (*MPS Student Handbook*)

Grade Reporting: Students' grades are continuously available on line at <http://gradebook.mpslakers.com>. Parents and students receive login and password instructions each year that allow them to access current academic standing in all courses. Regular checking is advised. If at any time a parent wishes to communicate with a teacher about his/her student's progress, an e-mail can be sent.

Make-up Work: The student is responsible for making up missed work upon returning to school in accordance with the individual course policy listed on the syllabus. The day the student returns to school it is his/her responsibility to contact his/her teachers regarding work missed. Assigned tasks can be accessed and completed work submitted via Schoology during absence if the student is able.

Homework: Homework will be assigned regularly. It is an independent activity given to support learning or to demonstrate learning. It should be an appropriate extension of class work.

Academic Integrity: It is expected that all students will exercise academic integrity in all aspects of their work. (*IB Academic Integrity; MPS Student Handbook and MPS Academic Integrity Policy*)

Access and Inclusion: MPS in accordance with IB "believes that all students should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Standard assessment conditions may put some candidates at a disadvantage by preventing them from demonstrating their level of attainment. Inclusive access arrangements may be applied in these circumstances if it is observed that they could reduce or minimize barriers" for the student (*IB Access and Inclusion Policy*). Such arrangements follow the guidelines set forth in the *MPS Access and Inclusion Policy and IB Access and Inclusion Policy*.

IB Assessments (*IB Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures*):

Internal Assessment

Internal Assessment allows some student assessment to be conducted by teachers over the course of the class. Teachers mark individual pieces of work according to the IB criteria and this grade counts as a portion of the overall IB grade. A sampling of the teacher- marked work is sent to a moderator who evaluates the teacher's application of the IB criteria and grade descriptors.

At the beginning of the academic year, all IB teachers and the IBC collaborate on the creation of a calendar for the completion of Internal Assessments. It is designed to arrange the due dates of tasks in order to avoid a convergence of due dates for multiple tasks to the degree possible. The calendar is shared with each IB teacher and it is posted on the IB bulletin board.

Internal Assessment grades are submitted by IB teachers to the IBC by the end of March.

External Assessment

External Assessments are conducted and overseen by the IBC, teachers or invigilators and then sent to be graded externally by qualified examiners. Examples of external assessments include Extended Essay, English A Literature Higher Level Essays, TOK Prescribed Title Essays, and the end of course exams.

Predicted Grades

The Predicted Grade is the teacher's prediction of the grade that the candidate will receive in the subject. This grade is based on all of the evidence of the candidate's work and the teacher's knowledge of the IB DP grade descriptors, guidelines and standards.

Predicted Grades are submitted by IB teachers to the IBC by the end of March.

IB Diploma Award Regulations

Performance in each of the six Diploma subjects is graded on a scale of 1-7, with 7 being the highest. A maximum of 3 bonus points is awarded for combined performance in Theory of Knowledge and on the Extended Essay. To earn an IB Diploma the maximum score is 45 points and the minimum score is 24 points.

The IB Diploma will be awarded to a candidate whose total score is 24 or above, provided all of the following requirements are met:

- Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) is completed.
- Both Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay have been completed with a grade of at least D in both.
- There is no grade 1 in any subject/level.
- There are no more than two grade 2 in any subject (HL or SL).
- Overall, there are no more than three grades 3 or below (HL or SL).
- At least 12 points have been gained on HL subjects (for candidates who register for four HL subjects, the three highest grades count).
- At least 9 points have been gained on SL subjects (candidates who register for 2 SL subjects must gain at least 5 points at SL).
- The final award committee has not judged the candidate to be guilty of academic misconduct (see *IB Academic Integrity*)
(*IB Assessment Principles and Practices; IB Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures*)

References

IB Assessment Principles and Practices

IB Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures

IB Diploma Programme: From Principles into Practice

IB Guidelines for Developing a School Assessment Policy in the Diploma Programme

IB Learner Profile

IB Teaching and Learning Informed by Assessment in the Diploma Programme

MPS Academic Integrity Policy

MPS Access and Inclusion Policy

MPS Community of Scholars

MPS Student Handbook

Scotts Valley High School Assessment Policy

In order to ensure alignment of Mercyhurst Preparatory School's assessment policy with IB philosophy and expectations an outline was initially created by the previous IBC. The above listed documents were studied and pertinent information was accessed for the outline and/or subsequent drafts, revisions and updates. This policy document shall be reviewed and updated biennially by the IBC, Academic Council, and IB teachers.

Last reviewed and updated March, 2022.