



Blackrock College
Assessment Policy

Preamble:

Blackrock College is a mixed ability school which provides an inclusive educational milieu centered on 'Fides et Robur' which is articulated on a daily basis by 'Be Caring, Be There, Be Truthful, Be Grateful'.

Each student is encouraged to be the best he can be spiritually, academically, socially, intellectually and culturally. Assessment, both formative and summative, formal and informal, supports this intention.

Definitions:

The term "Assessment" refers generally to the gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a student's learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and areas of learning that need addressing.

Formative Assessment refers to the methods that teachers and learners use to conduct in-process evaluations of a student's comprehension, learning needs and academic progress during a lesson and prompts an adjustment in teaching in order to support effective learning.

Summative Assessment evaluates student learning at the end of an instructional unit.

Assessment Policy Statement:

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In order to fulfill this requirement, we have developed assessment procedures which provide an accurate account of a student's application and progress.

Aims of the Policy:

This Assessment Policy aims to

- Explain the rationale and importance of assessments
- List the different types of assessments
- Detail the annual schedule of assessments
- Detail the reporting procedures post assessments
- Outline with whom the assessment information will be shared.
- Explain how assessment information will be shared with others.
- Outline the retention schedule for the storing of assessment information.

Rationale for Assessment:

Assessment is an essential part of good teaching and learning for the following reasons:

1. Assessment enables the Teacher to monitor a student's progress and make decisions about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in advancing the student's learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessment provides the students and parents with information regarding progress.
3. Assessment helps to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate.
4. Assessment helps identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
5. Assessment assists school management in identifying students, subjects, classes and areas of the curriculum that require further timetabled support.
6. Assessment plays an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.

Types of Assessment:

There are two main types of in Blackrock College, Assessment for Learning (AfL – informal, formative) and Assessment of Learning (AoL – formal, summative)

Formative Assessment (AfL):

1. Definition - the goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching, by students to improve their learning and by parents to improve their understanding of their son's learning in their courses.
2. Blackrock College is in the process of embedding/has adopted the assessment for learning (AfL) approach to formative assessment. The assessment for learning approach is formative because its intention is to form, shape or guide the next steps in learning. It is about 'learning to learn'. Blackrock College is cognisant that not all aspects of this approach are of benefit in all curriculum areas and the discretion of the teacher is advised to adapt the theory to suit the particular demands of the subject.
3. Blackrock College aims to implement AfL using the following methods:
 - Effective use of questioning: basing the questioning within a class in line with Bloom's Taxonomy moving from lower-order questioning to higher order thinking where appropriate.
 - Sharing Learning Outcomes with students at the beginning of a lesson.
 - Sharing features of quality/criteria for success with students – WILF (What I'm Looking for) so that students know exactly what is expected, leading to a point where students themselves will set the success criteria, where appropriate.
 - Comment-only marking: Teachers will periodically engage in comment-only feedback which will include – what the student has done well; where the student might improve; how that improvement might be made.

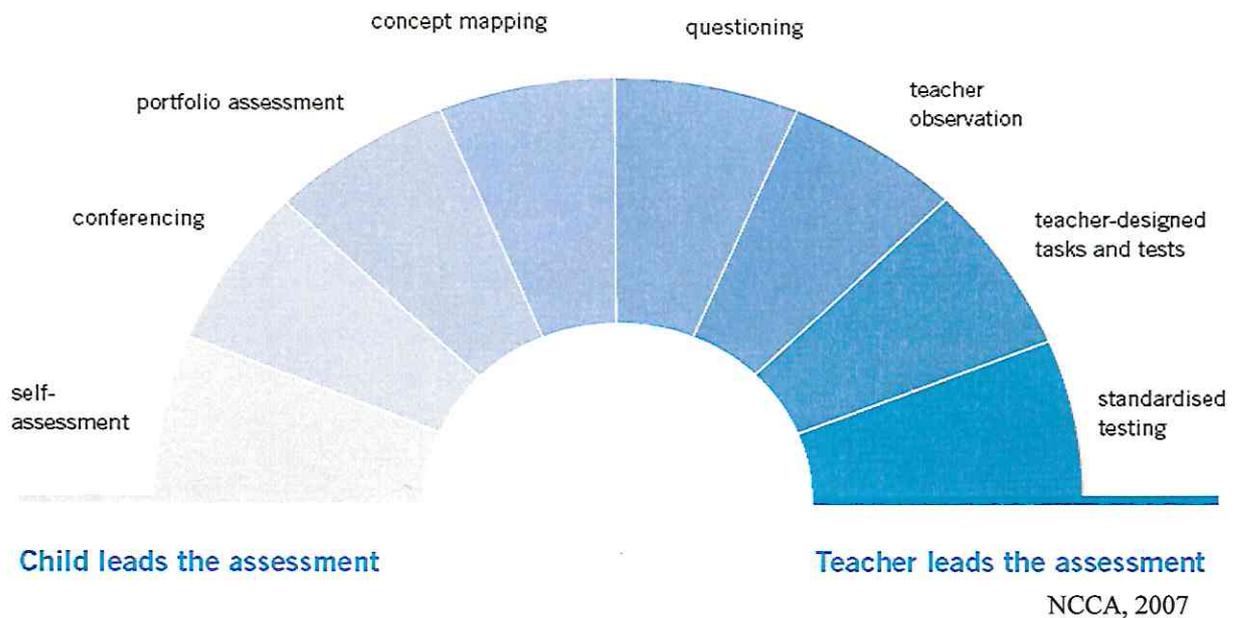
- Peer Assessment and Self-Assessment: Teachers will, occasionally, supervise students to correct their own or their peer's work based on a rubric or list of success criteria.
4. In line with the demands of the syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers set regular homework and comment on the merits of work and make suggestions for improvement. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in any assessment process.
 5. Assessment work may be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of an individual student.
 6. The use of E-Portfolios – electronic portfolios – a good e-portfolio is both about being a product (a digital collection of artefacts) and a process (of reflecting on those artefacts and what they represent). Development of E-Portfolios is in its infancy in Blackrock College, concerns about levels of access and general data protection regulation will be taken into account during its development.

Summative Assessment (AoL):

1. Definition - summative assessment refers to the Assessment of Learning (AoL) and aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner.
2. There are many types of summative assessments that take place in the school. The results of these generally form the basis for the reports issued to parents.
3. Blackrock College aims to implement AoL using the following methods:
 - Weekly Application Cards
 - Monthly Progress Cards
 - House Examinations
 - Aptitude Tests
 - Orals
 - Classroom based assessment
 - State Examination

Figure 1. below illustrates eight possible assessment methods which can be used in any classroom across all subject departments. Each of these assessment methods can be used for Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL).

Figure 1. A continuum of assessment methods



Reporting Procedures:

There are many different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to students and parents.

Non Standardised Reports

- Student Journal – the teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents/guardian of a student by writing the result or a note in the student journal. The parent/guardian is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.
- Direct Contact - the teacher may decide as they see fit to contact the parent/guardian directly with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student. This may also be done through the Dean.
- Signature of Parent on Assessment – the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Parents may access their child's academic records through the e-portal system.
- Parent Teacher Meetings – there are Parent Teacher Meetings for all year groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings it will be possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians of individual students that generate an accurate picture of the students' application and progress.

Standardised Reports

There are two types of Report Card in use in the College:

1. ***Weekly Application Cards*** give an individual teacher's assessment of the EFFORT made by a pupil during that week.
2. ***Progress Cards*** are marked every four/five weeks. The marks based on class tests/assessments indicate the STANDARD attained by a pupil in the subject matter covered in class in the preceding weeks.

We attach a great deal of importance to the Report Cards. Cards are returned to boys every Monday. Parents should review them with their son. Failure to do so, on a weekly basis, forfeits the many opportunities that arise for affirmation of your son's efforts. It also diminishes opportunities to assist where a deterioration in work is evident and an immediate response is the priority.

Examinations

1. ***There are full-scale examinations at the end of the Christmas and Easter terms.*** Marked scripts are returned to pupils. Reports are sent to parents giving examination results and comments by the Dean of the Year on a pupil's punctuality, conduct, attitude and involvement in extra-curricular activities. In all years, adjustments may be made to classes based on these results.
2. ***Formal examinations*** take place in **2nd and 5th Year** at the end of Term 3 to monitor progress since Easter. A summer report will follow. Portfolio Assessment Interviews will take place at the end of Term 3 in Transition Year. Parents are afforded the opportunity of discussing all aspects of their son's education in the College with class teachers at Parent-Teacher meetings during the course of the year or with Deans by appointment.

The New Junior Cycle profile of Assessment will include classroom based assessments.

The Dean

The Dean of the Year plays a key role in the monitoring of the cards. Boys whose cards are consistently of poor standard either through behavior or application will incur Friday or Saturday Detention. The Counsellor will meet boys who have such difficulty and will provide advice on classroom behavior and /or study skills.

The Dean also comments on the attitude, application and engagement of each boy in Christmas and Easter reports.

Guidance

The Guidance and Counselling Department of Blackrock College play a key role in the whole school plan.

1. Counselling

The personal well-being of each boy is central to the Blackrock College Mission. Individual counselling plays an important role in the Mental, Physical, Spiritual, Social, and Intellectual development of each boy. Each year group has a counsellor who supports the Dean in the care of the boys.

Counsellors are always happy to see a student who can be referred to them through their Dean. This referral can come via the student themselves, a Parent or a Teacher.

2. Career Guidance

One of the most important decisions the boys will make is that of career choice. The purpose of guidance and Counselling in Blackrock College is to empower each student to get to know his Abilities, Skills, Talents, Interests and Values so that when he reaches his final year he will be able to choose a third level course and plan a career that suits his needs and abilities. There is a Career guidance counsellor in each year of Senior Cycle - Transition year, 5th year and 6th year.

Psychometric Tests

In Transition year the student Eirquest Test (CAT4) provides a robust, standardised measure of cognitive reasoning ability. With CAT4, you get invaluable insight into the student's ability to reason across four distinct batteries: verbal, non-verbal, mathematical and spatial, as compared to the national average. Also in Transition year the Students complete The Eirquest Career Guidance Programme, from Cambridge Occupational Analysts. Comprising of a questionnaire about their interests, abilities and personal qualities without the pressure of time. Their answers are then used to produce a careers guidance workbook covering around 50 broad career areas. Students are encouraged to complete their workbooks using their Action Plan, Career Analysis Forms, The Careers Directory and by acquiring relevant work experience and advice.

At the end of 5th year the students complete the Centigrade questionnaire, also from Cambridge Occupational Analysts. It comprises of a specially designed questionnaire where your responses are then analysed and matched with all the courses available and the results compiled into a personalised workbook. The use of Centigrade can significantly improve the quality of your decision-making and thus reduce the risk of selecting the wrong course.

Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Assessments

Sixth class are tested in December in Willow Park Senior School. We use SIGMA-T Level 5 and NGRT Group Reading Test. (New Students). This helps to identify students with AEN issues entering Willow Park Senior School in August.

Students transferring from Willow Park Junior School to Senior School (First Year) are tested with Drumcondra Primary Maths Test, Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test (May of 6th Class).

Willow Park Senior School also use the CAT (Cognitive Attainment Test) to test all First Years.

These tests are transferred from Willow Park Senior School when the boys move to Blackrock College in August. The resource teacher transfers all of her notes in June to the AEN Department in Blackrock College.

Blackrock College: WRAT 4 is used on students with learning difficulties. Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) is taken by 4th years to test their ability. These scores help to assist Career Guidance with regard to the choice of careers that would suit each student.

Blackrock College students may also participate in DOTS (Drumcondra On-line Testing System) during 2nd year, the tests focus on the areas of Maths and Reading.

Dyslexia Screener Test is used on students that query dyslexia.

Hedderly Sentence Completion Test is used on students to test their handwriting and legibility.

Standardised and International Testing

Ireland takes part in a number of large-scale national and international assessments, overseen by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. At any time, Blackrock College may be selected to take part in these studies. The following tests are applicable to second level students involved in the studies:

TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) – 2nd year

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) – 15 year old students

Willow Park Junior School	Willow Park Senior School	Blackrock College
Drumcondra Primary Maths Test: (Administered in May of 6 th Class)	SIGMA-T (maths attainment)	WRAT4 and WIAT-II are administered in the College if students are under performing. It is also used for RACE and DARE DOTS – may be administered to 2 nd year students. The results can be useful in identifying AEN students.
Drumcondra Primary English Test (Administered in May of 6 th Class)	Level 5 NGRT (administered in December of 6 th class to incoming 1 st year students not attending Willow Park Junior School)	
Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test (Administered in May of 6 th Class)	CAT (Cognitive Ability Test) Administered in September of First Year. The results are uploaded to SIMS. All tests results are transferred to College in June (up-coming 2 nd Years) A hard copy of the results is also kept in the AEN office.	Eirquest is used at the start of Transition Year to identify interest in careers in order to assist subject selection. GS distributes the results and they are kept on file in ND's office.
		CAT is administered in 4 th Year during the final term. This test, tests students' overall ability. It has a dual purpose; (i) AEN (ii) Career Choice It takes one day to administer and results are uploaded to SIMS Centigrade is administered at the end of 5 th Year to prompt further career discussion. It is returned at the beginning of 6 th Year by ND and kept on file in her office.
		Hedderly Sentence Completion Test. This test, tests student's handwriting speed and legibility
		Dyslexia Screener Test is used on students that query dyslexia.

Glossary of tests

DOTS – Drumcondra On-line Testing System (focuses on reading and maths)

WRAT4 – Wide Range Achievement Test (reading, spelling and maths computation)

WIAT II – Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (reading, language and numerical attainment)

CAT4 – Cognitive Abilities Test 4th Edition (verbal, non-verbal, mathematical and spatial reasoning)

SIGMA-T – mathematics attainment tests

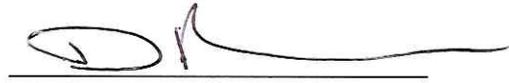
NGRT – New Group Reading Test (reading and comprehension)

TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (maths and science achievement)

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment (reading, science, maths, creative thinking will be assessed in 2021)

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on 30.01.19

Signed:



Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:



Secretary, Board of Management

Appendix 1
Bloom's Taxonomy: Question Stems

REMEMBER / KNOWLEDGE		
What is ____? Where is ____? Who were the main ____? Why did ____? When did ____? How would you show ____?	How did ____ happen? Which one ____? How is ____? When did ____ happen? List three ____. How would you describe ____?	What do you recall about ____? Select ____. How would you explain ____? Who was ____?
UNDERSTAND / COMPREHENSION		
How would you explain ____? How would you identify ____? How are these alike? Different? How would you differentiate between ____? What do you conclude from ____?	What characteristics identify ____? What is the difference between ____? What relationship exists between ____? What patterns exist ____?	What could be a reason for ____? What can you interpret from the graph/table? Which does not belong? What would happen if ____?
APPLY / APPLICATION		
How would you make use of ____? How does ____ apply to ____? How would you modify ____?	How would you use the facts to investigate ____? Using what you know, how would you design ____?	Predict what would happen if ____? What would result if ____?

<p>Under what conditions would you ____?</p> <p>How could you apply what you have read to construct ____?</p>	<p>Utilize ____ to ____.</p> <p>Illustrate a way to ____.</p> <p>What other way would you demonstrate ____?</p> <p>Identify the results if ____?</p>	<p>Show me a way to organize ____.</p> <p>Why does ____ work?</p> <p>Using what you have learned, how would you solve ____?</p>
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ANALYZE / ANALYSIS

<p>Determine what could have caused ____?</p> <p>Discuss the pros and cons of ____?</p> <p>Explain why it is not possible for ____.</p> <p>How would you order ____?</p> <p>How would you document ____?</p> <p>Justify your conclusion about ____.</p> <p>Why do you think ____?</p> <p>What fallacies influenced ____?</p>	<p>What are the components of ____?</p> <p>What is the reason for ____?</p> <p>What observations can you make from ____?</p> <p>What evidence will support/refute ____?</p> <p>What relationship exists between ____?</p> <p>What inference can you make/were made from ____?</p>	<p>What assumptions can you make/were made about ____?</p> <p>What is your analysis of ____?</p> <p>What ideas validate ____?</p> <p>What conclusions can you deduce ____?</p> <p>Under what conditions ____?</p> <p>Using the assumption of the ____ theory, analyze ____?</p>
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EVALUATE / SYNTHESIZE

<p>Create/propose an alternative to ____?</p> <p>How would you improve ____?</p> <p>Devise a way to ____?</p>	<p>Propose a hypothesis/an experiment for ____.</p> <p>Develop a model to represent ____.</p>	<p>What could be done to integrate ____?</p> <p>How would you test ____?</p> <p>What would happen if ____?</p>
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<p>Hypothesize the reason for ____?</p> <p>Design a fair test for ____.</p> <p>Predict the outcome of ____?</p> <p>Develop a theory to explain ____.</p>	<p>Think of an original way to represent ____.</p> <p>Develop an experiment to determine ____.</p> <p>What solutions would you suggest for ____?</p> <p>Elaborate on ____.</p>	<p>How would you combine ____ to create a different ____?</p> <p>What changes would you make to revise ____?</p>
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CREATE / EVALUATION

<p>Based upon the evidence, explain your choice.</p> <p>Compare the ideas of ____.</p> <p>How else would you ____?</p> <p>How would you critique ____?</p> <p>How would you interpret ____?</p> <p>How would you verify ____?</p>	<p>How would you determine the facts about ____?</p> <p>How would you prove/disprove ____?</p> <p>Rate the ____.</p> <p>State a case that would support/reject ____.</p> <p>What is the most important ____?</p> <p>What data was used to evaluate ____?</p> <p>What would you conclude about ____?</p>	<p>What is the significance of ____?</p> <p>What criteria would you use to assess ____?</p> <p>What choice would you have in ____ situation?</p> <p>What data was used to evaluate ____?</p> <p>What is your opinion of ____?</p> <p>Which ____ is valid?</p> <p>Would it be better if ____? Why/why not?</p>
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Appendix 2
Relevant Sections from Blackrock College Records Retention Schedule –
Data Protection Policy

Student Records	Vol Sec.	Final disposition	Comments
Attendance Records	Indefinitely	N/A	Indefinitely. Archive when class leaves + 2 years
State exam results	N/A	N/A	SEC responsibility to retain, not a requirement for the College

Records relating to pupils/students	Vol Sec.	Confidential shredding	Comments
<p>These records include:</p> <p>Application forms, Enrolment forms, Scholarship applications, Student transfer forms, Disciplinary notes, Results of in-school tests/exams (i.e. end of term, end of year exams, assessment results), End of term/year reports, Records of school tours/trips, including permission slips, itinerary reports, Gaeltacht, book rental scheme</p>	25 years after a student leaves the College	Confidential shredding	

Sensitive Personal Data Students	Vol Sec.	Final disposition	Comments
Psychological assessments	Indefinitely	N/A - Never destroy	Never destroy
Additional Educational Needs' files, reviews, correspondence and Individual Education Plans	Indefinitely	N/A	Never destroy

Appendix 3
Legislative Requirements for Blackrock College Assessment Policy

- The Education Act 1998
- The Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003
- The Equal Status Act
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act (2004)
- The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997, 2003.