



## **SHS -Assessment Policy**

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### **Our Mission Statement**

***To provide a holistic education in the Mercy tradition***

### **Our Vision**

“In keeping with the Mercy tradition, we seek to achieve the holistic development and the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. We strive to ensure that our students leave our school with a healthy self-image, enhanced by the life skills and abilities necessary to make a positive contribution to society.”

### **A Voluntary Secondary School**

Ours is what is known as a Voluntary Secondary School for girls. It dates from 1836 when the Mercy Sisters started a school soon after they arrived in Tullamore and founded their second house here.

The school is now a member of CEIST (Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust) and is managed by a Board of Management.

### **A Catholic School**

A Catholic school helps students to develop their understanding of their faith. Ours is a Catholic school, but it is not a school for Catholics only. Due to the universal, non-discriminatory nature of Catholicism and the value it places on

ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, seeing God at work in all people, Catholic schools are open to the admission of pupils of all faiths and none.

Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness and sees the presence of children from other denominations as an enrichment of the educational experience and an opportunity for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.

## **Policy on Assessment Sacred Heart School Tullamore**

### **Scope of the Assessment Policy:**

The term “Assessment” refers generally to the gathering, collating and interpretation of information related to a student’s learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and areas of learning that need addressing.

### **Legislation framework for Assessment**

The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student’s progress and achievement.

### **Aims of the Policy:**

This Assessment Policy aims to:

1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments
2. List the different types of assessments and their purpose
3. Detail the schedule of assessments and feedback
4. Detail of CBA’s and Assessment Tasks (AT’s)
5. Outline New Junior Cycle
6. Explain the purpose of Psychometric Assessments
7. Outline Accredited Grades and Assessment Process

### **Rationale for Assessment:**

Rationale - Why Assess?

The term “Assessment” refers generally to the gathering and interpretation of information related to a student’s learning abilities, learning attainments, learning strengths and learning needs. Assessment is part of good teaching and learning and takes place for the following reasons:

1. Assessments enable 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 students learning and adapt teaching strategies and learning activities as appropriate.
2. Assessments help to identify appropriate subject levels for students in the Junior and Leaving Certificate.
3. Assessments help identify students who may need additional support and services and to inform consultations with the NEPS psychologist where necessary.
4. Assessments assist school management in identifying students, subjects, classes and areas of the curriculum that require further timetabled support.
5. Assessments play an important role in subject choice, career guidance and progression to third level and further education.
6. Monitor a student's progress and to provide the teacher with information about what and how the student is learning. This information allows the teacher to identify the next steps in progressing the student's learning and to adapt teaching strategies and/or learning activities as appropriate.
7. Provide the student and his parents with information regarding his progress.
8. Establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects
9. Assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional or agency for assessment or direct intervention.
10. Teach students to assess their own work.
11. Agreed assessment practice among staff is noted as one of the most effective tools in promoting quality teaching & learning.

## **Types of Assessment**

Assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle subjects:

A new dual approach to assessment has been introduced that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle. This new approach

measures and reports achievement at the end of those three years. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment. This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

### **Formative Assessment: (Assessment for Learning)**

Formative assessment is ongoing and involves teachers and students reflecting on how learning is progressing and deciding on the next steps to ensure successful outcomes.

It involves a shift from focusing mainly on summative judgments to engaging in ongoing activities that can be used to support next stages of learning. A vital part of formative assessment is the feedback that teachers provide to their students and students' feedback to teachers. Through a range of assessment for learning strategies the teacher helps the student to identify what has been achieved and where there is room for further learning and development. Classroom-Based Assessments in subjects (CBAs) have been introduced to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts and skills and their ability to apply them in ways that may not be possible in an externally assessed examination. They will be used in the assessment of learning in subjects and in short courses. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be assessed by the students' teachers and reported on to students and parents/guardians during junior cycle and in the JCPA. Students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher, one in second year and one in third year. Classroom-Based Assessments in all subjects will be specified at a common level. (Due to Covid19 in 20-21 school year there are changes to the number of CBA's that need to be completed.)

### **Informal Assessment**

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature, and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who will use them

constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in this process. Where appropriate, teachers will keep records of these assessments to provide an insight into a students' progress and to fully inform them regarding the learning process.

### **Informal Assessments methods include –**

Worksheets & written classwork

Questions and answers in class

Essays, projects & assignments

Reading & writing in Class Sample exam questions

Homework – written or learned Presentations Performances

Subject Departments are encouraged to plan similar assessments to enhance the practice of collaboration and shared practice.

Correction of assessments should take place within a seven -day period.

Research notes that the more immediate the feedback on assessment, the more effective for the student's learning process.

### **Implementation of Formative Assessment**

In our implementation of formative assessment, it and may involve using some of the following methods:

- **Learning Intentions:** Teachers will share the learning intentions with students at an appropriate time in each lesson, refer back to them throughout the lesson and again at the end of the lesson where deemed necessary. This will help to clarify what the student was supposed to have learned and will assist both teachers and students in determining the levels to which the outcomes have been achieved.
- **Features of Quality/Criteria for Success:** Teachers will tell students in advance of a piece of work what exactly they will be looking for when assessing it. Teachers are aware that it is important to share this information with students beforehand so that they will be in a better position to know what is expected of them. They can also decide how far they want to push themselves.
- **Self-assessment:** Teachers will, from time to time, supervise students to correct their own work, based on a list of criteria for success. Departmental rules/guidelines are applied to suit specific subject needs. Following such

methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it.

- **Peer-assessment:** Teachers will also, from time to time, supervise students to correct their peer's work, based on a list of criteria for success. Following such methods, teachers will encourage students to reflect on their work and write down how they can improve and assist them in achieving it.

- **Formative feedback:** Teachers, from time to time, will engage in comment only feedback. It allows both the teacher and the student to identify the next steps in learning. This includes the following:

- What the student has done well
- Where the areas for improvement are
- How the improvement might be made

## Feedback

Oral feedback to students is an effective method of highlighting strengths, weaknesses and target areas for improvement. It is therefore necessary to use effective dialogue appropriate to the student. Most feedback between students and teachers will be in the form of oral communication. Oral feedback happens frequently and can be given following homework exercises, classwork, class questioning, or examinations. Teachers the SHS are advised to follow the feedback protocols agreed for this.

Written feedback happens from time to time and can be given following homework exercises, classwork, or examinations. Recording all feedback to learners in written form can impinge on valuable time for learning and teaching. Therefore, it is not expected that all feedback should be provided in written form. In the case of school reports, teachers endeavour to comment on how the student can make progress.(See Appendix 1)

**We recognise in the SHS that the following are key classroom practices and strategies needed for AFL:**

- a positive classroom culture and ethos, which encourages students to think and talk about their learning and which provides a safe place for open, honest and respectful discussion.

- questioning skills (student to teacher/ teacher to student/ student to student), which stimulate thinking and reflecting on learning and explicit teaching of how to consciously reflect on what one knows and how to make an evaluative comment on it

- frequent identification and review of learning goals through teacher-directed discussion, clearly defining learning objectives and success criteria thereby empowering

- a recognition and acknowledgement of the purpose and importance of collaboration between home and school in the student's learning process. This may be facilitated by various means including web resources.

### **Summative Assessment**

Assessment of Learning (AoL) Definition:

Summative Assessment refers to the assessment of learning and aims to provide a summary of the achievements of the learner. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students, and parents, on the level of each students' attainment and learning in that specific subject area. The following are some of the AoL practices used in the SHS:

- All years have in class tests to provide results for Christmas reports. Junior Certificate/Cycle and Leaving Certificate have Mock examinations in early February and state exams in June. Other years have house exams in May. Certain departments may hold uniform in house tests throughout the term as well as monthly/end of topic/chapter tests. These forms of assessments may also be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis.
- Teachers give regular class tests in various subjects and results are recorded by the student in the relevant pages of the Homework Journal to track academic progress. Results will be returned to students in a timely manner.
- The mode of assessment may include written examinations, practical, aural, oral work, project work, CBAs/assessment tasks.
- Transition Year (TY) assessments may involve the following: external certification, portfolio, oral presentation, work experience evaluation and interview assessment.



- Examinations follow a similar format to the Junior Certificate/Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations and a marking scheme is clearly identified. (Appendix 2 Grading Scheme for Leaving Certificate since 2017)
- Mock Examinations are set and corrected externally for 6<sup>th</sup> years.

## **Reporting of AoL**

Reports are sent to parents/guardians following end of term examinations.

- The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. A mark/grade are awarded, and a comment can be generated from a menu.
- Parents of TY students receive progress reports in the same way as other year groups.
- Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) descriptors are awarded to students on completion of CBA 1 in Second year and CBA 2 in Third year. The descriptors from CBA 1 will be included in the student's end of year report.
- The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will include the student's written exam results from their examinations at the end of Third year, their descriptors from CBA 1 and CBA 2 and results from any short courses undertaken.
- Any Other Areas of Learning from any non-academic achievements will also be included on the JCPA.

## **New Junior Cycle Programme**

In 2020 all subjects were assessed under new subject specifications, and in June 2022 all subjects will be examined by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

The state exams will be no longer than 2 hours, the results will form a part of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). This offers students a more complete report on progress throughout the Junior Cycle. The JCPA will also include descriptors awarded for levels of achievement in classroom-based assessments, short courses and other learning experiences.

The Assessment Task mark will be included in the final examination grade, and both are graded by the SEC. The grading of new subjects will be as follows in State Exams:

### **Grading of the Final Examination:**

Distinction  $\geq 90\%$  to  $< 100\%$

Higher Merit  $\geq 75\%$  and  $< 90\%$

Merit  $\geq 55\%$  and  $< 75\%$

Achieved  $\geq 40\%$  and  $< 55\%$

Partially Achieved  $\geq 20\%$  and  $< 40\%$

Not Graded  $\geq 0\%$  and  $< 20\%$

### **Classroom Based Assessment (CBA)**

Classroom-Based Assessments will emphasise the importance of formative assessment in supporting teaching and learning. In each subject, students will undertake two Classroom-Based Assessments facilitated by their teacher. One Classroom-Based Assessment will take place in Second Year and a second Classroom-Based Assessment in Third Year. Classroom-Based Assessments will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a way which would not be possible in a formal examination.

A particular purpose of the Classroom Based Assessments is to facilitate developmental feedback to students during their engagement with the assessment task and at the end of the process.

Examples of CBA's include oral presentations, written work of diverse types, practical or designing and making activities, artistic performances, scientific experiments, projects, or other suitable tasks. Work related to the Classroom-Based Assessments is best seen as an integral part of ongoing assessment and routine classroom practice. (Changes to CBA's due to Covid 19 in the current year have been implemented as advised by the DES)

## **Marking of CBAs.**

There are four descriptors of achievement for classroom-based assessment as follows:

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- Exceptional.
- Above expectations.
- In line with expectations.
- Yet to meet expectations.

Teachers develop an understanding of the above descriptors by attending Subject Learning Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. This is when teachers come together in subject departments meetings to discuss the quality of the students work. The SLAR meetings play a key role in helping teachers to understand standards and expectations. The descriptors from CBA1 and CBA2 will be communicated to parents in reports. The descriptors will also be included on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) that the students receive from the school after the Junior Cycle.

## **Assessment Task (AT)**

The written Assessment Task, marked by the SEC, relates to the learning outcomes of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. The written Assessment Task may require the student to demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge and skills developed during the second Classroom-Based Assessment. The Assessment Task will be completed in class under the supervision of the teacher and will be sent to the SEC for marking along with the script for that subject in the state-certified examination. Marks for the Assessment Task in each subject will be incorporated into the presentation of the grade for that subject.

## **Assessment and Wellbeing**

The school takes note of Circular 0055/2019 'Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. It states: 2.6.1 Reporting on Wellbeing through the JCPA Reporting on students' learning in Wellbeing aims to provide a picture of what students have learned about Wellbeing and the skills they have developed to support their Wellbeing.

It is expected that schools will report on student learning about Wellbeing as part of ongoing assessment and reporting throughout Junior Cycle. Wellbeing will show in a separate area of the JCPA. It is in this area that schools will report on student achievement in CSPE, SPHE and PE. This will be facilitated using the descriptors which have already been developed and reflect the appropriate language of learning. The Wellbeing area of the JCPA will also include a free text space where schools can report on achievement in Wellbeing.

### **Project work as part of Assessment:**

There are various deadlines for project work, classroom-based assessments, portfolios, and orals to be met by each student at Junior Cert level and Leaving Cert level. The key dates for the Junior Certificate/Cycle can be checked on the State Examinations timetable.

The key dates in each subject at Leaving Certificate level are undergoing changes due to Covid 19.

It is expected that students do not leave class in a subject to complete project work in another subject except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed by both teachers impacted. (Due to Covid 19 these are currently in the process of changing)

Examples of Projects/Oral Exams:

Irish: Oral exams in late March of 6th Year

French: Oral exams in April of 6th Year

History: Project due in April of 6th Year

Geography: Project due in early April of 6th Year

LCVP: Portfolio due in early March 6th Year

Art: Practical exams in May of 6th Year

Music: Practical just before the Easter

Economics: Research Topic due in 6th Year

## **Reporting on Assessments**

Teachers are encouraged to use the teacher journal, student journal, and to keep records and report progress on assessment. From time to time, teachers may arrange formal and informal meetings with other teachers/ parents and/or students in support of this ongoing progress.

Standard reports are sent to parents to report Christmas and end of year results in June. In addition, students receive reports on mock exams. (Currently there are changes to this reporting because of Covid19 on staging the mocks exams and the consequent small numbers of students taking mock exams)

## **State Exams**

The school will strive to ensure that all 3rd and 6th Year students participate (as directed by the State Exams Commission) in the many assessments that make up the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be conducted in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission. The Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations begin the first Wednesday after the June Bank Holiday Monday each year. The exact timetable of examinations is available from the end of January in the examination year.

## **Leaving Cert Applied and Assessment**

Assessment is continuous throughout the course and there is a final examination.

Assessment takes place on the completion of modules and practical activities that allow the student to integrate the learning from different courses.

The final examination must be taken in the following areas:

- English and Communication
- Two vocational specialisms
- Mathematical Applications
- Language
- Social Education.

There are written and oral examinations in all languages. There are practical examinations in the vocational specialisms. The written examinations take place in June, at the same time as the examinations for the established Leaving Certificate.

Page | 14 Students who successfully complete the programme are awarded a Leaving Certificate from the Department of Education and Science. The certificate is awarded at three levels:

Level	Marks and Credits Required
Marking system for examination grades Pass	60-69% (120-139 credits)
Merit	70-84% (140-169 credits)
Distinction	85-100% (170-200 credits)

Candidates who get less than 60% (120 credits) or who do not complete the course, are awarded a Record of Experience.

A Pass in the Leaving Certificate Applied is the equivalent of 6 Grade D at Ordinary Level in the established Leaving Certificate.

## House Exams

When appropriate, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area. Monthly/End of Topic/Chapter Tests. These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly, end of chapter or end of topic basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students, and parents, on the level of each students' attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who complete these tests.

First, Second, TY and Fifth year students will sit their Summer Exams at the end of May. The duration of these exams shall be as follows:

**First Years:** 1 hour

**Second Years:** 1 hour- exams will be given post CBA, if the CBA has been completed.

**Fifth Years:** 1-2 hours.

Page | 15 These exams are of a serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams.

**Sixth Year and Third Year** – may sit Midterm tests in October during class time and will undertake Mock Exams in February each year to prepare them for their state exams in June. **Due to Covid19 these exams have been adapted and a separate mocks policy exists to deal with changes due to the pandemic.**

**Transition Year** students will have their Portfolio Assessment at the end of May and students sit subject exams as determined by their subject teacher. As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years.

### **Psychometric Assessments**

Incoming first years will undertake assessments in Literacy and Numeracy (CAT 4 E) and the NGRT which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability first year classes. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's academic potential.

If a student is identified as having a learning need/difficulty the AEN Coordinator will discuss the matter with the AEN Team. Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time, and dictionaries amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the AEN Coordinator in consultation with individual subject teachers. IEPs are drawn up by the subject teachers to support the learning progress of such students.

The Guidance Counsellor administers the DAT Differential Aptitude Test to determine student individual strengths and potential in subject areas which in turn guide subject choice for the senior cycle. Students who go directly to 5<sup>th</sup> year complete this later in 5<sup>th</sup> year as it is age specific, and the norms are related to being aged 16. The full policy on Psychological Assessments and

assessments for RACE provision and exam accommodations is provided for in a separate policy.

The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management, may carry out psychological assessments and other assessments on students at various times throughout the year.

## **Assessment and Accredited Grades 2021**

### **What informs the teacher's estimated marks?**

The range of evidence that teachers will draw on may include both formative and summative assessment activities undertaken, over the two years of study including those undertaken during periods of emergency remote learning in the current school year 2020/21.

Teachers' professional judgement should not be allowed to be influenced by a student's behaviour (whether good or challenging), character, appearance, social class, ethnicity, or absences from school-based summative assessments due to illness, for example. It is important that aspects such as work habits and effort, homework, participation, attendance, and punctuality are not conflated with achievement in the subject in question. In coming to their judgements, teachers should draw on existing records and available evidence. It is important that the judgements are objective, and they should only take account of information about student performance. This will include the following, where available:

- Records of each student's performance over the course of study including for example, assignments, projects and practical work and key assignments and practical work in the case of Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)
- Performance on any class assessments, for example, tasks, questions, house or term examinations etc. taken over the course of study. **Evidence of learning from the period of school closures in 2021 should be used.** In using this evidence account must be taken of students whose circumstances made effective engagement with remote teaching and learning particularly difficult. **Teachers should exercise great care in using evidence of learning from the period of school closure in 2020, especially if the teaching and learning experiences of students were very different at that time.**



- Performance on any coursework component, even if this has not been fully completed including tasks in the case of LCA
- Any other relevant information related to student performance. (See Appendix 3).

*Reviewed by the Board of Management May 2021*

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:

Date: June 14 2021

Signed: \_Denis Doherty

This policy is under continuous review and will be due for review in March 2023.

## Appendix

1. Policy on Conflict Protocols
2. Grading System for Leaving Cert since 2017  
<https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ma>
3. A Guide to State Examinations and Accredited Grades for Leaving Certificate 2021  
[https://shtullamore.sharepoint.com/sites/Staff/Lists/Staff%20Announcements/Attachments/1786/Guide%20to%20State%20Examinations%20and%20Accredited%20Grades%20-%2025%20Feb%202021%20\(002\).pdf?web=1](https://shtullamore.sharepoint.com/sites/Staff/Lists/Staff%20Announcements/Attachments/1786/Guide%20to%20State%20Examinations%20and%20Accredited%20Grades%20-%2025%20Feb%202021%20(002).pdf?web=1)

Reviewed March 2021