

GIFS Assessment Policy 2015-16

At GIFS, our assessment policies are closely aligned with our vision and core values statements:

Vision and Mission Statement:

"Celebrating Diversity - Encouraging Citizenship - Fostering Growth"

GIFS has a welcoming environment where students gather to receive a quality education that prepares them for academic success.

Our inclusive school provides students from many nations and cultures an opportunity to learn and practice relationship skills that will foster harmony and positively impact the world.

Assessment Philosophy at GIFS

We at GIFS recognize that grades and traditional assessments are only one part of who our students are. In order to foster our school aims of diversity, citizenship, and growth, it is important to acknowledge that our work in class teaches students more than the content that is being expressly taught. Our activities in class, in addition to effectively teaching content, must also develop student's social skills and a sense of respect for others. We will achieve these aims through student-led teaching, group projects, and independent learning tasks. At GIFS, it's not enough to simply learn the material. Students will learn about themselves and others.

Assessment Practices:

Teacher Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the teacher to:

- Develop unit plans and student-learning program that meets the standards and/or subject requirements for each particular course.
- Ensure that all assessment tasks are linked to the expected student learning outcomes, standards and assessment objectives in the subject guidelines.
- Provide students with timely assessment feedback, guidance and targets for improvement.
- Maintain accurate records of assessment outcomes on Renweb and ManageBac.
- Provide a description of the assessment and/or their corresponding rubrics on the unit plans for each subject.
- Ensure that GIFS deadlines and external timelines for assessment and reporting are met.
- Inform students and parents of academic progress in a timely and accessible manner.

Assessment and Reporting Process

The assessment and reporting process is important in communicating valuable information to parents and students regarding their learning. Regular and accurate feedback to parents and students is crucial to ensure that parents can feel confident that their child is being assessed and supported appropriately.

Informal Parent Contact

A subject teacher may email parents to provide informal and up to date reports regarding improvements in academic achievement or in attitudes to learning. While positive reports are important, it is critical when a teacher believes a student is ‘at risk’ due to poor achievement (likely to fail or achieve a much lower grade than in a previous quarter) that timely communication occur via email or personal phone call.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL (Grades 6 - 12)

Assessment and Reporting Process

At the Conclusion of Quarters 1 and 3:

At the conclusion of Quarters 1 and 3, a report is produced for each student. This report includes an overall grade for **Achievement of Learning (AoL)** and a grade for **Approaches to Learning (AtL)**. (See below) These are accompanied by Parent Teacher Conferences.

At the Conclusion of Quarters 2 and 4:

At the conclusion of Quarters 2 and 4, a report is produced for each student. As in Q’s 1 and 3, the report includes an overall grade for **Achievement of Learning** and a grade for **Approaches to Learning**.

However, since there are not Parent Teacher Conferences at this time, the reports include subject specific comments from teachers about student progress.

Achievement of Learning / Attitude to Learning

At GIFS, students receive two types of reports: An Achievement of Learning report (AoL) and an Approaches to Learning report (AtL). AoL reports focus on academic achievement while AtL reports focus on cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills that contribute to overall student success in schools. The AoL reports also formatively assess student performance on the IB Learner Profile Attributes. These can be found on the GIFS school website.

Assessment

Teachers employ both formative assessments (to measure learning that will inform instruction) and summative assessments (to measure achievement of knowledge and skills.) We recognize research that suggests that assessment is most effective when it is:

- It is integral to the curriculum.
- When students know what knowledge and skills are essential to the learning.
- When they get detailed feedback about how well they are doing.
- When they get detailed advice about what about they can do next to improve.

In order to create these circumstances we rely on a variety of assessments to include written assessments, presentations, video, art, and other performance indicators to include project based learning.

Assessment should account for differences in gender, language, culture, and special needs in order to allow each student an equal opportunity to learn and develop by providing equal access to educational experiences. This belief applies to all subjects. We strive to give students multiple opportunities to show what they have learned and what they can do. Having a varied range of assessment techniques also gives the benefit of increasing the interest in teaching and learning.

GIFS teachers create an Attitude to Learning (AtL) report for each student in Grades 6-12 at the end of each quarter.

Approaches to Learning (AtL) - Descriptor
Thinking Skills
Social Skills
Communication Skills
Self-management Skills
Research Skills
Models the attributes of the IB Learner profile for this subject

AtL Grades: Exceptional (5), Very Good (4), Satisfactory (3), Needs Improvement (2), Unsatisfactory (1)

HIGH SCHOOL (Grades 9-12)

Syllabuses Covered

In Grades 9-10 the programme utilizes selected elements of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), adapted to the needs of the students. In Grades 11-12 students undertake the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP).

Information provided to students

At the start of each academic year and at the start of each new unit (or pair of units) the teacher will provide a printed document of the following for each student:

- A **yearly outline** of units covered in any given academic year.
- Provide students with key IBDP Coordinator and **external deadlines** for the 2-year IB programme.
- The **syllabus guide** for each IGCSE course.
- The **subject guide** for each IBDP course.

- A **unit plan, at the start of each unit**, that includes the standards, assessments, unit content and the sequence/timeframe in which the unit will be taught.

Assessing Student Achievement in the Middle School

- Teachers may enter a combination of formative and summative assessments into the Renweb grade book.
- Teachers will provide an assessment outline for each major assessment that includes:
 - The assessment type
 - The weighting for each assessment type
 - The weighting for each assessment task
 - A general description of each assessment task
 - The approximate timing for each task
 - The corresponding assessment rubric (also clearly displayed in each classroom).

Assessing student achievement – Formative and Summative Assessment in the High School (9-12)

General

- Students will be assessed in a variety of different ways: written assignments, oral presentations, field work, practical work, role-play, debates, exhibitions, performance, tests and examinations, research papers, peer and self-assessment across all subjects.
- Assessment will not be based on “how many questions can a student answer?” or “what percentage have they achieved?” but rather “what skills have they learned?” or “what level of understanding can they demonstrate?”
- Assessment is *criteria-related*. Students are assessed against published, agreed upon learning and assessment objectives mandated by the IB and IGCSE. These are clearly articulated in the subject/syllabus guides for each subject.
- Grading is undertaken positively and consistently in relation to clear subject criteria. Teachers look for evidence of what students know and understand. Teachers always reward alternative but equally valid answers that contain coherent ideas which are relevant to the question.
- Assessment will be on-going and reflective, allowing the students to evaluate their progress and set targets for improvement; and for the school to evaluate the measure of success in meeting specific learning objectives.
- No 1-7 grades are given in Quarter 1 of IB1 (Grade 11). Instead, students are given a report called ‘Preparedness for Learning’ which only assesses the Approaches to Learning (AtL). Those are: Thinking Skills, Social Skills, Communication Skills, Self-Management Skills and Research Skills.
- ATLs are assessed using a 1-5 scale (above) whilst Achievement of Learning (AoLs) are assessed on a 1-7 scale (IBDP) or with an A* - G symbol (see below)

Formative Assessment:

- These identify student learning needs and form part of the learning process itself.

- The main purpose is to provide detailed feedback to students on the nature of strengths and weaknesses, and to help develop students' capabilities. These can take the form of self-reflections, quizzes, interviews, class tests, peer or self-correction etc.
- Grades may be assigned for these, but they are always accompanied by a detailed comment and verbal feedback to guide learning. When a grade is assigned it is not recorded in the Renweb gradebook, but communicated to students via ManageBac.
- Feedback on a student's performance will be communicated to parents via a written evaluation using Managebac.
- A Managebac or Renweb notification of any formative tasks should include information about the teacher's expectations, due dates will be posted on the respective secondary school Managebac calendar.
- Each course in Grades 9-12 will include a minimum of **3 formative assessments per quarter** with written and verbal feedback.

Summative Assessments (or Culminating Tasks)

- All summative tasks will be linked to past IBDP or IGCSE exam papers (or the equivalent) and assess a broad range of skills and course objectives. Past paper-type questions can also be found in the IB-endorsed textbooks.
- All summative tasks should have an equal distribution of all the assessment objectives for that particular subject and must allow students access to the full range of achievement descriptors. This may be achieved by assessing students against all strands within a descriptor, or by formulating assessment tasks that evaluate a limited number of strands.
- Assessed work may vary in its purpose and teachers are expected to use the full range of assessment activities. Teachers must inform students which criteria will be used to evaluate their work, both for internal assessment (IA) and external examination.
- Teachers must explain what is required for students to fulfil the criteria for any particular piece of assessed work.
- Feedback to students will be prompt (within 10 working days of work being submitted) and specific to support learning.
- Each course in Grades 9-12 will include a minimum of **3 summative assessments per quarter** based on a specific assessment type and rubric mentioned in the subject guide or course outline for that subject.

Grading

- When using criterion-related assessment, student answers are aligned against the majority of descriptors correspond to the student's work. In the IBDP these descriptors (by group or by subject) are available in the *GIFS DP Handbook* that is circulated each year and available on the school website. The IGCSE syllabus guides also have subject-specific objectives.
- If the descriptors include many strands of an objective and student performance is at a high level on most of the strands but not all them, teachers adopt a "best-fit" model.
- If, for example, most of the performance was at the 5–6 level (B-C for IGCSE), and yet student work on a particular strand was missing, teachers might consider reducing the overall performance to a lower band.

- If a piece of work seems to fall between two level descriptors, only partially fulfilling the requirements of the higher descriptor, teachers will re-read both of the descriptors in question and choose the descriptor which is a ‘best fit’ description of the candidate's work.
- Grades awarded for criteria-referenced tasks are translated into final 1 (low) to 7 (high) reported grades (G (low) – A* (high) in the IGCSE) by measuring performance against moderated grade boundaries, based on reports published by the IB and IGCSE after each May/June exam session.
- A copy of these grade boundaries are sent home quarterly and will be programmed into the GIFS reporting software (Renweb) annually after the most recent external exam sessions.
- The grades from summative assessment tasks are recorded in the Renweb grade book and feedback to students and parents will be shared via Managebac.
- At the end of each quarter (beginning in quarter 1 of IB1), students are given a detailed report and a final 1-7 grade for each subject.

Holistic Judgements

The final grade each quarter is an **informed teacher evaluation** taking into consideration:

- All summative assessments taken. This will not be a numerical aggregate, but rather an appraisal or holistic judgement, based on student achievement against specific criteria.
- The specific criteria are embedded within:
 1. The over-arching **grade descriptors/descriptions** (as mentioned above).
 2. The **assessment objectives** as presented in each subject guide.

These descriptors are meant to describe the student’s achievement over a large range of content and skills. The teacher must select the grade which BEST describes the student’s overall achievement, even though achievement on individual benchmarks might be higher or lower.

Note: It is neither the highest nor the lowest achievement which determines the grade- it is **the big picture view**.

Submission of Student Work

All summative assessment (culminating tasks) will be identified as a ‘task’ on the ManageBac calendar. Students will be informed in class of the due date and an outline of the specific requirements will be posted on Managebac.

ManageBac notification will include the following features:

- Indication of task content and conceptual understandings
- Form of the task, e.g. an essay, report, presentation, podcast, oral, performance, etc.
- The criteria to be assessed, with generic descriptors and task-specific clarifications

- Task’s due date

NOTE: Ideally, at the beginning of each teaching unit the final summative assessment should be posted as a “task” on the ManageBac calendar. At a minimum, the summative task should be on the ManageBac calendar at least 14 days before the submission date.

Examinations

Grade 12 **IB2** DP mock (trial) examinations occur in February. These will include questions on material completed over the entire two year course of study.

Grade 11 **IB1** DP end-of-year examinations will include questions on material completed over the entire year of study. When material is drawn from work undertaken during the second semester, these scores can be a component of a student’s semester grade.

Over the course of the programme the following examinations will be offered:

IB1: January (Mid-Terms- *internal*) and May (Year End Finals- *internal*)

IB 2: February (Mock Exams- *internal*)

IB2: May (Final IB external examinations)

High School Grading Scales

The High School grade threshold boundaries are updated each year after the IGCSE and IB examination sessions in May/June. These are used for various assessments during each quarter.

In addition, subject-specific ‘Diploma Programme Grade Descriptors’ are applied to all Grade 11 and 12 students. The descriptors are printed and accompany all quarterly report cards and can also be downloaded from the GIFS website.

GPA’s are calculated on the table below for **Grade 11-12 students**.

IBDP 1-7 Scale	Grade Points	Grade Descriptor	IBDP 1-7 Grade Boundary	
			Grade 11	Grade 12
7	4.0	Exceptional	These boundaries vary according to each subject and level (HL or SL). See the individual subject grade threshold tables in the IBDP handbook (also available on the school website).	
6	3.75	Very Good		
5	3.5	Good		
4	2.75	Satisfactory		
3	2.0	Mediocre		
2	1.25	Poor		
1	0	Very Poor		

Grade 9-10:

IGCSE Grade	Grade Points	Grade Descriptor	IGCSE A* - G Grade Boundary	
			Grade 9	Grade 10
A*	4.0	Exceptional	These boundaries vary according to each subject. See the individual subject grading threshold tables On the school website. Copies will also be sent home with report cards each quarter.	
A	4.0	Very Good		
B	3.7	Good		
C	3	Satisfactory		
D	2.3	Mediocre		
E	2	Poor		
F	1.3	Very Poor		
G	1			

MIDDLE SCHOOL (Grades 6-8)

Syllabuses Covered

The GIFS Middle School Program has adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS) guidelines for Language Arts and Math assessment. GIFS has adopted the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) Standards for Social Studies, Art and Music and the McREL Standards for Science and Physical Education (PE).

Current Assessment Practices

The GIFS Middle School Program believes that teachers should employ a combination of formative and summative assessments to inform teaching and assess learning.

Formative Assessment: Teachers use a variety of formative assessments throughout the school year to inform about student progress and indicate where students need further support. Student work is teacher, self, and peer assessed using specific rubrics, depending on the project. Examples include: quizzes, peer review, self-review, group projects, individual projects etc. For all peer and self-assessment, students are made aware of: a) The expectations for the assignment, and b) The rubric to be used as assessment.

Summative Assessment: Summative Assessments are used to inform teachers at the end of a unit as to what skills and knowledge students have been achieved. Assessments can take the form of in-class tests, unit tests, homework assignments, portfolios etc. Teachers are encouraged to give students **4 to 5 summative assessments** per quarter.

Weighting: These may vary by subject but all teachers follow the general guidelines on in the Staff Handbook.

Initial Baseline Testing: Students new to GIFS are given an initial assessment by the respective subject teacher and also tested for ELL through the English in Mind Placement Test that assesses grammar proficiency on the Common European Framework for Languages scale.

Students from Grades 5-8 participate in MAP testing twice per year and this data is used to drive teaching focus and to determine improvement goals.

Drafts: Students are given the opportunity to submit a 1st draft of any major assignment for teacher feedback and recommendations with a date assigned for the final project.

Critical Thinking Skills and speaking skills are not exclusively tested, but are embedded in ongoing assessment in a variety of ways (observation, interviews, open-ended questioning, participation in class discussions, etc.)

Achievement of Learning (AoL) Assessment Scale for Grades 6-8

Middle School (Grades 5-8)	
Letter Grade	% Grade
A +	97-100
A	94-96
A -	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	0-59

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (Grades PreK/K – 5th Grade)

Syllabuses Covered

The GIFS Elementary Program (K-4) has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) guidelines for Language Arts and Math assessment. We have adopted the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) Standards for Social Studies, Art and Music and the AERO Standards for Science and Physical Education (PE).

Assessment Practices

In the GIFS Elementary Program an emphasis is placed on ongoing formative assessment throughout the year with occasional summative assessment at key reporting times (end of units, prior to reporting periods etc.)

Formative Assessment:

Teachers use a variety of assessment types throughout the school year. Work is teacher assessed as well as self and peer assessed using specific rubrics (for example, a scale of 1-4, Sad Face-Happy Face, Yes/No, etc.) depending on the project. In addition, anecdotal records are kept during observation, interviews and questioning of students during and after a project or work is completed. Teams participate in evaluation of collective effort and achievement.

Groups may be asked to assess other groups. For all peer and self-assessment, students are made aware of: a) The expectations for that assignment, and b) The rubric to be used during assessment. Both students and teachers assess participation grades. In Grades 1-5, homework is assessed by the teacher for the purpose of identifying problem areas and informing students and parents.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments occur less frequently than formative assessment and are used to provide evidence at the end of a unit of the sum of student learning. Summative Assessment makes up a small percentage of the final grades in each quarter. Summative Assessments can take the form of in-class tests, one-on-one testing, student-generated learning evidence, and group or individual presentations.

Critical Thinking and speaking skills are not explicitly tested, but are assessed on an ongoing basis using formative assessment methods (observation, interviews, open-ended questioning, participation in class discussions etc.) See p8.

Initial Baseline Testing: Students new to GIFS are given an initial assessment by the respective subject teacher and also tested for ELL through the IPT test that assesses baseline data on English oral, reading, and writing skills.

Literacy/Language Skills: Students in Grades 1-5 use the online reading program Tumblebooks that includes comprehension tests for understanding. These tests provide data for assessment purposes (for example, “students demonstrate a command of the convention of standard English grammar and usage”, and “students demonstrate an understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meaning” (From Grade 2 Report Card). In PreK/K, students participate in in-class reading assignments, as well as the Home Reading Program. Reading assessments take place in both whole-class settings as well as 1 on 1 with a teacher. Assessment methods include direct and open-ended questioning, class discussions, and a variety of other activities that can be used for formative assessment.

Standardized Tests: Students from K-5 participate in MAP testing twice per year to evaluate Language, Reading, and Math Skills against their peers in other international schools by grade level.

Grading and Reporting

At the conclusion of Quarter 1 & 3: A report is prepared for each student using a grade specific Report Card template. Each report contains a grade of 1-4 for each of the standards assessed in that quarter. Quarters 1 & 3 also have a scheduled Parent-Teacher Conference component when information can be shared and questions asked in both directions.

At the conclusion of Quarter 2 & 4: Identical to Quarters 1 & 3 except there is no automatic Parent-Teacher Conference (although one may be requested by either party if necessary)

Report Card: The Report Card is divided by subject headings. Each heading addresses specific standards from either the CCSS or AERO and grades are assigned using the following 1-4 systems (Note: Grades of 1 are not used on the Pre K or K Report Card). The goal is to have each student reach a minimum grade of 3 on each standard by the end of the school year.

Performance Levels

- 4 **Exceeds Expectations:** Student demonstrates an advanced understanding of concepts, skills and processes taught in this reporting period. Exceeds the expected achievement in knowledge or skills.
- 3 **Meets Expectations:** Student consistently demonstrates an understanding of concepts, skills and processes taught in this reporting period.
- 2 **Approaching Expectations:** Student is not yet consistent in demonstrating an understanding of concepts, skills and processes taught in this reporting period. Student is slightly below grade level expectations.
- 1 **Not yet meeting expectations:** Student does not demonstrate an understanding of grade level concepts, skills and processes taught in this reporting period. Student is performing significantly below grade level expectations.

Homework: Homework varies by grade level. At the Pre-K/K level, there is no mandatory homework. In Grades 1 and 2, students average 15-25 minutes of homework per night including daily reading. In Grades 3-5, students average 30-60 minutes of homework including daily reading.

In-class Assessment Tools: Overall, each assignment or piece of work is designed to directly address one (or more) of the many standards that are assessed each Report Period. No standard will ever be assessed using only a single type of assessment or a single piece of work, but instead will be assessed using a variety of tools to ensure maximum opportunity for student success.

In Pre-K/K the core rubric is a 3-face system (Sad Face=failure to meet expectation, Neutral Face=partially meeting expectation, Happy Face=Fully met expectation). Teacher assessment, and self and peer assessment are used as formative tools. In Grades 1 and 2, a core rubric that is used in all self and peer assessments mirrors the 1-4 Performance Levels used on the Report Card. Achievement scores are recorded to inform the teacher when assigning grades at the end of the reporting period. Prior to any assessed assignment, expectations are clearly explained and reviewed by the whole class. The 1-4 scale (with graphic explanation) is permanently displayed at the front of the classroom.

In Grades 3, 4, and 5, a core rubric that is used in all self and peer assessments mirrors the 1-4 Performance Levels used on the Report Card. Further directions are explained on individual

rubrics per assignment as to what needs to be present to achieve a score of 4, 3, 2, or 1. Achievement scores are recorded to inform the teacher when assigning grades at the end of the reporting period. Prior to any assessed assignment, expectations are clearly explained and reviewed by the whole class, and rubrics are provided to students. The 1-4 scale (with graphic explanation) is permanently displayed at the front of the classroom.

For details on initial assessment and baseline data leading to support services, see the GIFS Admissions Policy and ELL Policy. For details on language offerings at GIFS, see the Language Policy.

