School Assessment Policy	Academia Internacional	Applicable to teaching staff	Issue Date: August 2016	Date of Review: June 2017	Authorised by Academic Council	Consultation: Teaching staff and Head of PTA

1) Purpose of the Academia's School Assessment Policy

1. To allow achievement standards to be measured in the Academia to ensure that students are receiving a high quality of education across all the subjects that they are studying.
2. To give members of the Academic Council data about how the Academia is functioning, and to identify and to rectify any weaknesses through the mentoring of teachers and further professional development.
3. To allow the tracking of individual academic progress across the curriculum by academic managers in order to permit timely intervention in the case of students whose performance deteriorates.
4. To allow the Academic Council to compare the performance of the Academia with other schools of a similar character.
5. To identify the ways that assessment data can help teachers to modify their pedagogical practices in order to best engage the learner and to bring about an improvement in performance.
6. To ensure that assessment is integrated logically into the lesson plans and schemes of work of teachers at all times enhances the learning process.
7. To empower the individual learner at the Academia in the sense that feedback is positive and helps a student to identify and understand their strengths in each subject, and also the specific areas where improvement is needed in the immediate future.
8. Such empowerment in turn is valuable for developing the learner's ability to reflect on the ways that he or she is learning, to understand more the processes of learning and to become more independent and confident in time when evaluating their own work. In time the learner will become more reflective, curious and confident in their learning thereby meeting more of the attributes of the Cambridge Learner.
9. To make teachers aware of the uses of the different types of assessment (formative, diagnostic and summative) that they can use to evaluate correctly and comprehensively the achievement and progress of a student.
10. To ensure that assessment of academic performance and progress is broad and not simply restricted to knowledge and recall of subject content. The ability of students to think conceptually, to problem solve and to develop specific skills should be considered in the evaluation process. Such attributes as a student's sense of responsibility, work ethic and ability to work independently and self-evaluate are also worthy of recognition.
11. It is important that aspects of learning beyond the formal curriculum should also be considered in the evaluation of each child.
12. To inform in a clear manner parents of the ways and frequency their children will be assessed, the standards against which they are assessed and the practical steps that students can take in order to bring about improvement.
13. To have an assessment policy that develops the potential of each child to the full. This reinforces the mission belief of the Academia that with determination and a good work ethic, progress is possible, despite occasional failures.

14. To ensure that the use of standardised tests should only support, and not replace the information gathered on a pupil's ability and progress by a teacher in the classroom on a daily basis.
15. To clarify how assessment data will be stored and used by teachers and academic leaders in such a way that respects the confidentiality of students.
16. 16. To ensure that new students in the Academia are placed in the appropriate level to ensure a smooth transition and minimum delay in the learning process.

2) The Different Types of Assessment Techniques Used in the Academia

- Teachers at the Academia to identify a learning difficulty that a student has in order to suggest strategies to overcome the problem, use **diagnostic assessment**. A teacher can call a meeting of all teachers to see whether the learning difficulty is evident across a number of subjects. Then the shared expertise of teachers can be used to draw up an individualised education plan for the student. Diagnostic tests can also be used at the beginning of the school year to indicate students' academic level.
- **Formative assessment** used to help learners by the teacher giving feedback during the learning process is a regular practice at the Academia. A lot of the time this takes the form of oral comments in class as the teachers monitors the progress of different groups. Students are also given written feedback with comments designed to highlight strengths, and to suggest steps to overcome weaknesses and to bring about improvement. At times, within the Mexican educational system where the year is divided up into five bimesters, each with a test component, it is difficult for teachers to give students "extended formative assessment" as the priority for many is to achieve good test results. Fortunately, the final mark during each bimester is made up of different elements and the test is just one component.
- **Summative assessment** in the Academia usually comes at the end of each of the five bimesters. This takes the form of a test designed to assess learning. At the Academia, teachers are expected not to produced tests which simply demand students to recall factual knowledge but have more open-ended questions based on the analysis of evidence, or weighing up the worth of contrasting views to arrive at a conclusion. Summative assessment can be useful for indicating to parents that their children have met typical standards, and such information can assist the transfer of a student to another school.

3) Ideal Characteristics of Classroom Assessment: What Learners Should Expect?

"Developing your school with Cambridge: A guide for school leaders" [1] identifies a number of important characteristics that classroom assessment should have:

- **"Relevant** – relate directly to the learning objectives and the course and syllabus standards.
- **Appropriate** – give the information that is required. Teachers will almost certainly need to use a variety of methods to assess different assessment criteria and learning objectives.
- **Fair** – assume that all learners can make progress, regardless of their starting point, and provide them with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.
- **Reliable** – provide an objective and accurate check of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding at the point of assessment.
- **Informative** – establish where learners are in their learning, i.e. what they already know, understand and can do. This information should then be used to diagnose what each learner needs to improve and how the teacher can support this. Where this information is gained during a lesson, it may lead to immediate changes to the lesson plan. Or, where it is gained from a series of lessons or unit of work, it may lead to revisions in course plans or schemes of work.
- **Integrated-** into the lesson and teaching and learning cycle – the reflection on learning and progress by learners and teachers will provide evidence that guides the next steps to be taken and provide motivation for future progress in learning.

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1. Dr Tristian Stobie (2015). "Developing your school with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders"

- **Manageable** – assessments should be integral to classroom activities. The recording of these assessments needs to be time efficient and the information provided needs to be valuable for improving learning. 2"
- **Further characteristics can be added** to this extensive list. Teachers may decide from the data generated from formative assessment even to repeat work, or to set further differentiated work in order to give student additional support. Robin McCLelland suggests that difficulties with a problem solving exercise could be helped by the teachers asking a range of questions which suggest possibilities:

- "What would happen if..?
- If you did A instead of B what would be the outcome?
- Are there any other ways of approaching this task?" 3

- It is important that assessment is "authentic". Darling-Hammond has defined "authentic assessment" as having the following features:

- "Students are challenged to generate new knowledge and products.
- Tasks are embedded in the curriculum and an assessment is made of a pupil's response to a genuine learning experience, not a contrived one". 4

- In terms of written work students often benefit from being provided with examples of different work that has been graded. A student at a 'B' level would benefit from seeing 'A' grade type work, whereas a student at a 'C' level would be disheartened by seeing an 'A' grade type example. Mark schemes are also useful for giving students a clear idea of what is expected and these are a normal part of both formative and summative assessment techniques.
- At the Academia it is school policy to guide students in their revision when summative assessment takes place at the end of each bimester. Students are provided with revision guides.

4) What is Valued in Assessment at the Academia?

- Assessment should not be just limited to the recall of factual knowledge, though it is important that students are able to substantiate their arguments with sound knowledge, as this gives depth to their responses.
- It is important that all forms of assessments have more "opened-ended" questions which encourage students to use their existing knowledge to think more deeply and creatively: For example, to problem solve, or to arise at conclusions based on the evaluation of different viewpoints or contrasting bodies of evidence. It is crucial that the development of subject specific skills is recognized in any evaluation: For example, in history comparing and contrasting the purposes and the impact of two sources.
- While summative assessment can give a good idea of a student's knowledge and understanding at a fixed point in time, it is important that any evaluation of a student is not simply based on academic factors but are related to the student's social development and the wider values reflected in the Academia's mission. These include characteristics such as a student's sense of responsibility and work ethic; an ability to overcome setbacks and to be able to reflect on the processes of learning; intellectual curiosity and the desire to continually learn; the capacity to work respectfully with others and independently; the confidence to present ideas in public and to accept the contrasting views of peers; awareness and tolerance of cultural diversity; involvement in extra-curricula activities; and the willingness to participate in the community of San Miguel in order to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

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2. Dr Tristian Stobie (2015)."Developing your school with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders"

3 and 4. Robin McClelland "Managing Assessment". Sonia Blandford and Marian Shaw (Editors 2001."Managing International Schools". Abington. Oxon. Routledge

- At the Academia during each bimester the student's mark is made of a number of different elements: a test; a project; classwork and homework. The idea is that the teacher is able to take evidence of achievement from a wide range of different activities and that the mark is a comment on not just factual knowledge but conceptual understanding and the development of skills.

5) Timing of Assessments

- At the Academia a diagnostic assessment will be given to any new students. A teacher with a new class at the start of a year will often give students a test to see if they have all reached a common level of achievement. This will help the teacher to detect common problems that the group might have and provide information about the point to start teaching them from. Alternatively, it may also give useful information about which students in the class need additional support.
- During the five bimester system, which is currently a requirement of SEP, all students, national as well as Cambridge have one test per bimester. These tests are summative and are designed to evaluate a student's understanding and knowledge in each bimester.
- Teachers are expected to use formative assessment during the course of each bimester and not to simply teach to the test but to encourage students to think about the process of learning.
- The project component of each bimester's mark gives students an opportunity to pose, and to test hypotheses in a practical manner, or for teachers to focus on the development of a specific subject skill. Projects are often based on issues within the community: For example, in mathematics students have used their mathematical skills to design bridges to allow the movement of livestock and products across streams; or have taken photographs of local architecture to show angles of inclination. In English, recent projects have involved students showing the different stages by which a creative piece of work (a poem or a short-story) evolves with students presenting their work on storyboards, which are then displayed.
- Both parents and students at the Academia are informed when assessments will be taken. Students are given assistance with developing both study and revision techniques by tutors and subject specialists.
- Standards in each subject area are published on the school webpage.
- Teachers provide students with mark schemes and leave time at the end of each summative assessment to analyse test questions. Students repeat questions that they have done wrong in a test for homework, or else are given additional work to do to reinforce concepts that they have not understood.

6) Responsibilities for Assessment

- The Academic Council publishes assessment dates on the school calendar and informs teachers accordingly in the weekly meeting each academic leader has with her or his teaching team.
- The Academic Council members will address with teachers of any incident when the performance of students in a particular test is much lower than expected. In such cases it might be a case of a teacher setting a test where students are unfamiliar with the style of questions, or that teaching has not provided engagement or level of understanding on the part of students. In this case a general adjustment of grade boundary may well be required. Part of the work of members of the Academic Council with their teams of teachers is to prevent this from happening by guiding teachers in the principles that need to be followed when creating and marking tests.
- Teachers submit lesson plans and schemes of work to their academic supervisor in the Academic Council. This gives an opportunity to see at what stage of the learning process that assessment activities are planned and whether they test a sufficient range of abilities and skills.
- Lesson observations and mentoring sessions often further opportunities for academic leaders to elicit and model techniques of oral formative assessment.
- As part of their professional responsibility teachers are expected to mark work frequently. This is helped in the Academia by the current small teacher: student ratio and is essential to a "student-centred" philosophy.

7) Guidance on the Nature of Feedback that Teachers should Provide Learners with

- Feedback can be so powerful that some educationalists speak of "A better term for the guidance given to students to help them improve their work is 'feed forward'. This is because it is about providing effective feedback to help the learner improve their next pieces of written work - to prompt them to think about 'What's next' ". [5]
- Teachers need to ensure that any feedback that they give to learners is encouraging but also clear and specific. The strengths of work need to be commented on but guidance to bring about improvement should be realistic and manageable (a couple of suggestions) in order to give learners confidence. Comparisons with the work of other learners should be avoided. Feedback must be based on the assessment criteria in mark schemes.
- The language that teachers use in written feedback also needs to be appropriate for the age of the learner. Comments should also relate to the specific learning objectives and encourage students to think deeply about their work and how they can improve.
- Teachers need to avoid marking which for example corrects every grammatical error as this not only demotivates students but is also not a productive use of teacher time.
- Oral feedback is less time consuming and can be given within the normal flow of the lesson where a teacher monitoring different individuals or groups. Learners appreciate this type of feedback as it is immediate and can directly allow improvements to be made.
- Teachers need to re-check work soon after feedback has been given to make sure that students have acted on advice.

8) Peer Feedback

- Instead of the teacher providing all of the feedback in a classroom it is useful for the learning process for other students to give an evaluation of the work of their peers. For this to be productive then students need to make their evaluation against a specified criteria, and this feedback should be given with respect.
- A positive and supportive atmosphere within the classroom is crucial because all learners then feel confident enough to share their ideas with others, and also to evaluate their own work.
- The use of pairs to give feedback on each other's work can also be less intimidating for students.
- Teachers need to make sure that they give students sufficient time to reflect and do not expect feedback to be instantaneous.
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that just a few students do not dominate the process of giving oral feedback as all students should be encouraged to participate.

9) Guidance on Report Writing

- Parents at the Academia have a right to receive written reports detailing the progress of their children. This is desirable because parents in partnership with teachers can bring about improvement. For parents to be effective they need to know and understand the curriculum.
- Reports should not simply consist of summative marks or grades but detailed comments. Parents need to understand from comments on the report what has been taught and what their child's current level of knowledge, conceptual understanding and skill development is. These details need to be related to clearly defined standards, which are explained to parents and allow them to understand what is expected of learners at a specific age. In each subject area the teacher should specify the exact steps that the learner needs to take in order to improve. A report will not only comment on academic levels of attainment but also the learner's effort and attitude. Does the learner have positive attitudes to learning?

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[5] Dr Tristian Stobie (2015)."Developing your school with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders". 2015

10) Guidance on Portfolios of Work

- At the Academia teachers are encouraged to keep and build up portfolios of different samples of student work. These can be used to show students work which matches aspects of the assessment criteria. Students can get a better understanding of how to meet the expected standards by analysing such work examples with the teacher.
- Such portfolio samples can also be shared and discussed with more experienced colleagues in the same department. This will help younger teachers to gain more confidence in their ability to assess work correctly.

11) Standardisation of Teacher Assessments Within the Same Subjects

- In subjects with more than one teacher at the Academia in order to ensure that all teachers assess in a way that is accurate and consistent, assessment will be standardised. Teachers will set a common exam for a grade level and then use a standardised mark scheme. They will examine a sample of each other's work to see that work has been correctly assessed against a defined set of criteria.
- Teachers need to refer closely to the criteria on assessment marks schemes when they explain to students how final marks have been arrived at.
- Such practices will increase both student and parental confidence in the reliability of assessment methods.

12) The Recording and Storage of Assessment Data

- Teachers will keep their own personal records of grades in their mark books and comments in digital format but are also expected to enter these into the Academia system at the end of each bimester.
- Bimester grades are computerised and registered and stored with the local educational authorities. Report comments are stored inside of school and can be accessed by members of the Academic Council when a teacher and a parent expresses concern about the progress of a particular child.
- At the end of each bimester the Academic Director and the Co-ordinator of SEP Secondary analyse the data of secondary students and compare and contrast their performance with previous bimesters. If there is a noteable decline in performance then further information is gathered through consultation with teachers, and then a conference is arranged with the parents of the student. Subsequently, an individual learning plan can be drawn up and strategies devised to bring about improvement.
- Academic leaders at the Academia also use such data to track the progress, not just of individuals, but of classes. At times, the performance of whole classes in a particular subject might cause concern.
- Such data can help the Academic Council to set academic targets when they come to writing the detailed annual School Development Plan.
- Parents are encouraged to keep copies of old school reports so that they too can evaluate and monitor the progress of their children. Parents should go through each new school report with their children. This helps to give students more ownership of their learning process and to think of ways they can improve.