



# WALLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

## Assessment Policy

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# WHSG Assessment Policy

## 1. Principles and Scope

### a. What is the purpose and audience for this document?

The audience is any stakeholder who wants to understand the what, the why and the how of assessment at Wallington High School for Girls.

In particular, this document exists to provide departments and teachers with a practical guide, that they can use to evaluate and determine their assessment practices in line with school expectations.

### b. What is assessment?

For the purposes of this document, assessment is understood as any procedure/task that is used to provide insight into pupil learning. Please note, this understanding means assessment should not be reduced to formal written tests sat under exam conditions. Such tests are often the first example that come to mind when assessment is mentioned, but they are not the only tool teachers can use to provide insight into student learning. For example, in-class questioning, short low-stakes tests, on-line quizzes, etc. also count as examples of assessment.

Finally, before we move on to the next section, we should clarify the distinction between formative and summative assessment, which rests on their different purposes. Whereas formative assessment is used to inform and adapt teaching practices to improve pupil learning, summative assessment is used to inform high-level judgments about pupil attainment (e.g. a grade). This difference in purpose is why formative assessment typically takes place during a learning sequence while summative is set at the end.

## 2. Protocols

### a. Why do we assess?

Formative assessment is fundamental to the mission and purpose of any school. It is a practice that we should prioritise, not just because a wealth of evidence supports its effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, but because it is central to what it is to be a school, and even to be a teacher. As Ausubel puts it 'The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach [them] accordingly'<sup>1</sup>.

However, we also have an obligation to report home to parents/carers on their child's mastery of the curriculum, and to prepare students for the rigours of public examination. Therefore, in order of importance the purpose of assessment at Wallington High School for Girls is to:

- 1) provide information that is used to inform and adapt teaching practices to improve pupil learning,
- 2) produce robust data that can be used to inform high-level judgments about pupil's attainment<sup>2</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup> Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View, David Ausubel, 1968, p.6

<sup>2</sup> mastery of the curriculum

- 3) to give pupils the opportunity to practice for public examinations.

## **b. How do we assess?**

### Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are the best and most appropriate form of assessment to inform high-level judgments about pupil learning, and to provide pupils with practice for public examinations. However, there are compelling reasons to use them sparingly:

- 1) They are best when assessing a large domain, which takes a significant amount of time to teach.
- 2) They represent a significant drain on teacher's and student's time, which could be better spent on more productive activities, most notably formative assessment.
- 3) They are ill-suited to the primary purpose of school and education; to improve pupil learning.
- 4) Over-use can have a negative impact on pupil wellbeing and attitudes towards education.

Given these concerns – for the purposes of central reporting – only one data point in the year must be informed by a formal summative assessment. The other(s) can simply be informed by insights gathered from formative assessment, including - where appropriate – a common assessment to act as a sense check against teacher bias.

Formal summative assessments should typically take place after a significant amount of teaching time has passed (e.g., at the end of the school year), under standard conditions, and with no central expectation that teachers provide feedback beyond moderated marks or grades. They should also assess a large domain, and be composed of exam or exam-style questions for KS4 and KS5.

To further inform their department's approach to summative assessment, it is recommended that Heads of Department read Chapter 8 of *Making Good Progress* by Daisy Christodoulou, and Chapter 3 of *Middle Leadership Mastery* by Adam Robbins.

### Formative Assessment

In contrast to summative assessment, formative assessment should sit at the heart of teaching and learning, and feature as a common – day to day – practice. Teachers should be desperate to know what students know and understand, and to use this information to adapt their practice and improve learning outcomes (a.k.a. responsive teaching).

The literature on effective formative assessment is rich and complex, however, below are a series of recommendations that should guide departments and teachers as they take advantage of this important activity. To clarify, in the context of what follows, feedback is understood as a response to students' completing a task.

1. It is much easier to provide effective feedback on tasks which assess a small and crucial aspect of learning.
2. As exam questions are designed for summative assessment there is no expectation that they should be used for formative purposes.
3. Feedback includes any response to an assessment. It is not a synonym for marking and written comments.
4. Feedback should be more work for the pupil than the teacher (it should make them think hard).

5. Feedback should seek to change the pupil not the work.
6. A correct response doesn't mean further assessment isn't necessary.
7. Grades should never be used as feedback.
8. Be open with students about the process and purpose of formative assessment and prime them for feedback.
9. Seek misconceptions, celebrate and use them as an opportunity to learn.

To further inform their department's approach to formative assessment, it is recommended that Heads of Department read Chapter 7 of *Making Good Progress* by Daisy Christodoulou, *Responsive Teaching* by Harry Fletcher-Wood, and *William & Leahy's Five Formative Assessment Strategies' In Action* by Kate Jones.

### **3. Implementation**

It is not the purpose of this document to prescribe specific concrete strategies<sup>3</sup> that teachers should use on a day to day basis in their classroom (e.g. three hinge questions and an exit ticket per lesson).

This is a professional decision that should be made by each teacher with the support of their Head of Department.

However, it is expected that each department uses this document to guide, evaluate and determine an approach to assessment which is best suited for their subject and students, and which doesn't create an unhelpful burden.

Teachers should be systematically and frequently assessing student learning for the purpose of adapting and improving their own practice, and using infrequent summative assessment where appropriate, but how this is realised may vary from department to department.

### **4. Monitoring and Reporting**

#### **How will we check that this policy is being followed?**

1. Each department will write an assessment policy in line with the wider school policy. The department policy should answer the following questions.
  - a. How does [department] realise effective formative assessment?
  - b. How does [department] realise effective summative assessment?
  - c. How does [department]'s assessment practices marry up with reporting?
  - d. How does [department] review and ensure assessment practices are lean and fit for purpose?
2. Department assessment policies will be reviewed by senior leadership and discussed with HoDs to ensure compliance with the wider school policy.
3. Learning walks, drop-ins, faculty/department reviews, etc. will be used to ensure departments are following their assessment policies.

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix for a list of recommended strategies

## Appendix – Recommended Strategies for Formative Assessment

### Strategies for Eliciting Evidence of Student Learning

#### **A. Think, Pair, Share**

Before the teacher selects a student to answer a question, she gives the whole class silent thinking time and an opportunity to discuss their ideas with a partner.

<https://sites.google.com/view/walkthrusfullpackage/what/questioning-feedback/think-pair-share>

#### **B. Whole-Class Sampling**

Instead of selecting one student to provide a response to a question, the teacher asks all students to provide a response (e.g. raising fingers in response to a hinge question, writing an answer on a mini-whiteboard, completing an exit ticket).

<https://sites.google.com/view/walkthrusfullpackage/what/questioning-feedback/show-me-boards>

#### **C. Cold Calling**

After a teacher pitches a question to the class, the students think about it in silence. Only after a significant amount of thinking time has passed does the teacher select a student to answer the question.

<https://sites.google.com/view/walkthrusfullpackage/what/questioning-feedback/cold-calling>

#### **D. Circulating the room, checking work, and providing live feedback**

As the students complete independent work, the teacher circulates the room and checks to see how they are getting on. Where appropriate, the teacher intervenes to support/challenge based upon what she has found.

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/get-out-from-behind-the-desk/>

#### **E. Probing Questions and Process Questions**

Whenever a student answers a question the teacher asks further questions to investigate a) the breadth and depth of the student's understanding, or b) the student's rationale for their answer.

<https://my.chartered.college/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/7.-Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce-1.pdf>

#### **F. Asking students to comment on each other's responses**

Instead of the teacher responding to a student's answer they ask other students for their thoughts.

<https://sites.google.com/view/walkthrusfullpackage/what/questioning-feedback/class-discussion>