Assessment Policy

Assessment Policy Statement:

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.
The Education Act (1998) requires schools to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to students and their parents/guardians. In fulfilling this requirement, schools develop assessment procedures, which provide an accurate account of a student's progress and achievement. The school is mindful of changes to the assessment procedure in place for state examinations, outlined by DES circulars.
This Assessment Policy outlines the importance of assessment and the key role students, parents/guardians and staff play in supporting this policy document.

Aims of the Policy: This Assessment Policy aims to:
1. Explain the rationale and importance of assessments.
2. List the different types of assessments.
3. Detail the annual schedule of assessments.
4. Detail the reporting procedures post assessments.

Definition:
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. Methods include examinations, homework/home learning, written, oral and aural work and digital platforms e.g. OneNote and Teams. This list is not exhaustive.

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

- To improve the learning outcomes of the students.
- To measure the progress of students over time
- To raise expectations and standards
- To reinforce the learning carried out by the student.
- To provide the students, teachers and parents/guardians with information regarding progress.
- To involve students in their own learning.
- To act as an incentive for students in the learning process.
- To encourage and facilitate student ownership of their own learning and progress.
- To be motivated to achieve their full potential.
- To strengthen their questioning capabilities through the use of effective questioning and reflection strategies.
- To deepen learning and to develop critical thinking skills.
- To provide students with opportunities for effective feedback from teachers and peers to develop their thinking and learning.

The above list is not exhaustive.

Assessment should enable teachers to:

- To reinforce the learning carried out by students.
- To evaluate what a student has learned in a particular area and to provide feedback regarding progress to students in a timely and constructive manner.
- To provide the teacher with information to make decisions 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 adapt their teaching strategies and / or learning activities as appropriate.
- To monitor a student's progress.
- To encourage self-directed learning.
- To ensure that students know how to improve the standard of their work through e.g. success criteria, peer discussion and review.
- To establish baseline data in relation to a student's attainments in certain subjects.
- To fulfil the course requirements in certain subjects.
- To identify students for levels in Junior Cycle in Irish, English and Maths and all Senior Cycle subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of their learning and teaching methodologies in achieving the learning outcomes.
- To review and change practice.
- To assess a student's eligibility for additional support and services and to inform consultations with psychologists where necessary.
- To assist in the identification of students who may need to be referred to an outside professional agency or person for assessment or direct intervention.
- To raise expectations and standards for students, individual teachers and Parents.

Reporting of assessment should enable:

Parents/guardians

- To be involved in their child's learning.
- To monitor, understand and encourage the progress their child is making and to provide the parents/guardians with information regarding this progress.
- To be equipped with necessary information to further their child's progression.

Our assessment policy at Coolock Community College covers both assessment **of** learning (summative assessment), assessment **for** learning (formative assessment) and assessment **as** learning. Assessment of learning is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of learning and teaching. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting to students themselves and their parents/guardians. Assessment for learning and assessment as learning are part of a continuous process which may combine a grade with advice to the student towards further improvement. All forms of assessment are invaluable and will be used by teachers in this school.

Types of Assessment

1. Formative Assessment:

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 and by students to improve their learning. It typically

involves qualitative feedback for both student and teacher which focus on content and performance. Coolock Community College has adopted an Assessment for Learning (AFL) approach to its formative assessment.
The purpose of formative assessment is to use the whole process of assessment to help learners improve their learning. It is formative because its intention is to form, shape or guide the next steps in learning. It is about 'learning to learn.' It provides feedback for teachers during the learning process so that subsequent learning activities and experiences can be modified. It moves the focus away from achieving grades and onto learning processes. This results in increasing self-efficacy and improving intrinsic motivation. Feedback has a central role in formative assessment in Coolock Community College.

Principles of good feedback practice:

- It clarifies what good performance is (goals, success criteria, and expected standards etc.).
- It facilitates the development of self-assessment in learning.
- It provides high quality information to students about their learning.
- It encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
- It encourages the recognition of strengths and motivations.
- It promotes positive self-esteem.
- It provides opportunities to reflect on their learning and to identify gaps between current and desired performance.
- It provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

The above list is not exhaustive.

Formative assessment involves a range of strategies designed to give students, teachers and parents/guardians' feedback about students' understanding of elements of their learning in courses. Formative assessment strategies help students to reflect and identify their strengths, weaknesses and target areas that need work in order to encourage progress. They also help teachers recognise where students are struggling and enable the teacher to develop an intervention to address the problems.

Assessment for Learning (AFL):

In Coolock Community College, we feel that assessment should support learning, as well as measure the outcomes. Effective assessment for learning enables students to understand how to improve their work by:

- Helping them to understand the learning outcomes and assessment criteria before an assignment is begun.
- Discussing with them, what they have done well and what they could improve on.
- Discussing with them how to improve their work.
- Making available examples of work which meet the criteria so they can see how to improve their own work.
- Informing the teachers on how students learn, and this can be central to classroom practice.
- Being a part of effective planning.

In line with the demands of the syllabus in each curriculum area, teachers assign regular home-learning and comment on the merits of work and make suggestions for improvement. Grades/marks are avoided, wherever possible, when returning the initial work, but may be given at a later date. Assessment work may be differentiated to suit the needs and abilities of the individual.

Teachers at Coolock Community College have adopted and implemented several AFL strategies, questioning strategies and reflection strategies such as success criteria, to reinforce learning and teaching. We recognise that the professional judgement and discretion of the teacher may be used to adapt and adopt the methodologies to suit the particular demands of the subject and the requirements of the students.

Classroom Practices and Strategies Supportive of AFL:

Positive Classroom Culture:
A positive classroom environment, culture and ethos, which encourages students to think and talk about their learning, and which provides a safe and secure place for open, honest and respectful discussion.

Sharing of Learning Intentions with Students:
Learning Intentions, when explicitly shared with students at the beginning of each lesson clarifies the goals and places the lesson in its context. The teacher may refer to these learning intentions throughout and at the end of the lesson. This will help to clarify if the student has achieved the desired outcome. This will assist both teachers and students in determining the levels to which the outcomes have been achieved.

Identifying and Sharing of Success Criteria:
Identifying and sharing the success criteria is used to assess how well the learning outcome has been achieved. Teachers are aware that it is important to share this information with students at the start of an assignment so that they will be in a better position to know what is expected of them. Success criteria, shared with the students in advance, illustrates to students how to recognise success and how their work will be assessed. The students themselves can also use the success criteria to self-assess and re-draft their own work as part of the assessment process. Students may also be encouraged to think about and develop their own success criteria, either individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Self-Assessment:
Self-assessment involves students looking at their own work in a reflective way, identifying aspects of it that are good and that could be improved upon. This facilitates the setting of personal learning targets for themselves. Self-assessment involves metacognition, the process of being aware of and reflecting on one's own learning, with the aim of improving the level of thinking and learning occurring. Self-assessment can be used by students of all levels of ability and in all areas of learning. The results of the student's self-assessment (for example: learning logs, portfolios, pieces of writing, reflection sheets on exams, reflection pointers in the journal) can be shared with their parents/guardians. This can give parents/guardians more information about their student's learning from the student's own perspective.

Peer Assessment
Peer assessment empowers students to reflect on and evaluate each other's work in a purposeful and meaningful way. Teachers will, when deemed appropriate, supervise students to correct their own or their peer's work, based on a list of criteria for success. The students may write down what their

strengths are and how they can improve. This may be completed in a separate section of their copy, similar to a reflective journal, on the mini-white boards or through a digital platform.

Effective Feedback:
This is essential for students to understand how well they are learning and to identify the next steps in their learning. The teacher is often the person who is best placed to give focused feedback and support to students, but students can gain important insights into their own learning by reviewing or assessing their own work or by getting feedback from fellow classmates.

Comment-Only Marking (including two stars and wish):
Teachers using their professional judgement may engage in comment-only feedback, which may include references to what the student has done well, possible areas for improvement and how this improvement might be made.

Questioning:
At Coolock Community College, we promote effective questioning and have adopted and embedded many strategies into our classroom practice. Some effective questioning strategies include Blooms Taxonomy, wait time, NCCA booklet. Effective questioning applies to both the teachers and the students in the school. Questioning can take many forms - student to teacher, teacher to student and student to student.

Effective questioning serves as a means of deepening the thinking and learning of our students, enabling students to embrace their role in learning as self-directed learners and improving the learning outcomes for our students. Questioning strategies are an important part of developing higher order thinking skills and encouraging students to think systematically and critically, to be creative, to be adaptable and flexible and to encourage them to ask meaningful questions about topics. The implementation of effective questioning strategies has significant positive impacts on teacher practice, student learning experiences and the school as a whole.

Reflection:

As well as Assessment for Learning, we encourage the implementation of several effective reflection strategies. Our focus on reflection is based on the belief that reflection on thinking and learning can transform experience into genuine learning opportunities and facilitate the development of understanding. Reflective learning creates and clarifies meaning for students and results in greater understanding. We believe that by reflecting on their learning and making it explicit in classroom students will gain a greater understanding of what they know/understand, what they do not know/understand and what they need to learn. It is only by reflecting that students can connect the parts of what they've learned and establish how they can progress to further deepening that understanding.

Summative Assessment:

Definition:
Summative assessment refers to the assessment *of* the learning and summarises the development of learners at a particular time. After a period of work, the learner sits a test or completes an assignment which the teacher marks and assigns a score. Summative assessments will have a marking scheme developed that:

- Reflects the learning outcomes expected of the learner.
- Is appropriate to the learning outcome level being tested.
- Is planned reliable, valid and authentic.
- Contains a range of questions to test learning outcomes.
- Is based on good assessment practice.
- Reflects possible questions that occur in state exams.

General guidelines:

- Student work in Coolock Community College is assessed on a regular basis.
- Summative assessments will take place on a planned and regular basis.
- Class tests are conducted at the discretion of the teacher. Students may have assessments at the end of a topic. This may take the form of a class test or a homework exercise on the entire topic e.g. a past Leaving Certificate question.
- Students are assessed formally twice a year. The year is roughly divided into three 10 week blocks. Transition years do not sit formal house exams due to the nature of their programme.
- Mock Examinations take place at the end of January/start of February. This date can vary marginally from year to year, reflecting school activities/events and the needs of the Mock Examinations process. Mock Examinations are designed externally.
- All forms of assessment will strive to meet the additional needs of students in the classroom when they arise. Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, scribes and readers, may be used from time to time, as determined by SEN Team.
- Where feasible, and as determined by each department plan, all examination papers will be compiled collaboratively by each Subject Department. Where feasible, tests shall be common to all students within the same level. Fairness prevails and equal opportunities apply to all students. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area. The subject department agrees a common marking scheme for the common formal exams.
- Assessments will reflect the learning outcomes of programmes and subjects as outlined in the appropriate syllabi.

Students are expected to treat all of the above forms of assessment with respect. Any student who willingly fails to participate fully, or who acts in a disrespectful way towards any form of assessment in the school, will be dealt with accordingly.
The results of tests are recorded by the Teachers and the results of formal exams are entered onto VSWare and sent to parents/guardians. The results of class tests may occasionally be sent home. Corrected exams are returned to students after the exams when deemed appropriate, and the teacher and students review any problem. Such feedback and opportunity to reflect upon the actions taken and results given, is vital for student learning, and hopefully should ensure improved learning in the future.
The report template is computerised and allows teachers to distinguish levels. A mark and grade are awarded where appropriate a comment can be generated and days/classes missed entered.

Forms of Assessment:
Many forms of assessment are used at Coolock Community College.

1. 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 student's progress over time and to fully inform the learning process.

Informal Assessments methods include:

- Worksheets & written class work.
- Questions and answers in class.
- Essays & assignments.
- Reading & writing in class.
- Sample exam questions.
- Homework – written or learned.

2. Formal Assessment
There are many types of formal assessments that take place in the school environment.

(I) Monthly/End of Topic Test:
These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly or end of topic basis. These formal tests are a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents/guardians, on the level of each student's attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who partake in these tests, and the results of these tests will be used in the school's formal reporting structure where appropriate.

(II) House Exams – The year is divided roughly into three 10-week blocks. Formal In House Exams are held twice a year, Winter Exams (November) and Summer Exams (May). Transition years do not sit formal house exams due to the nature of their programme.
The length of the exam is typically:
1st Years -1 hour,
2nd and 3rd years – 1-2 hours
5th and 6th Years – 1-2 hours.

These exams are of a very serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents/guardians and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience of sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams. All house exams will follow the same operating rules as state exams. The results of these exams will be reported home to parents. Continuous assessment in the subject area leading up to these exams may also be reported, at the discretion of the teacher and where deemed appropriate, in the computerised reports sent home.

3rd Year and 6th Year students do not sit any formal house exams at the end of May, and do not receive a Summer Report.
The house exams after the second 10-week block (late January/early February) for 3rd and 6th years will be the pre junior and leaving certificate examination.

Transition Year students do not sit any formal state or house exams in the school. 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. It will be mainly continuous assessment.

(III) 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 New Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate exams.

These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be operated in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission. The same is true for L.C.V.P. and Leaving Certificate Examinations.

Other Assessments
Psychometric Tests
Prior to entry, or soon after entry to Coolock Community College all students will complete the following:
-Transition Profiler
-Accelerated Reader

We also take into consideration the STEN scores which were administered in the Primary Schools. These results are confidential, stored securely and used when necessary to inform resources to be provided to students.

CAT 4 testing can be used.

RACE – Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations
In order to ascertain who may be eligible for RACE the SEN department use the following tests: -

- WRAT
- NGRT
- DASH

If required students for further assessments and the SEN procedure for same will be followed (SEN policy)

Assessment and Reporting:
There are different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to parents/guardians.

Student Journal: Teachers may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents/guardians of a student by writing a note in the student's journal, therefore, we encourage parents/guardians to regularly check with their student for test results to monitor their progress. 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 through the Year Head, with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student.

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.

Parent Teacher Meetings:
At parent/teacher meetings it is possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians/guardians of individual students, that generates an accurate picture of the student's progress.

Written reports: Formal written reports are posted to the parents/guardians/guardians of students twice during the academic year, depending which year group they are in 1st, 2nd, Transition Year and 5th Year parents/guardians will receive their *Winter Report* in December, and their *Summer Report in June*. Parents/guardians of 3rd and 6th will also receive a *Winter Report* in December but will then receive another report in April with the results of their Pre-Junior and Pre-Leaving Certificate Exams. 3rd and 6th Year parents/guardians/ do not receive a *Summer Report*. Students of the JCSP will receive their Certificate at their Graduation in May, which their parents/guardians re invited to.

Please note the above list is not exhaustive.

Grading at First Year/Second Year/Third Year – Junior Cycle

The new descriptors for Junior Cycle and the existing Junior Certificate grades for all other subjects. Assessment practices for Junior students have changed dramatically under New Junior Cycle reforms.

In First Year, students will be given a comment using the summative grade descriptors of Distinction, Higher Merit, Merit, Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Graded, a total of 6 grade descriptors. These can be equated to grade points/percentages (see table)

Junior Cycle	
Percentage	**Grade Descriptor**
≥ 90 to 100	Distinction
≥ 75 and < 90	Higher Merit
≥ 55 and < 75	Merit
≥ 40 and < 55	Achieved
≥ 20 and < 40	Partially Achieved
≥ 0 and < 20	Not Graded (NG)

In Second Year, a combination of assessment descriptors are used.
Classroom Based Assessments (C.B.A.s), which are substantial bodies of work for which a descriptor given will appear on the student's Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). Classroom Based Assessments (C.B.A.s) are marked using the following descriptors:

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

Please note that if a student does not submit a CBA within the time allocated the grade descriptor that will appear on the JCPA will be 'not reported'. All non C.B.A. materials and work is assessed using the summative descriptors of Distinction, Higher Merit, Merit, Achieved, Partially Achieved, and Not Graded (see table).

In Third Year, a combination of assessment practices are again used.
Classroom Based Assessments (C.B.A.s), which are substantial bodies of work for which are awarded a descriptor, which will appear on the student's Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). Classroom Based Assessments (C.B.A.s) are marked using the following descriptors:

• Exceptional,
• Above expectations,
• In line with expectations,
• Yet to meet expectations.

Please note that if a student does not submit a CBA within the time allocated the grade descriptor that will appear on the JCPA will be 'not reported'.

An Assessment Task specific to each subject, worth 10%, is completed by all students in Third Year. This Task is based on C.B.A. work and is completed in school over a number of days. The A.T. is collected by the class subject teacher and stored in a secure location in school and submitted to the SEC with the student's terminal written examination in June. This is then corrected by the State Examinations Commission and forms part of their final summative grade.

Students sit a terminal exam which is graded by the State Examinations Commission, using summative grade descriptors of

- Distinction,
- Higher Merit,
- Merit, Achieved,
- Partially Achieved,
- Not Graded.