

Assessment in the Primary Year Programme

“Instruction and assessment are often two sides of the same coin and the relationship between them is continuous and reciprocal”. (Murdoch 2015)

Assessment is integral to the teaching and learning. It is central to the PYP goal of thoughtfully and effectively supporting students through the essential elements of learning: the acquisition of subject specific knowledge and skills, the understanding of concepts and the development of approaches to learning. Assessments at SIS are therefore, used as a tool to evaluate the depth of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Purpose of Assessment (Why do we Assess)

The purpose of assessment is to inform learning and teaching. It involves the gathering and analysis of information about student learning to inform teaching practice. It provides a supportive and positive mechanism that helps students to improve their learning, teachers to improve their teaching and contribute to the efficacy of the programme. It also offers information on student’s learning to parents, administrators and other stake holders.

At SIS, we believe well-designed and effective assessment is central to engaging students and allows learners to consolidate their learning.

Characteristics of Effective Assessment

- **Authentic:** It supports making connections to the real world to promote student engagement.
- **Clear and specific:** This includes desired learning goals, success criteria and the process students use to learn.
- **Varied:** It uses a wider range of tools and strategies that are fit for purpose in order to build a well-rounded picture of student learning.
- **Developmental:** It focuses on an individual student’s progress rather than their performance in relation to others.
- **Collaborative:** It engages both teachers and students in the assessment development and evaluation process.
- **Interactive:** Assessment encompasses ongoing and iterative dialogues about learning.

- **Feedback to feedforward:** It provides feedback on current learning to inform what is needed to support future learning (Hattie, Timperley, 2007) and raises students' motivation.

What to Assess

PYP assessment recognizes the importance of monitoring and documenting the process of inquiry as well as the product of inquiry. The teachers plan multiple opportunities for their students to develop knowledge, conceptual understandings and skills to support self-regulatory learning. At SIS, the learners are assessed based on the knowledge of facts, understanding of the concepts and the development or growth of skills over a period of time. The success criteria are either known to the students or are co-constructed with the learners, allowing them to be involved in the learning process and taking ownership of their own learning.

How to Assess

PYP assessment has four dimensions: Monitoring, Documenting, Measuring and Reporting on learning. Each of these aspects has its own function, but all aim to provide evidence to inform learning and teaching. Although the four dimensions of assessment are not weighted the same; each dimension has its own importance and value.

A) Monitoring learning

Monitoring of learning aims to check the progress of learning against personal learning goals and success criteria. It occurs daily through a variety of strategies: observation, questioning, reflection, discussing learning with peers and teachers, and well-considered feedback to feed forward for next steps in learning. Tools used for monitoring include open-ended tasks, written or oral assessment, and a learning portfolio.

B) Documenting learning

The documenting of learning is the compilation of the evidence of learning. Documentation can be physical or digital, and can be displayed or recorded in a variety of media forms. Documentation of learning is shared with others to make learning visible and apparent.

Students and teachers can document learning goals, questions, reflections and evidence of learning using a variety of formats.

- **Learning logs or journals:** These are used to record feedback and reflections of ongoing learning.
- **Learning stories:** Narratives that document an instance when the learner shows knowledge, conceptual understanding or skills.
- **Portfolios:** The Learner Portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that is designed to identify student growth and provide a continuum for students to track their learning process. Portfolios enable students to reflect on their learning and identify their strengths, as well as areas for improvement, throughout the year.

C) Measuring learning

The measuring of learning aims to capture what a student has learned at a particular “point in time”. Not all learning can be, or needs to be, measured.

- **Pre-Assessment** - The assessment of a student’s prior knowledge and experience, which will be evaluated prior to new learning experiences.
- **Assessment for learning (Formative assessment)** - Provides information and evidence of student understanding that is used to give timely feedback and design the next stage in learning. It is interwoven with learning, and helps teachers and students to find out what the students already know and can do. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked and function purposefully together.
- **Assessment as learning** – Students reflect on their own learning and their progress towards their goals. May include the following
 - Self-assessment* - Tasks in which students actively reflect on their performance on assignments.
 - Peer and group assessment* - Tasks in which students actively evaluate each other's learning by providing feedback.

D) Reporting Learning

It is the process of communicating the knowledge and understanding gained from assessing a student's learning. Reporting practices at SIS include

- **Parent /Teacher Conferences**

Parent/Teacher Conferences occur at the end of each term. In these conferences, parents and teachers discuss the progress of each student's learning and identify areas for growth.

- **Student-Led Conferences**

Student-Led Conferences take place after each unit and are a review of the work that has happened during the course of six weeks. Students lead their families through various activities in the classroom and sharing of their learning portfolio, to demonstrate their personal and academic growth. Student-Led Conferences conclude with a family reflection.

- **The PYP Exhibition**

The PYP Exhibition is a collaborative experience that provides students an opportunity to identify, explore and investigate into issues of personal interest. In Symbiosis International School, the Exhibition is one of the six Units of Inquiry in Grade 5, wherein students are fully engaged in planning and implementing their inquiries as well as presenting their findings to the school community.

- **Written Reports**

Formal written reports are issued twice a year across all grades from EYP1 to PYP 5. The report is one element in the process of communicating with parents about their child's progress, and facilitators will provide comments on areas of success and next steps in learning. Reports are issued at the end of each term.

EYP and PYP students are evaluated and graded in their reports in the following way:

Learning Scale	E	A	I	B
Descriptor	Expert level of	Advanced Level of	Intermediate Level of	Beginning to attain

	Proficiency towards the Learning Goal	Proficiency towards the Learning Goal	Proficiency towards the Learning Goal	Proficiency towards the Learning Goal
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Roles and Responsibilities:

Student responsibilities

Students develop assessment capability when teachers provide them with multiple supported experiences in reflecting on their learning and how to make improvements. Using specific language to describe, discuss and evaluate learning, students demonstrate their assessment capability by

- partnering with teachers to design their learning goals and success criteria
- being able to self-assess and discuss their progress towards achieving learning goals
- selecting evidence, such as samples of their learning, that best demonstrate the intended learning goals
- developing the metacognitive skills to reflect on their learning and to plan next steps
- drawing on feedback and multiple strategies to adjust their learning and identify where and when to make improvements.
- Being active participants responsible for their own learning and assessment; for example, seeking and acting upon feedback, setting and meeting goals and deadlines.

Teacher responsibilities

- Supporting students to become assessment capable.
- Using data and evidence to inform planning and teaching strategies
- Understanding the purpose of assessment and selecting appropriate strategies.
- Collaborating to design and moderate assessments, analysing results and planning next steps.
- Giving effective feedback and communicating the learning process.
- Sharing evidence and data with students and the learning community.
- Reflecting on evidence and data to improve own practice
- Planning multiple opportunities for success
- Supporting student reflection through modelling

Parent responsibilities

- Being active participants in assessment practices.
- Supporting your child's growth, with an emphasis on the progress rather than comparison with others
- Taking opportunities to reinforce school learning.
- Communicating constructively with students and teachers.

References:

PYP: From Principles into Practice "Learning and teaching".
SIS Assessment Policy- 2016
Guidelines for developing a school Assessment Policy
Murdoch, Kathleen. 2015. *The Power of Inquiry*.