

ABBEY
COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

Assessment Policy

2021-2022

SLT Responsible for this Policy

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This policy has been approved by SLT and adopted on behalf of the Governors, and is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and is available on the school's portal. It is available to parents on request. It applies wherever staff or volunteers are working, including when this involves being away from the school.

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Philosophy

The Abbey College Cambridge vision is to be a community energised by the love of learning and the pursuit of outstanding achievement for all. In order to ensure excellent outcomes and outstanding achievement for all, it is necessary for our students to undergo regular assessment, and to benefit from instructive and effective feedback. Equally, we are mindful of the cultural background of our students and the immense pressure many place themselves under during formal assessments.

We hold that for students to achieve the best possible outcomes, strategic oversight of their progress during their programme of study is crucial and must encompass a 360-degree view of the student. This oversight takes place during regular progression conferences led by the Vice Principal Academic in consultation with the Vice Principal Pastoral and the relevant Housemaster, following input from teaching staff and Heads of Department. In progression conferences every individual student's progress is discussed. Such oversight allows for effective intervention to take place without overloading students or for alterations to be made to the programme itself to best serve the needs of each student as an individual.

In fostering a love of learning, we do not allow students to progress onto courses where they cannot flourish. The very best interests of each individual student frames each decision made during progression conferences. In keeping with our vision and our commitment to safeguarding each and every student in our care, we will not stand by whilst a student flounders on a course they may not be sufficiently academically or linguistically developed to cope with.

Measuring progress

We recognise that measuring the progress of our students is important and in order to do so effectively a baseline is essential. This is a challenge because our students come from all over the world. Some will have taken I/GCSE examinations, most will not. Some will have sat IELTS, most will not. We are not academically selective and our students do not sit any form of admissions examination as it would be a barrier to entry in our sector. Our experience is that using cognitive aptitude tests alone at the start of a student's course in an effort to establish a baseline does not consistently produce useful target grades. This is due to a combination of underdeveloped English skills perhaps masking a student's true ability, and the fact that many of the subjects chosen have not been studied before so a baseline of prior knowledge cannot be established (e.g. Economics, Psychology, Accounting).

Our approach to baseline testing

Nonetheless, in order to measure progress a form of baseline must be established. Our approach is to use a combination of cognitive assessment, our own internal baseline assessment tests in each subject area and the professional judgement of the Head of Department. Therefore, all students sit the GL Assessment and receive CAT4 target grades enabling ACC to measure both the progress that *should* have made as well as the progress that *has* been made since students began with us.

Evidence of progress

We measure progress both throughout and at the end of a course as well as at logical punctuations – end of topic, term and year.

In many cases, it is easy to evidence the progress made on a course using a student's current working grade from a topic test or internal examination and comparing it to their baseline grades (both CAT4 and departmental). At times intervention may be necessary to support overall progress but as a college we are confident they are on the right programme of study.

However, we do have some students where it becomes evident (through internal assessment) that we cannot expect progress in our internal assessments as the test level is simply too high for the student's English level and/or ability. We provide intervention for these students, reduce their subject loading to give them more time to focus on less material, and where possible divert them on to a more suitable pre-session course (subject to visa restrictions and parental consent).

Where these strategies do not result in sufficient progress, such students are prepared for transferring to an alternative programme of study, most commonly the International Foundation Programme in order to secure the best possible university destination.

During this period, Heads of Department use evidence of *learning* as a measure of progress for these students. This is achieved by collating evidence of knowledge and skills required for the IFP that students did not have at the start of the academic year but acquired during their current course – this is often qualitative in nature.

Process

- 1) All students sit a baseline cognitive aptitude test to assess their academic potential at the start of each course. This is provided by GL Assessment and provides an externally-verified and meta-tested summative statement on a students' learning preferences and likely outcomes at the end of a course, if appropriately challenged.

- 2) Students will also sit a baseline assessment in each subject in which they are enrolled. This is internally developed and is transitional in nature, recognising the steep learning curve from GCSE/high school equivalent and A levels. This allows us to have an understanding of where students are now and, in combination with CAT4, where they should get to.
- 3) These results are reviewed by the Head of Department and in recognition of the challenges faced in producing a target grade for our students, may be adjusted at the discretion of the HoD.
- 4) There are three major summative testing events throughout the Academic year. An 'End of Term' exam before Christmas, a 'Mock' exam after February half term and a final End of Year in June for those students not taking final GCSE or A level exams. The summative tests for IFP students are at the end of each term, reflecting the structure of their course. Pre-sessional students will sit PET examinations in addition to the three summative tests. Students will also sit IELTS examinations on the advice of their teacher or housemaster at the most appropriate time for them.
- 5) The exam days are fixed throughout the week to allow adequate planning, thereby minimising impact on teaching & learning. All internal examinations are administered by the Examinations Officer and are run in-line with JCQ requirements. For more information, please refer to the Examinations Policy.
- 6) In addition to formal internal examinations, topic tests take place in class to measure student progress in a less formal environment and provide useful data for progression conferences. Therefore, the whole assessment structure is chronologically presented as follows:

Term 1

- Topic test 1
- Topic test 2
- End of Term examinations (incl. IFP Term 1)
- Progression 1

Term 2

- Topic test 3
- Mocks (Y11/1yr, Y13 A level) and Mid-Years (all non-exam years)
- Progression 2
- IFP Term 2

Term 3

- Topic test 4
- End of Year examinations or external GCSE/A level exams
- Final progression (Pre-sessional, Year 10 and 12 only)
- Term 3 IFP

- 7) It is expected that students will be given past paper questions in many tests. The intention is that the test will give the opportunity for assessing:
- a) Factual recall
 - b) Conceptual understanding
 - c) Interpretation / application of theory
 - d) Varied exam skills
- 8) Feedback from internal examinations should be summative, giving the student a current working grade, and formative, equipping the student with the tools they need to make further progress.
- 9) All feedback from assessment, whether internal examinations or regular written and verbal feedback on students' work or topic tests between these events, should be in accordance with the curriculum policy and therefore:
- Kind, specific and helpful;
 - Detailed with personalised evaluation points for future development;
 - Presented at the end of a piece of work, or attached to it, and take the form of at least one What Went Well (WWW) and one Even Better If (EBI)
 - An "EBI" may synthesise/direct a student's attention to all teacher annotations present throughout the body of a piece of work;
 - Summative feedback may be a mark or percentage but should not allocate grades. Grade-specific feedback should be reserved for formal assessments and topic tests;
 - Regular and frequent. Students are expected to receive written feedback once per week per subject as a minimum; note that given the nature of teaching in the 21st century this may be a) auto-generated (i.e. through self-answering programming/platforms such as MS Forms or Seneca Learning) or b) audio
 - Promote good English;
 - In red pen (with students responding in green pen where appropriate and teachers responding to such reflective work from students to ensure no inaccuracies or misconceptions become embedded).
- 10) There is a day of Personal Tutor Meetings following each progression conference in which each student meets with their Personal Tutor to discuss all their results and develop a plan of shared targets which the student and tutor can use to work together for better outcomes.

Missed internal examinations and topic tests

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of Heads of Department to arrange an appropriate time for an internal examination (Dept Baseline and Mid-Year only) or topic test to be taken under invigilated conditions. If it is suspected that the student may already have had access to that assessment then it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that a new one is set. No assessment should be done by students at home or in accommodation, unless in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of SLT.

In practice, wherever possible the Examinations Officer will arrange at least one additional internal examination sitting for a student who is unable to sit the assessment at the allotted time. Once the internal examination session (including all planned catch-up sessions) has closed, the Examinations Officer will inform the relevant Head of Department of any students who have not yet sat the relevant assessment for them. The Head of Department will then arrange a further additional session.

Monitoring progress

At Abbey College Cambridge we recognise that the vast majority of our students join us in the hope of securing a top UK university destination when they leave us. The majority of our parents have little interest in 'value-added' but see student progress only in absolute terms. Therefore, when we consider the question of 'is this student making progress?', we must respond in both relative and absolute terms. At Abbey College Cambridge a student is making progress when they are in line with or surpassing their Baseline+ grade and are on track to securing results that will secure a top university offer.

Student progress is measured at several levels within the school. Firstly, within the classroom by the teacher. We respect the professionalism of our teaching staff to ensure that students are making progress within lessons and to recognise when they are not. Given the culture background of some of our students, it may not be appropriate for a teacher to intervene in the public forum of a single lesson early in a course as it may damage the burgeoning student-teacher relationship. However, it is expected that all staff would follow-up and support a student who they identified as not making progress. Secondly, the Head of Department has a crucial role in monitoring all the students who study their subject via topic tests and internal examinations and engaging in dialogue with their teaching staff about the progress of each student. Heads of Department will highlight students of concern within the progression cycle outlined below or during 1:1 meetings with the VPA and put in place a support plan (specific measures are at the discretion of the HoD who understand best the likely impact on a specific student) for any student identified as under-performing. Finally, progression conferences ensure that every student's progress is analysed by the VPA and VPP as well as the student's housemaster. This ensures provision for support (intervention) is put in place where required and that common 'threads' are identified and explored, such as potential SEND issues.

Intervention

Teachers and Heads of Departments should feel empowered to intervene at any point if a students' progress and attainment is falling short of expectations.

Students are judged firstly against their baseline grades. Their baseline grades are not shared with the students as we believe children should set their own targets and not be influenced by a potentially lower baseline grades. However, teachers must be aware of these minimum grades and ensure students do not fall below them.

Progress is ultimately judged, given the university aspirations of the majority of our students, in absolute terms of potential university entry requirements. This is to encourage early intervention and timely in-depth discussions about the best route forward to access those universities. All Heads of Department and Housemasters are mindful of the AAB minimum requirements for Russell Group entry via A Level.

Where a student is identified as not making sufficient progress, by their teacher, Head of Department or during a progression conference, appropriate intervention must be put in place to support them. Housemasters and Heads of Department work together to ensure that intervention is put in place, and that it is supportive and not overwhelming for students.

Intervention takes many forms and students are allocated on a case-by-case basis as appropriate. Intervention includes but is not limited to:

- 1:1 or small group additional lessons
- Peer mentoring (please see Peer Mentoring documentation)
- Evening support sessions run via Abbey Inspires
- Morning or lunchtime support sessions
- Academic mentoring
- Study skills support
- SEND assessment
- Additional EAL support
- Supervised prep
- Attendance at specific academic clubs, such as those aimed at language acquisition

Progression criteria

Pre-Sessional English

Where applicants' level of English is not judged to be advanced enough to master GCSE (IELTS 4.5 or equivalent), IFP (IELTS 5.0 or equivalent) or A-Level (IELTS 5.5 or equivalent) courses students are accepted onto our pre-sessional English course with a conditional offer to progress.

Typically, the conditional offer will state: Subject to a minimum IELTS (4.5/5.0/5.5) equivalent result or confirmation of the required academic progression by your tutors following completion of your Pre-sessional course, this can then be followed by main course study on a one-year/two-year/18-month GCSE/IFP/A-Level course.

The Principal and SLT will reserve the right not to allow a student to progress from the pre-sessional course.

From GCSE

Progression from GCSE to A-Level requires 5 GCSEs, or their equivalent, at grade 4/C. Where internal examinations including mock data suggest that a GCSE student will not achieve this, SMT and SLT can make a decision during the penultimate progression conference that follows mock examinations.

If the student will be over 17 at the start of the next academic year it might be appropriate for the student to enrol onto the IFP rather than A-Levels and SLT may issue this advice.

From and During A-Levels

Students normally progress from the first year of an A-Level course to the second year when joining the Upper Sixth from the Lower Sixth (or '18 month' A Level for students who started in January of that year). In order to make this transition to Year Two study students need to demonstrate a good understanding of Year One.

Students wishing to progress with three A-Levels (with Maths and Further Maths counting as two) must be achieving at least a C in each subject. A B grade is required to continue Further Maths.

Students wishing to progress with four or more A-Levels (with Maths and Further Maths counting as two) must be achieving at least an A in each subject.

It should be noted that no UK Universities make offers based on more than three A-Levels, and students should aim for the highest possible score in three A-Levels rather than a less impressive score in four.

Progression Conferences

At regular intervals in the academic year (see above), progression conferences are held led by the VPA and attended by the VPP and relevant Housemaster. Academic and pastoral circumstances and aspirations are considered in conjunction with the student's current progress level and the following suggestions might be made:

- 1) All students working below their Baseline+ grade must receive targeted intervention which is then reviewed at the next progression conference.
- 2) Reduce the subject profile. GCSE students should not drop below five GCSEs and A-Level students should not drop below three unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 3) Year 12 students who have made little progress across the board may be advised to restart on the 18M course in January on different subjects.
- 4) Starting an A level in a native language to supplement A level offering to universities.
- 5) Preparing to transfer to the International Foundation Programme in the following academic year. In these instances, the VPA will be mindful of the visa implications of such a transfer and may consult with those responsible for the issuing of CASs. Parental consultation will always take place in this situation via the tutor, Housemaster or VPA. Additional support may also be given to best prepare the student for the IFP during the remainder of the academic year/summer holidays depending on the appropriateness of their current programme of study.
- 6) Assign an Academic Mentor.
- 7) Refer for study skills support.
- 8) Refer for SEND assessment.
- 9) Assign to supervised prep.

Penultimate and Final Progression conferences

Following the mock examinations, the penultimate progression takes place. For Years 11 and 13, this is a final opportunity to check progress before their public examinations and intervene as appropriate. This is the point at which Year 11 make final decisions on their subject choices for A level during their PTM. For Pre-sessional, Year 10 and Year 12 students, decisions are made as to the most appropriate programme of study and subject combinations for them in the following academic year.

As at previous progressions, all students are discussed individually. Pre-sessional students will be advised whether to progress onto two-year GCSE, one-year GCSE, Year 12 of A level or the IFP with due regard to their age and language ability. Year 10 students may be advised to reduce their subject offering. Year 12 students are either given an unconditional offer to progress to the second year of A level, a conditional offer to progress to the second year of A level (usually by reducing to three subjects), another opportunity to secure the progression requirements in the End of Year examinations with the possibility that they may need to transfer to the IFP, or are advised that preparing to transfer to the IFP now is the best route forward. By advising our students of their likely route forward in the following year at this point we allow plenty of time for parent and agent consultation, an additional chance for students to achieve the required progression criteria of CCC, but also enough time for new visas to be obtained if required (IFP students who require a visa must move to a Tier 4 General visa regardless of their age before they can start the course).

During the final progression conference, only pre-sessional, Year 10 and Year 12 students are discussed as public examination results are not available for Year 11 and Year 13. At this point final decisions are made following the advice given in the penultimate progression conference.

Progress following Results Day

Students who considerably over perform or underperform come Results Day may have a progression intervention made by SLT. SLT and Directors of Studies will be on hand to support with Clearing & Adjustment following the release of results. GCSE students who are borderline on the progression criteria or below may be accepted onto A-Level courses with a reduced subject profile.