

Assessment Principles

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this assessment policy is to describe the role of assessment in the Trust and explain what formal assessment involves in our schools. It aims to offer a general outline of the formal (or summative) assessment process at Future Academies and the principles that underpin it. It is important to note that individual schools within the Trust will have their own, specific assessment practices. This policy does not seek to replace or reform these practices, but rather offer a description and rationale that is common within our schools.

2. Rationale

There have been a number of significant changes to assessment practices in England in recent years, affecting Key Stages 1 to 5. This has provided an opportunity to think carefully about our assessment practices, with a particular interest in ensuring that the summative assessments we develop for the new key stage requirements are reliable, purposeful and valuable for stakeholders (including staff, students and parents). In light of the absence of any external standardised assessment at KS3, it particularly important to ensure that assessment design and delivery is robust in this area.

3. Forms of assessment at Future Academies

Formative assessment: assessment for learning. Within our Trust, approaches to formative assessment are led by individual schools' Teaching and Learning teams. The purpose of formative assessment is to check student understanding during lessons and to enable teaching that is responsive to the information gained from this. Examples of formative assessment include: regular low-stakes testing, use of questioning in class, interrogative and instructional marking, batch or sample marking, feedback lessons, and 'do nows' that address common misconceptions or require students to retrieve knowledge. Formative assessment is part of the everyday experience of teaching and learning across the Trust.

Summative assessment: assessment of learning. Within our Trust, schools conduct summative assessments in formal conditions (i.e. examinations), which are specifically designed to test knowledge of the curriculum. Summative assessments are designed by the Curriculum Centre (for curricula provided by the Centre), school departments (for curricula designed within schools), or public examination boards (only for students preparing for public examinations). Our summative assessments are carefully designed to ensure that they are fair (e.g. they do not assume or require knowledge outside the curriculum being assessed, they are suitable for all levels of knowledge of the curriculum, and they are sat in appropriate conditions), and they are reliable (i.e. student performance is a reliable indicator or representation of their knowledge of the curriculum).

Baseline assessment: Within our Trust, it is possible that students will be given a baseline assessment before they embark on a new curriculum. Baseline assessments can be standardised or knowledge-specific. Standardised baseline assessments are used in order to identify the general academic abilities of a student, especially at points across Key Stage 3. The purpose of this assessment is to inform target-setting for our students. All of our students will have a target grade for each of their subjects, and we understand their progress throughout the key stage in relation to this target (i.e. after a summative assessment, we will know if a student is on or off track to reach their target). Additionally, knowledge-specific baseline assessments are used in order to identify the specific conceptual knowledge that students have before they are taught a new curriculum. The purpose of these is to inform teaching and curriculum delivery, whilst also providing useful information when allocating students into class sets.

4. What is the purpose of summative assessment at Future Academies?

Within the Trust, summative assessment fulfils three valuable functions. Firstly, it enables us to gain a reliable representation of student knowledge of the curriculum. Secondly, it enables us to know what progress students are making in relation to their targets and analyse trends within and across individual academies. With this knowledge, our academies are able to identify and implement practical strategies to support our students make excellent progress. Lastly, the collection and analysis of summative assessment data enables us to provide information and assurance to each of our stakeholders, including students, staff and parents.

5. How and when does summative assessment take place?

Whilst formative assessment is part of the day-to-day experience of teachers and students, it is important that summative assessment only takes place at intervals when such assessment can be valuable and purposeful for our stakeholders. On the one hand, we need to assess our students regularly enough to collect data that informs academy, department or teacher priorities. On the other hand, it is important that summative assessment is not over-used, which can lead to assessment driving the delivery of the curriculum ('teaching to the test') and other forms of negative washback. With this in mind, academies within our Trust will conduct summative assessments:

- In a formal environment. Typically, they will take place in classrooms under the supervision of the class teacher. Ideally, however, each year group would be able to sit a summative assessment in an 'exam hall' supervised by invigilators towards the end of the academic year (space and staff permitting).
- Twice a year. Typically, this will be arranged by academies at a mid-point in the academic year (December-February) and at the end point in the year (May-July). This enables students, parents, teachers, and departments to gain a snapshot of performance and progress during the year, respond to this and put in place strategies that can support learning for the end of year assessments. It may be the case that individual academies elect to assess a particular year group, or class within a year group, more than twice. Where this is the case, however, it is important to note that any formal assessment ought to be carefully considered regarding its purpose and ought to sit outside the data reporting cycle.

6. How is summative data used by the Trust?

Within each of our academies, a specific data analysis process will take place. This process depends on the organisational structure of the academy but is underpinned by some common elements:

- Before each summative assessment cycle. The assessment is checked to ensure it is a fair and reliable assessment, which will provide purposeful information about student performance.
- During each summative assessment cycle. Departments put in place clear moderation strategies to support the consistency of assessment and reliability of data.
- After each summative assessment. Data analysis is conducted by both an academic lead (Head of Department) and pastoral lead (Head of Year). This enables the identification of a clear set of actions to be followed by class teachers (e.g. identifying target students within the classroom, revisiting concepts or topics, etc) and year teams (e.g. identifying groups of students who require specific support or attention, meeting with parents, celebrating success). Both data analysis reports are discussed at Senior Leadership Team meetings, where further consideration for specific actions can be given.

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