



A framework for assessment in KS3, KS4 (and KS5)

1. Introduction: Assessment Aligned with Curriculum and Pedagogy

In recent educational history, it has very often been the case that assessment has become broadly synonymous with data and reporting. In many cases, assessment has become the servant of number-crunching and spreadsheets, often in the pursuit of 'proving' pupils or groups of pupils are making progress. The real purpose of assessment – understanding and supporting pupils' learning and planning how to improve it – has, to varying degrees, been obscured. This framework sets out the principles and practice for a trust-wide approach to assessment which meets this core purpose.¹

As Sweller, Ayres and Kalyuga have said, **learning is defined as *knowing more and remembering more*** and as an alteration in long term memory - if nothing has been remembered, then nothing has been learned.² The primary purpose of assessment, therefore, is to understand the extent to which pupils *know more and remember more of the curriculum* they have experienced, and whether what they know is *flexible and secure in long-term memory*.

2. Aims and Objectives

This framework has several important objectives, the most important of which is that assessment must be fit for purpose, in all contexts and domains. This framework achieves this by ensuring:

- **A close link between assessment, curriculum, and teaching.** Assessment is primarily about how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. The outcomes of assessment should always influence decisions about teaching and the design of the curriculum
- **Assessments are valid, reliable, and used to help pupils to learn better.** Assessments should be designed to provide insight into pupils', – it should never be 'data-led'. However, assessment will be robust enough to provide valid and reliable information across different teachers and different cohorts or classes
- **Reporting and target setting are meaningful and valid.** Where assessment outcomes are reported, these measures will be valid, meaningful, and easily understood. A valid assessment will always measure what it purports to measure – it will not be used to generalise or distort
- **Assessment methods must be efficient and not increase staff workload.** The outcomes from most formative assessments should not need to be recorded formally. There should not need to be more than three formal summative assessment points per year. Approaches to marking should be designed to ensure impact on learning and reduce the burden on staff
- **End of year assessments will be appropriately benchmarked.** This is to provide confidence to academy leaders and to the trust that standards are appropriate and to ensure comparability between academies and, where possible, with national expectations.

¹ This framework was reviewed by Prof. Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment, and incorporates his feedback.

² Sweller, J., Ayres, P., Kalyuga, S. (2011)



3. Core Principles

- **The primary purpose of assessment is to provide valid and reliable information about whether pupils are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** Assessment should always provide information about whether pupils can remember, in long-term memory, what they have learned. A further purpose of assessment is to provide information about the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy and how these can be improved
- **Progress is defined as the extent to which a pupil or pupils have learned or are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** The curriculum is the progression model. It sets out what we want pupils to learn, and therefore their 'progress'. If pupils are successfully learning the curriculum, they must be making progress. Progress cannot be measured or 'proved'.³ Attempting to do so often sets up perverse incentives or practices such as teaching to the test
- **Assessment should exploit the benefits of assessment on learning and memory.** The approach to assessment should always seek to make use of the 'testing effect'⁴. Research has shown that regular assessment, if used in appropriate ways, strengthens long-term memory and recall

4. Summative and Formative Assessment

- **Summative assessments information should be gathered at least at three points during the year, which includes an end of year assessment.** Academies can, of course, also use summative approaches more frequently at other times (for example, at the ends of sequences or units of learning). Summative assessments should be designed to evaluate pupils' learning (of the curriculum) since the beginning of that unit, sequence or term/year, along with any content taught previously and considered essential to support current and future learning. Academies should note that there are often limitations in using summative assessments for diagnostic purposes⁵
- **At other times, regular formative assessment will be the main approach.** The main aim is diagnostic and remedial: to identify whether important learning has been securely mastered and fluency achieved. From lesson to lesson, this will only rarely take a 'formal' test-based format. There is no need to record or aggregate 'data' from such formative assessments, other than information the teacher feels necessary. Formative assessments will be 'low stakes' and are likely to take a wide variety of forms: from reviewing pupils' work and responses, interactive Q&A during teaching, to 'quick quizzes' and 'exit tickets', teachers will deploy a range of strategies to gauge pupils' fluency and mastery of key knowledge and understanding. The impact of formative assessment will be evident through pupils' improved understanding and mastering of the curriculum
- **The development of high-quality assessment approaches is essential.** For example, research has shown that a high volume of high-quality questions is a significant factor in effective assessment which supports improved learning. As Tim Oates notes, these questions are particularly effective in 'challenging, flushing out misconceptions, stimulating thought and so on. Teachers should design

³ Attempting to measure learning is inherently flawed (it is too complex) and very often reductive (applying a single numeric metric narrows our view of what has/has not actually been learned).

⁴ http://psych.wustl.edu/memory/Agarwal/Agarwal_Bain_Chamberlain_2012_EDPR.pdf

⁵ For example, summative assessment is often highly composite, so unless very skilfully interpreted and assessed, can lead to generic remedial action.



learning sequences – engaging with content – but at the same time think of high-quality questions and the answers which would indicate the depth of understanding which is being aimed for'

- **Academies should draw on robust methodology that meets these core principles.** Academies should draw on effective practice both externally and across the trust. Collaboration between academies in the trust will be especially valuable in developing robust assessment methodologies and ensuring trust-wide consistency. Externally, there is good body evidence which supports the use of 'comparative judgement' methodology, as propounded by Daisy Christodoulou⁶

5. Tracking and Reporting - Key Stage 3

- **National reporting measures, such as GCSE grades, should never be used to track pupils' attainment or progress.** However, in Key Stages 3 and 4, it is legitimate to make use of GCSE questions as part of assessments (both formative and summative)⁷ and to support teaching. This is because familiarity with test instruments is known to be a significant factor in pupils' performance in external tests and examinations.⁸ However the use of 'flight path' methodology is faulty and has been demonstrated to lack validity as well as building in low expectations for many pupils^{9 10}
- **Academies should report on the extent to which pupils have successfully learned the intended curriculum.** To do this, each academy should make an assessment at three points in each academic year, in each subject (except where this would not be appropriate - for example where subjects are taught on a termly carousel, or where the overall teaching time is small. In these cases, a single end-of-year summative assessment would be sufficient). Each assessment point should be synoptic (that is, assessing pupils' learning since the start of the year or key stage), and academies are free to design the most suitable assessment tools for this purpose. Information from these assessments will be collected at a trust-level at each of the three points (see Appendix A)
- **Pupils' learning should be assessed using the four-point scale set out below.** Academies should submit at the end of each term, and report to parents¹¹ and other appropriate stakeholders, for each subject, the proportion of pupils who are:
 - *Successfully learning all or nearly all the curriculum, demonstrating a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills expected (1)*
 - *Successfully learning most of the curriculum, demonstrating a good understanding of the knowledge and skills expected, although there may be some gaps (2)*
 - *Successfully learning some of the curriculum, demonstrating a satisfactory understanding of the knowledge and skills expected, although there may be a number of gaps (3)*
 - *Not successfully learning the curriculum, with significant gaps in the skills and knowledge expected (4)*

⁶ <https://researched.org.uk/comparative-judgement-the-next-big-revolution-in-assessment/>

⁷ As long as the questions (instruments) used assess against the taught curriculum.

⁸ https://www2.gwu.edu/~fellows/GTAP/Online%20Makeup/T-L%20Presentation%20Readings/Using%20Practice%20Tests_2004-Winter_p109.pdf

⁹ <https://learningspy.co.uk/assessment/how-do-we-know-pupils-are-marking-progress-part-1-the-problem-with-flightpaths/>

¹⁰ <https://researchschool.org.uk/public/docs/Dawn-Cox-Why-are-you-using-marks-and-grades-rEDIpswich19.pdf>

¹¹ To strengthen the effectiveness of reporting to parents, academies should ensure that high-level curriculum plans (or equivalent) are available on the academy website so that parents can understand the content covered over the term.



In order to do this, teachers should formally assess every pupil each term using the above four-point scale. This assessment should draw primarily upon the teacher's knowledge of each pupil, through the range of formative and summative assessment approaches used

6. Tracking and Reporting - Key Stages 4 and 5

- **In Key Stages 4/5, public examination grades (e.g. GCSE or A-level) should be used to track pupils' attainment.** While formative assessment should continue to concentrate on the diagnosis and remediation of pupils' gaps in learning, summative approaches should make good use of examination questions and formats. This not only increases pupils' familiarity with examinations, it also ensures pupils receive feedback about the standards they are reaching. Academies should therefore make sure that the summative assessments used for tracking and reporting purposes are moderated and benchmarked sufficiently to ensure reliability and validity
- **In KS4 and 5, academies should report estimated end of Year 11 and Year 13 grades and not current attainment.** To do this, each academy should make an assessment of pupils' attainment at least three times in each academic year, in each subject, and use this to generate a forecast measure of attainment. While this approach is not entirely valid, academies should ensure this process is as rigorous and reliable as possible, preferably by developing a bank of assessment materials correlated with past examination outcomes. Note that GCSE/A-level grades etc. are end-of-course grades and, as such, it is not valid to apply grades to assessments which assess only part of the whole teaching programme (including individual questions, where it does not make sense to refer to, say, a grade 7 question)¹²
- **Judgements about pupils' attainment should be informed by teachers' on-going formative assessments, as well as by summative assessments.** Ideally, each assessment point should be synoptic, and academies are expected to administer any trust-wide assessments. Information from these assessments will be collected termly, at a trust-level, including an end-of-year assessment in Years 10 and 12

7. Targets / Minimum Expected Grades

- **Individual pupil targets or minimum expected grades should not be used in key stage 3.** There is considerable evidence of the negative impact of target setting on pupils' achievement and expectations of themselves, as well as teachers' expectations. Targets at a pupil level often lack validity and reliability and are sometimes derived from the inappropriate use of baseline measures¹³
- **At key stages 4 and 5, pupils should be given individual targets or minimum expected grades based on examination grades.** Targets / MEGs should only be set once a great deal is known about pupils'

¹² "You cannot use a GCSE grade to describe the attainment of someone who hasn't studied the whole course."

<https://medium.com/@mrbenyohai/banning-gcse-grades-before-year-11-8737b40180a>

¹³ <https://bennewmark.wordpress.com/2017/09/10/why-target-grades-miss-the-mark/>



prior learning and potential.¹⁴ For example, targets / MEGs may be set for pupils at the beginning of Year 10, based on FFT estimates and teachers' knowledge of pupils' prior learning. Similarly, in key stage 5, targets /MEGs should be set based on prior attainment at key stage 4. Any such targets set should reflect high expectations of all pupils. The use of individual (and cohort) targets must not distort or unduly narrow the focus of the curriculum or teaching

- **Academies should still set end-of-key stage 4 and 5 cohort targets for each subject.** Such targets are much less affected by statistical unreliability and other sources of uncertainty. These targets remain a useful tool for academy self-evaluation, improvement planning and accountability

8. Benchmarking

- **Academy leaders will continue to use FFT estimates to benchmark their performance against similar schools nationally.**
- **There should be a single end-of-year assessment for all subjects.** The end-of-year assessments should cover the curriculum content taught over that and previous academic years within the key stage. The end of year assessments for English, Maths and Science will be sourced externally via the trust. This will ensure consistency and comparability across the Secondary Academies. Academies are free to devise assessments for all other subjects, or to draw on assessments from other sources. A key purpose of this assessment is to check the 'reasonableness' and consistency of in-year teacher assessments (using the four-point scale in KS3 above, GCSE grades at KS4, and A-level (or equivalent) at KS5). Internal moderation of the end-of-year assessments should be undertaken using an appropriate sampling method. Reporting of end-of-year assessments should still make use of the four-point scale above (and the standardised measure from the external assessments for English, Maths and Science). Reporting of end-of-year assessments in KS3 should use the four-point scale in section 5, above. In Year 10 and Year 12, reporting should use the appropriate public examination scale
- **Results from past examination series** should be used to judge the effectiveness and reliability of summative assessments used in-year

9. Accountability and Workload

- **Accountability will be through existing trust review structures.** These will consider whether curriculum intentions are appropriate and if assessments of pupils' learning are suitable and valid. They will scrutinise the academy's own evaluations of how successfully pupils are learning the intended curriculum in each subject (or a sample of subjects). Assessments will not be used in isolation to reach judgements about pupils' progress or attainment
- **Assessment approaches should be implemented in ways which reduce staff workload.** For example, assessments made in KS3 using the four-point scale shown in section 5 should not be

¹⁴ For this reason, targets should only be given to pupils newly arrived in school once staff have had sufficient time to properly understand the extent of pupils' prior learning. Target and/or attainment information from other settings should be treated with caution.



St Ralph
Sherwin

Catholic Multi Academy Trust

translated to other measures, such as GCSE grades, which would require the design and use of suitable criteria. Similarly, assessment in all key stages should draw heavily on information from informal, formative and summative assessments. There is no need for staff to routinely record information from informal assessments

- **Approaches to marking should be impact evidence based.** Academies should review their approaches to marking to ensure they are not increasing staff workload. For example, pupils' routine work should not normally be marked. Instead, academies should identify a suitable number of assessment tasks which will be teacher-assessed. The purpose of teacher marking is to help the teacher understand gaps in learning for individual pupils or groups of pupils. Feedback to address these gaps should be provided as promptly as possible. It is not always necessary for such feedback to be written, or a record to be kept that feedback has been provided – evidence of improvement in pupils' learning or quality of work will usually be sufficient. For most purposes, responsive teaching, including through whole-class, or individual, verbal feedback is normally the most effective strategy¹⁵

¹⁵ For example, <https://twitter.com/MrBoothY6/status/1218898947651047426>



Appendix A: Summary of Timeframe and Reporting

Assessment information will be gathered and reported to the trust as shown in the table below:
Timescales to be agreed

Subject(s)	Key stage(s)	Frequency	Format for reporting (all stakeholders)
All subjects taught for the equivalent of one hour/week, or more	KS3, 4 and 5	End of Advent and Lent terms and end-of-year	KS3: Proportions of pupils in each subject at 1, 2, 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5. KS4/5: Proportions of pupils estimated to attain each grade by the end of the key stage
English, Maths and Science	KS3	End of year	Standardised measure based on external assessments
All subjects taught on carousel or rotation, and/or for less than the equivalent of one hour/week	KS3, 4 and 5	End-of-year only	KS3: Proportions of pupils in each subject at 1, 2, 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5 KS4/5: Proportions of pupils estimated to attain each grade by the end of the key stage

Notes:

1. The table above sets out the expectations on academies to report assessment information to the trust. Academies may gather assessment information as they wish, as long as their approaches are justified in terms of impact on learning and do not drive excessive staff workload or distort the curriculum or teaching
2. Reporting to parents should take place in line with academies usual reporting timeframes
3. There is no expectation that pupils undertake assessments in 'formal' conditions, or that teachers make use of test or examination-style papers. In KS4 and KS5, it is likely that teachers will make increasing use of past series of external examination papers
4. Academies will be expected to have procedures in place to identify and support pupils that are not on track to achieve their FFT estimates, this will form part of the existing review structures.