

AEU VICTORIAN BRANCH – ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING POLICY

Preamble

1. Assessment is the process of gathering and analysing information about student progress in relation to curriculum, socialisation and wellbeing goals. Reporting is communicating the knowledge gained from assessing learning progress. Assessment and reporting combined with curriculum and pedagogy are at the centre of a teacher's professional practice.
2. Assessment and reporting should be fair, equitable and inclusive of all students in public schools taking account of all abilities, all sectors, all school sizes and locations, all year levels/age ranges and all curriculum areas. The design and implementation of assessment and reporting should aim to build positive attitudes and self-confidence in students by assisting them to see what they have achieved and the progress they are making, and be designed to promote further learning and development.
3. The purposes of assessment and reporting as determined by the profession, at both a statewide and local school level, should be clearly articulated and communicated to school communities. The approaches and activities implemented centrally by the Department and in schools should derive from these purposes.
4. Teachers are the experts in assessment and reporting and are in the best position to regularly and accurately assess student progress and use this information to enhance student learning. They must be relied upon and trusted to carry out these professional responsibilities and enabled to do so through the provision of sufficient time and resources within their ordinary hours of work.
5. The authority of teachers to evaluate learning and assess progress is undermined by political interventions favouring narrowly-based standardised population testing programs. The evidence shows that an emphasis on these programs at the expense of more meaningful forms of classroom-based assessment has led to a range of negative educational outcomes.
6. Principals play a key leadership role in ensuring that their school's assessment and reporting policies are: fair, equitable and inclusive of all students; designed to build positive attitudes and promote further learning; consistently implemented and properly resourced; based upon the professional judgement of teachers; and effectively communicated to the school community as a whole.

1. Assessment

Principles

- 1.1 Assessment is the bridge between teaching and learning and as such is a fundamental and essential part of all teaching.

1.2 Assessment in schools incorporates three main functions generally described as assessment: for learning, of learning and as learning:

- Assessment for learning – ongoing formative assessment through which (a) teachers modify their teaching and learning programs by monitoring student progress and (b) students make adjustments to their learning after receiving timely feedback.
- Assessment of learning – a snapshot in time that provides information about student achievement through indicating how well a student has completed specific learning tasks and activities.
- Assessment as learning – assessment that develops and supports students' metacognitive skills through using teacher, peer and self-assessment feedback to make improvements and changes to what they know and understand.

Purposes

1.3 The purposes of assessment are to provide information:

- to students about their learning progress and to promote further learning development
- to students about their learning achievement for formal purposes such as end of schooling certification
- to teachers so that they can adapt the curriculum to the school context and develop and adjust appropriate learning programs for student groups and individual students
- to parents\guardians about student progress and achievement
- to the curriculum authority and Department of Education and Training for quality assurance, equity through monitoring the progress of various student cohorts (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, low SES, etc.) and end of schooling certification

1.4 All assessment processes should be transparent in terms of their purposes, the relationship to the curriculum, what is being assessed, how it is being assessed, and the evidence used to make a judgement.

1.5 The purposes of any assessment should be clear before it is implemented so that teachers and other educators and students understand how it will inform teaching and learning and to ensure that the form of assessment chosen is fit for purpose.

Assessment categories

1.6 The main categories of student assessment are:

- Formative assessment – ongoing assessment of student progress aimed at improving student learning. It provides students with timely and specific feedback and enables teachers to adjust programs in response to identified learning needs.

- Diagnostic assessment – assessment to determine what students already know and where there are knowledge and skill gaps and misconceptions, often used prior to instruction to identify a suitable program of learning.
- Summative assessment – a snapshot in time of student achievement that provides information about how well each student has completed learning tasks and activities.
- Criterion-referenced assessment – student performance is measured against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards.
- Standards-based assessment – a form of criterion-referenced assessment which measures student achievement against predetermined learning standards.
- Competency-based assessment – a form of criterion-referenced assessment mainly used in vocational education and training. It is based on collecting evidence and making judgements about whether a person has achieved a defined competency standard.
- Norm-referenced assessment – assessment which identifies whether an individual has performed better or worse than others who have completed the same assessment task(s). It yields an estimate of the position of the assessed individual in a predefined population.
- Ipsative assessment – assessment which measures the performance of a student against previous performances by that student rather than compared to other students.
- Computer-adaptive assessment - a computer-based assessment that is adaptive to each assessment-taker's performance level.
- Self-assessment/peer assessment – assessment by students of their own learning achievement, or of their own and that of their peers in cooperation with other students.
- Standardised population testing – testing of all students in a targeted population in a standardised manner to compare the relative performance of individuals, groups and/or schools. It is primarily associated with large-scale tests administered to large populations of students.
- Standardised sample testing – testing of a sample of students statistically representing the population as a whole.

1.7 While there may be crossover at times between these different forms and types of assessment (e.g. criterion-referenced and formative assessment), it is important to differentiate between them when designing and implementing assessment processes. For example, standardised population testing, such as NAPLAN, cannot properly function as both a quality assurance process for education systems, a school market mechanism, and a diagnostic assessment of individual student learning needs.

School-based assessment practice based on teacher professional judgement

- 1.8 Through assessment, teachers gather evidence and draw conclusions about the progress students have made in their learning and in this way develop an understanding of student capabilities, knowledge, and current skills.
- 1.9 Teachers use this knowledge as a basis for establishing whether, and how effectively, individuals and groups are learning in order to guide and support further learning, and to evaluate and adjust the structure, content and pedagogy of lessons and programs.
- 1.10 Assessment should be embedded in curriculum programs and planning and arise out of them so that students are assessed in terms of curriculum-based learning. Assessment should not take away from curriculum teaching/learning time but be an ongoing part of it.
- 1.11 Assessing student achievement and progress should include collecting and analysing information about the knowledge, skills, and understandings in each learning area including general capabilities.
- 1.12 Understanding a student's achievement and progress is complex and requires multiple sources of classroom-based evidence derived over an appropriate period of time. This evidence should encompass a range of authentic assessment activities, include higher order competencies, and provide students with the opportunity to use and apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways in different learning contexts.
- 1.13 Assessment processes should take into account and address the wide range of learning needs of students in public schools. Where appropriate, a range of assessment tasks should be used to meet the variety of student needs.
- 1.14 As assessment is a central component of learning development, no student should be left out of assessment processes because they are deemed to lack the capacity to meet certain assessment standards. Nor should they be subject to a narrative of failure and negative performance. Assessment processes should be designed to evaluate and advance the learning progress of all students.
- 1.15 Assessment task design should be aware of issues relating to gender, culture, Indigeneity, linguistic background, disability, socio-economic status and geographical location.
- 1.16 The quality of any assessment of learning is dependent upon the professional judgement of teachers incorporating their detailed knowledge of what is being taught, their deep understanding of how students learn in the curriculum areas they are teaching, and their knowledge of individual student progress over time.
- 1.17 This is enhanced through teacher collaboration and shared practice. Moderation processes to ensure consistency in student assessment and to address potential differences between classes and between schools should occur at both a school level and through school networks. Moderation acts as an important form of

professional learning which enhances teacher professional judgement and informs the assessment and pedagogy which teachers bring back to their own classrooms.

- 1.18 Quality assessment based on teacher professional judgement takes time and needs to be enabled through proper resourcing. This includes time for teachers to work collectively to develop consistent judgements through moderation of student assessments both in schools and across schools, and professional development support.

Student self-assessment

- 1.19 Teachers should engage students as collaborative partners in assessment, supporting student self-assessment and peer-based assessment. Self-assessment recognises the important role that motivation, goal setting, self-regulation, and feedback play in learning development. It gives students an opportunity to reflect on their progress helping them to take more responsibility for their own learning. Peer-based assessment complements this by developing a cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom as students gain ideas and strategies for improvement through providing feedback to each other.

School assessment and tertiary entrance

- 1.20 Assessment in senior secondary schooling should be criterion-based and designed to meet the goals of the curriculum offered in these years. It should also take account of and seek to reduce potential harm to the mental health and wellbeing of young people in examination-based courses.
- 1.21 Tertiary entrance selection procedures should not unduly influence these assessment processes. Tertiary entrance selection procedures should be fair, inclusive of students from a variety of backgrounds and based on a range of demonstrably relevant criteria, including school achievement, rather than a single statistical score (such as ATAR) which is neither the sum total of a student's achievement nor any reliable predictor of their future potential.

Department role

- 1.22 The Department, through the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, should provide schools with a curriculum-based assessment framework which, subject to proper validation and review, sets out increasing levels of proficiency, representing learning development pathways, in each learning area within the curriculum. The framework should be designed as a clear, easy-to-use, non-mandatory guide to support school-based assessment and be inclusive of the needs of all students in public schools, including specialist settings.
- 1.23 This framework informs the work of teachers in identifying the learning growth made by students and the next steps in their learning progression, facilitates assessment moderation procedures, and provides the basis for statewide quality assurance processes. It should lead to no increase in data collection or add to the workload burden of teachers. The Department must deliver systemic support to teachers to

carry out these complex tasks including: time, accessible and relevant resources based on teacher demand, and professional learning programs.

- 1.24 Meeting statewide quality assurance processes and identifying the progress of targeted student groups over time should be achieved through assessment processes which are integrated into the curriculum, promote student learning and do not have a negative impact on schools, the curriculum, pedagogy, or student welfare. Standardised population testing of students through programs such as NAPLAN does not meet any of these conditions and should be discarded. It should be replaced by school-based formative assessment and, where necessary, appropriate representative sample testing.

Collection of data

- 1.25 The Department should not use data derived from standardised population testing to compare schools or initiate school improvement processes, school reviews, or other school interventions. Such data is neither a valid nor reliable means to use for such purposes.
- 1.26 Assessment of student learning is not a precise science and therefore the data generated by it, particularly when it has been derived from one-off assessment tasks, should be accompanied by an acknowledgement of its margins of error. Data from standardised external assessment tools and tasks that teachers may use to complement the assessment program at their school should also be seen in this way. These margins of error are substantially reduced by ongoing formative classroom-based assessment informed by teacher knowledge of the students they teach.
- 1.27 The purposes of any assessment data collection need to be clearly stated and, before the data is collected, publicly available to all of those who it is collected from or who are in any way involved in its collection. Teachers must have access to any data which they have contributed to or which are derived from the classes they teach, or which are collected from their school and relate to their professional role.
- 1.28 Assessment data should be used solely to enhance student learning and development and inform teachers and should never be used to rank schools or teachers. Data that is collected in schools should be presented in useful and relevant ways for teachers' classroom practice. There should be a clear process within a school for data collection and sharing enabling the transfer of knowledge about a student (e.g. their literacy skills) to relevant teachers.
- 1.29 Schools should have a system for managing their electronic and hard copy data records to ensure the authenticity, privacy, security, reliability, and accessibility of these records.
- 1.30 The collection of student assessment data through software programs and platforms should be subject to a standard, legally binding, transparent privacy and data security agreement which clarifies the school ownership of and access to that data and prohibits the collection of any data not directly relevant to an agreed-upon specified educational purpose or the use of any data collected for any purpose other than the agreed-upon specified educational purpose.

Initial teacher education

- 1.31 Initial teacher education should include course content covering the issues raised in this policy including: the different purposes of assessment and their strengths and weaknesses; the collection of dependable evidence; the use of assessment processes to foster students' growth and awareness of their own learning progress, and the reporting of student progress and achievement.

2. Reporting

Reporting principles

- 2.1 The interrelationship between learning, assessment of learning and the reporting of assessment outcomes to non-professional audiences is complex. The essence of reporting is that something uncertain and complicated, which learning is, has to be turned into something clear and simple, namely a report. Teacher expertise is the essential factor in ensuring that this process is educationally sound.
- 2.2 Student reporting should focus on learning growth, identifying the progress a student has made. Reports should involve a comprehensive view of student learning progress including knowledge, understandings, skills, and personal development.
- 2.3 Reporting should acknowledge and cater for different audiences: parents/guardians, students and teachers. All of these groups will get the most comprehensive picture of student progress when reports are derived from assessment linked to school-based curriculum.
- 2.4 Reporting information should be relevant to and meaningful for its intended audience. Presenting only numbers or numerically-based grades does not meet these criteria. While they are familiar and seem to provide an objective comparative metric, they are relatively meaningless to parents and students in terms of an individual student's progress and are problematic in terms of comparability between teachers, classes and schools. They also have the potential to undermine student motivation if, despite their learning progress, students continue to receive the same grades.
- 2.5 Reports focusing on learning growth can be referenced against an approved curriculum-based assessment framework (see 1.22 above). Providing that the framework is a "clear, easy-to-use, non-mandatory guide" which is understood by parents and students, reports of individual learning progress can be described in terms of benchmarks and pathways; indicating where a student has reached in their learning development, the level of progress they are making and the pathways along the learning continuum.
- 2.6 Schools should have a clearly articulated and consistent reporting policy which clarifies the purposes of reporting student progress and the nature of the reports and

indicates that student reports are confidential documents between the school and parents and students.

- 2.7 Teacher comments based on their professional judgement of student learning development are an important element in good reporting practice. These comments can be most effectively communicated in person.

Accessible parent/guardian reporting

- 2.8 The language used by schools to report student progress to parents/guardians, based on classroom programs and the Departmental assessment framework, should be relevant to them and comprehensible by them. This will be facilitated when there is a productive interaction between parents/guardians and teachers to ensure that reports are responsive to the needs of each group.
- 2.9 It is important to have a reporting approach which builds effective individual contact with parents/guardians. Research has found that positive relationships between the school and parents/guardians are a crucial factor in improving student learning. Whatever reporting method is being used – hard/paper copy reporting, face-to-face reporting, online/digital reporting – there needs to be strategies to make reporting accessible to all parents/guardians.
- 2.10 Reporting strategies should be appropriate to the school community context and take account of parents/guardians: from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds; from non-English speaking backgrounds; with disability; with limited access to, and capability in, ICT/internet-based reporting; who find it difficult to attend school-located reporting sessions.

Reporting to students

- 2.11 Reporting student progress should be a learning process for students, involving feedback about their progress, and ways to further improve their learning which is meaningful and comprehensible to them.

Digital forms of reporting

- 2.12 The use of digital reporting in schools through software programs and digital management systems should be underpinned by the principles of good reporting practice outlined in this policy.
- 2.13 As the software programs and platforms used for reporting in schools are produced by private companies, it is important to reinforce teacher agency in reporting by having guidelines determined by the profession, in conjunction with the Department. These guidelines should be incorporated into software programs and platforms rather than commercial software companies determining the nature and quality of reporting carried out by schools.
- 2.14 These guidelines should also apply to externally developed comment banks. While the use of digitally available stock phrases from commercial software may play a part in reducing teacher workload, they raise questions about what is actually being communicated in a report and whether externally-set comment banks reflect an

individual student's progress in a meaningful way. School-wide comment banks developed by teachers which address the needs of students and parents in the specific school context, and supplement teachers' individual comments, are a more appropriate and effective alternative to the content of commercially-determined software.

Continuous reporting

- 2.15 Digital school management systems provide the capacity for schools to offer continuous online reporting of student learning, both to students and to parents. Teachers provide updated assessment information to the system online, which is then made visible to students and parents.
- 2.16 While continuous reporting through digital systems may enhance the capability of teachers to report in regular instalments, and provide features such as electronic portfolios showing growth over time, and digital annotation of student work indicating a progression of learning within a learning area, its introduction should be determined by the overall assessment and reporting policy of a school rather than by the capacity of the technology.
- 2.17 The introduction of continuous reporting in a school should only occur after consideration of the particular school context, and whether it will meet the needs of the school community. Continuous reporting also requires the following issues to have been satisfactorily addressed prior to its introduction:
- any resulting duplication (double or triple handling) of work;
 - the overall impact on the workload of teachers;
 - the development of the IT capacity of teachers;
 - the capacity of the parent/guardian body as a whole to access, understand and use this information.

Professional Learning

- 2.18 The Department of Education and Training has a responsibility to provide relevant and accessible professional learning programs and resource support to staff during their ordinary hours of work to meet their identified needs created by developments in digital reporting.

Statewide guidelines

- 2.19 Statewide reporting guidelines should support school-based assessment and be flexible enough to cater for the wide range of different school contexts and the various formats schools may use to meet the needs of their students and school community. The guidelines should encompass a broad curriculum-based assessment framework showing what growth means in each learning area as a guide for school reporting of student progress. The guidelines should not include the mandating of grades or support the inclusion of standardised population testing results in reports

3. Industrial requirements

- 3.1 School assessment and reporting policies must be subject to consultation procedures between teaching staff and the school leadership, in line with local industrial and occupational health and safety (OHS) obligations.
- 3.2 The implications for teacher workload should be a central consideration in school assessment and reporting policies and in any statewide mandated policies. An appropriate workload impact statement which incorporates and addresses industrial and OHS obligations and issues should be carried out:
 - to identify the impact of existing policy and procedures and ways of reducing the associated workload and
 - to accompany any change to policies and procedures.