



Assessment & Grading Handbook for Parents

This handbook describes the LAS grading policy beginning in Fall 2019 for all students, grades 7 to 12.

The former grading policy (A-F) that our new policy replaces will remain on student transcripts for all years prior to the 2019-2020 school year. Up until the end of school year 2022-2023, both the former and the current system will be reported on transcripts for students who experienced both systems. When there are no longer any LAS students who attended LAS during the time the former grading system was in use, only the grading system described here will be on the transcript.

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The LAS Assessment Policy

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve learning. LAS believes that as well as assessment *of* learning, which helps us identify what has or has not been learned, assessment must also be considered as assessment *for* learning. LAS defines the process of formative assessment, which is the basis of assessment for learning, as:

"an ongoing, collaborative process that provides feedback to both students and teachers to allow them to adjust their learning or teaching strategies towards specific learning goals."

In this process, students and teachers work together to specifically improve learning by sharing intended learning purposes, examining models and descriptions of what 'good' looks like, comparing student work to these models and descriptions and using feedback from teacher, peer and practicing self-assessment to plan a path to the next steps on the path to meeting the learning purposes.

To help students understand how they are progressing as learners, we use two forms of assessment:

Academic grading on a 1 - 7 scale that indicates the student's academic performance.

Learning behavior grading on a 1 - 4 scale that indicates how a student is developing the vital skills necessary to be an effective independent learner. *Learning behavior grades do not contribute to and have no effect on academic grades.*

PRINCIPLES

Effective Assessment:

Reflects the school's values of inclusion, challenge, and success

- provides opportunities for all students to be challenged through strategies such as:
 - open-ended tasks
 - complex contextual tasks
- ensures all students are included through such strategies as:
 - providing multiple ways to demonstrate understanding, with choices of task where appropriate
 - scaffolding at different level based on pre-assessment
- promotes success through strategies such as:
 - use of feedback with opportunities to act on the feedback
 - opportunities for resubmission where appropriate
 - use of clear criteria and exemplars

Generates formative feedback

- uses common criteria which are made available to students in advance
- makes use of peer- and self-assessment based on criteria and exemplars
- provides exemplars of what 'excellent' looks like
- provides opportunities for students to reflect on products and processes
- provides opportunities for students to act on feedback

Allows students to demonstrate understanding

- provides opportunities for students to apply skills and knowledge in context where possible
- provides opportunities for students to demonstrate the six facets of understanding (explain, interpret, apply, empathy, perspective, self-knowledge)

Promotes independent learning

- provides students with the tools and support to self-assess and set goals for future learning and improvement

Is fair

- utilises a variety of assessment strategies
- is consistent and compatible with the taught curriculum
- uses strategies and criteria that are known and understood by all students
- represents a manageable workload for teachers and students
- separates achievement from other factors such as effort or behavior so that it is clear what is being assessed

LAS GRADING POLICY

This policy pertains to grading (summative reporting) as opposed to marking (formative assessment).

The purpose of grading is to improve learning. We accomplish this in part through clear communication about student achievement. Therefore:

What is Included in Grades?

- Achievement, not behavior.
- Summative evidence. Formative assessment – practice in the course of the learning process – is recorded but not explicitly included in final grades.
- Evidence from quality assessments.

What is Not Included in Grades?

- Group scores. We use only individual achievement evidence.
- Academic dishonesty. This is a discipline issue. We do not reduce grades or give zeros as a form of punishment. Our response is to ensure the work is completed in a context that encourages honest completion in the first instance. See LAS Policy on Plagiarism.
- Zeros when evidence is missing or as punishment. We use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement or "I" for Incomplete.
- Extra credit or bonus points. We seek only evidence that more work has resulted in greater achievement.

How Are Grades Calculated?

- We use evidence from summative assessments supported by teacher professional judgment.
- Instead of averaging grades, we take the most recent student achievement into greater account.

THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Academic Grading

LAS uses a 1 - 7 scale for academic grading in order to provide consistency with International Baccalaureate (IB) grading practice.

Each grade descriptor indicates a level of skill. In the table below, keywords are associated with 1 - 7 grade descriptors based on Bloom's taxonomy, a hierarchical system of thinking skills (*see an example at the end of this document*).

Grade			Thinking Skills
7	Excellent	demonstrating mastery of the subject and able to creatively combine ideas	Synthesis Creating, Discussing, Evaluating
6	Very good	able to apply ideas and concepts effectively to a variety of situations	Application Explaining, Understanding, Applying
5	Good	able to apply ideas and concepts to a variety of situations	
4	Satisfactory	able to demonstrate recall of knowledge and skills	Recall
3	Sufficient	able to recall basic ideas	Describing, Remembering
2	Insufficient	not yet performing at an acceptable academic level	Insufficient
1	Insufficient	very low or non-existent level of performance	

LAS and IB Grading Scales

In grades 11 and 12, the majority of students work to achieve the externally-examined IB Diploma. The school produces predicted grades to inform students and parents of progress towards these externally examined subjects. The assessment described in this handbook is based on what LAS determines as the important knowledge and learning skills that students should develop. IB and LAS assessment are both described using a 1 to 7 scale based on levels of thinking skill (objectives 1 - 3), an although not necessarily exactly equivalent, we have developed the LAS scale to closely reflect the key ideas of the IB scale.

What is Standards-Based Grading?

LAS will use standards-based grading for reporting to students and parents. This is different from traditional grading familiar to many.

Traditional grading typically involves:

- Simple letter grades.
- Assessments based on teacher-defined criteria.
- A single overall grade per student based on a combination of related and unrelated assessments of skills, knowledge, performance and conduct over a period of time.

The main advantages of the traditional method are simplicity and familiarity. However, it results in a very limited measure of a student's abilities. An A on a student's report card might look good, but this grade does not convey any precise information about what the student did to obtain the grade or what they might do to improve further. Standards-based grading overcomes this problem.

Standards-based grading involves:

- Rubrics with meaningful labels. *An example of an assessment rubric is available in the Appendix, p.13.*
- Assessments based on specific school-wide standards so that there is consistency across all classes.
- Multiple grades per student: one for each standard that reflects the student's ability related to the standard at a certain moment in time, and the ability to see how a student has made progress towards that key skill over the course of the school year.

Key Skills

Each department identifies the key skills that are most important to learners in that subject. This allows students to monitor and develop these key skills over the course of their time at LAS from entry to school to graduation.

Arts

Knowing and understanding - Students discover the aesthetics of art forms and are able to analyse and communicate using specialized language. Students inform their work and artistic perspective using explicit and tacit knowledge alongside an understanding of the role of the arts in a global context.

Developing skills - Students develop their artistic ideas to a point of realization by applying their skills. Students make final commitments to their artwork by presenting it to audiences.

Thinking creatively - Students develop curiosity, and purposefully explore and challenge boundaries. Students explore the unfamiliar and experiment in innovative ways to develop their artistic intentions, their processes and their work. They discover their personal signature and realize their artistic identity.

Responding - Students respond to their world, to their own art and to the art of others. Students must make connections and transfer learning to new settings. Through reflecting on their artistic intention and the impact of their work on an audience and on themselves, students become more aware of their own artistic development and the role that arts play in their lives and in the world. Students learn that the arts may initiate as well as respond to change.

English

Knowledge and understanding - Having knowledge and understanding of literary and rhetorical text and terminology through different perspectives.

Application and analysis - An ability to analyze and apply elements of: genre and author's stylistic choices; literary and rhetorical terminology; the effects of these on the *reader*, and an ability to substantiate and justify ideas with relevant examples.

Organisation - An ability to express ideas engagingly, clearly, and with fluency in both written and oral communication.

Presentation and speaking - An ability to express ideas engagingly, clearly, and with fluency in both written and oral communication. Having an ability to use the oral and written forms of the language in a range of styles, registers and situations.

English Language Acquisition

Receptive skills - Extracting meaning from aural and text resources in different contexts. Understanding language strategies used to convey meaning.

Productive skills - Using oral and writing techniques to convey meaning in different contexts, using appropriate conventions and language features.

Mathematics

Problem solving - Applies and adapts a variety of appropriate strategies even when asked to solve unfamiliar problems in challenging situations.

Reasoning and proof - Understands and explains the significance and reasonableness of results and draws full and relevant conclusions.

Communication - Communicates mathematics in a clear, effective and concise manner, using correct techniques, notation and terminology.

Using mathematical tools strategically - Uses graphing calculator, computers, manipulatives, diagrams and software appropriately and effectively.

Modern Languages

Receptive skills - *Reading and Aural comprehension* - Developing the ability to comprehend aural and written texts.

Productive and interactive skills - *Oral and Written Expression* - Developing the ability to express ideas through writing and oral means.

Physical Education

Knowledge and understanding - The ability to know basic skills used, their techniques and the rules required.

Planning for performance - Prior planning which involves tactical and strategic thinking.

Applying and performing - Demonstrating prior knowledge and experience whilst performing in a variety of contexts.

Reflection and improving performance - Using previous experiences and observations to reflect on self and peer work.

Science

Identifying a problem - Identifying and evaluating key factors relevant to the problem, creating a clear research question.

Research - Gathering information, prototyping and trialling, sharing information.

Analysing - Drawing conclusions from research, identifying limitations of research.

Evaluating - Critically reviewing conclusions, peer review and self reflection.

Communicating - Communicating information in a relevant and effective manner using conventions where appropriate.

Social Studies

Knowledge and comprehension of specified content - the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of course content.

Application and analysis - the ability to analyse and apply evidence and to synthesize knowledge and concepts.

Evaluation - the ability to critically review conclusions, and conduct peer review and self reflection.

Selection and use of skills appropriate to subject - Skills individual to each subject area are demonstrated and used appropriately.

Learning Behavior

Learning behavior describes the behaviors a student might engage in that have an effect on their own learning and on the learning of those around them.

Developing good learning behaviors is a key element in becoming an effective independent learner. These skills will be reported on a 1 - 4 scale where 4 indicates a self-motivated independent learner.

Learning behaviour is shown in three key areas:

- **Engagement in the Learning Process** - how students address their own learning, focus and attitude in the classroom, how engaged is the student in the learning process regardless of academic ability.
- **Participation** - how students interact with others, how students contribute - working with others, compassion and empathy during class discussions, etc.
- **Organization** - how students manages themselves; are students prepared for learning? Are they on time, do they have the necessary equipment or materials, do they use their tools for learning effectively, have they completed any necessary work? This would include homework tasks, pre-reading or other tasks required to take effective part in a lesson.

Students will be graded on a 1 - 4 scale in each category:

1 - Unsatisfactory	2 – Cause for concern	3 - Good	4 - Excellent
The student is making no effort to further learning	The student requires a high level of guidance in order to learn	The student understands that further independent study is necessary in order to be successful	The student is a self-motivated independent learner

Learning behavior grades are regularly reported in Powerschool, but have no influence on the Academic grade. Separating learning behavior from academic performance allows students individual learning needs to be more easily identified and addressed.

PROCEDURES & CONSEQUENCES FOR MISSING ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

If a student does not meet an assignment deadline:

1. A new deadline is arranged with the student at the teacher's discretion. Late work affects the behavior grade and not the academic grade, though of course a pattern of late work is likely to affect academic achievement negatively.
2. If there are ongoing issues with late work, the student must attend a supervised study session to complete the work. Ongoing issues with late work can result in suspension of after school activities, including sport teams, as well as travel restrictions, for example, staying on campus on a Saturday to attend a supervised study session

Process:

- Supervised study sessions for late work are held Wednesday mornings and Saturdays. Students are required to submit the completed assignment to the supervised study session supervisor and can then leave the session.
- A notification will be sent to the parents when a student has been sent to a support session.

Students who fail to report to a required supervised study session are referred to the Academic Dean. The consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- Removal from extra-curricular activities and other privileges
- A contractual period of probation for academic issues

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Defining Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas as one's own. It may take the following forms:

- using another person's ideas, language, theory or other original material without acknowledging the source, creating the impression that these ideas are one's own;
- paraphrasing material located in web sites, magazines, newspapers, books, journals, charts, or graphs without citing the source;
- citing sources one did not use; and
- copying or using work done by another individual.

Plagiarism material will not be given any credit and the work must be redone. In addition, faculty will discuss with the student what plagiarism is, why it is treated so strictly by the IB and in academics in general, and how to avoid it.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process includes a number of steps:

1. Collecting evidence of student learning
2. Interpreting the evidence
3. Recording the evidence
4. Sharing the evidence with students and parents

Teachers collect a lot of evidence about student learning. Much of the evidence is used to guide instruction in real time, in class. Teachers interpret this evidence to adapt instruction, but it is not often recorded and rarely used as part of a reported grade. This evidence is used formatively.

Teachers do formally record some evidence of academic achievement (e.g. homework and quizzes) along the way to capture a picture of progress toward learning goals, but a good deal of this evidence is also used formatively. For example, teachers may record information about the kinds of things a student is doing well and the kind of things that are difficult. This information is primarily used to provide feedback to the student and teacher, suggesting areas of focus and guiding adjustments in instruction.

Evidence collected of specific learning goals is used for reporting/grading purposes. Teachers report, on the 1-7 scale, their best estimate of a student's academic achievement at that time. Using the history of these summative grades, teachers determine a final grade, also on the 1-7 scale, for a given marking period.

FREQUENTLY-ASKED-QUESTIONS

1. What are the core features of the assessment system?

- All grades have a single academic grading scale of 1-7. Grades are based on clear, published criteria which provide specific feedback to students on their academic achievement.
- Learning behaviour is assessed with a 1-4 scale, separately from academic grading.

2. How do students benefit?

A common grading scale based on levels of skill rather than overall score:

- makes clear to all students and parents what the various levels of achievement mean;
- provides explicit expectations of quality to students, in advance, to guide them in their work;
- allows for specific feedback, which guides students towards improvement;
- gives students greater control of their learning

3. How do schools, colleges, and universities respond to a 1-7 grading scale?

Our grading scale is both simple and transparent. Colleges and universities are concerned first and foremost that schools clearly explain their grading scales. Because schools use a variety of grading systems, colleges and universities have their own methods for translating grading scales on applications they receive. The International Baccalaureate 1 - 7 grading system is particularly well known and understood by Higher Education institutions in America, Canada, United Kingdom, and Western European countries.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the International School of Brussels, starting with the Common Ground conference held in April 2014, where ISB faculty shared their rationale for a 1-7 grading scale, as well as the current ISB parent publication on assessment practices, which we used as a guide for this publication.

APPENDIX

An example of a task with an accompanying assessment rubric

The task is a research project in astronomy which asks the following questions:

Compare and contrast the structure of a Gas planet and Rocky planet:

- What is the difference in surface structure?
- What is the difference in internal structure?
- What space missions have provided information?

The teacher provides the following marking rubric to students:

	3 - 4	5 - 6	7
Comparing planet surface structure Comparing planet internal structure	Key structures <i>labelled</i>	Main important differences between structures <i>compared</i>	Reasons for structural differences <i>discussed</i>
Space missions	Some relevant space missions <i>listed</i>	Key space missions noted with main mission objectives / key findings	Major scientific information gained from the missions related to structure of planet / moon

This rubric helps students to understand what level of complexity provides each mark. Students understand what they need to do in order to access higher marks.

An illustration of Bloom's taxonomy of hierarchical thinking skills



