



DESERT ACADEMY DIPLOMA PROGRAM ASSESSMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to set forth a workable and meaningful policy establishing how Desert Academy assesses student learning and achievement, as well as how we communicate this to our students and their families. Our intent is for this policy to both honor our mission and embody our commitment to the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile Traits – most especially, those of reflection, inquiry, and the pursuit of knowledge. To encapsulate our mission, Desert Academy is dedicated to academic and personal excellence and to valuing the individual, building character and promoting self-confidence. Critical to accomplishing these goals is our focus on serving students in a differentiated learning environment. Our purpose as a learning institution is to help all of our students gain a strong understanding of their unique learning styles and individual goals, as well as how best to attain them. By effectively communicating their levels of mastery in each subject area, we enable our students to set appropriate goals for themselves and to deepen their understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. This also enables teachers to revise and refine their curriculum and teaching style to best meet students' individual needs, as well as to reflect on their own knowledge, hence strengthening their professional practice. Further, the information gleaned from a thoughtful assessment sheds light for parents or guardians on what's needed to best support their student. Finally, an analysis of assessments throughout the school allows our Trustees to map future strategies for our institution based upon meaningful metrics.

MISSION

Desert Academy is dedicated to academic and personal excellence. We provide a quality college preparatory education in a diverse school community which values individuality, builds character, promotes self-confidence, and fosters global understanding.

REVIEW AND COMMUNICATION

We review this policy as it relates to our general mission in an effort to gain a clear picture of student achievement annually. Parties to the discussion and evaluation of the policy are our Head of School, our Assistant Head of School, our Diploma Program (DP) Coordinator, and our Executive Director of Operations and Student Life. All of our policies related to learning, as well as any updates to them, are directly communicated to our Trustees, faculty, students and their families via our Student-Parent Handbook, our website and newsletters. This policy is also included in our course overviews.

ASSESSMENT AS EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING

In the International Baccalaureate Diploma (grades 11 and 12) Programs, students demonstrate learning through formal, IB-required assessments that result in final IB marks ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Teachers, following IB guidelines, design assessments for all students. Students also receive Desert Academy grades (the traditional A – F), as well. From grades 9 – 12, a student’s semester grades become part of the student’s transcript that may be reported to colleges, employers, and others.

For more detail about our MYP assessments, please see our MYP Assessment Policy.

DP Assessment

The formal DP assessments can be categorized as internal assessments, external assessments, or course-end examinations. These assessments are summative in nature and evaluated according to a criterion-referenced rubric established and reviewed regularly by the IBO. During the duration of each course, our teachers use formative assessments to gain a sense of students’ strengths and areas where support is needed to aid them in their progress toward mastery and to enable students to actively engage in and reflect on their educational experience in each course. Students in need of additional support are able to meet with teachers during their lunch periods and may seek free tutoring daily before and after school with our National Honor Society peer tutors. Additionally, our DP Coordinator and Learning Advocate meet regularly with teachers to strategize about how best to meet the needs of students with learning differences. See our Special Education

Needs Policy for more detail on our work with students with learning differences.

In keeping with the requirements of the International Baccalaureate, we aim to achieve the following results through our DP assessments:

- Support the curricular and philosophical goals of the program through the encouragement of good classroom practice and appropriate student learning
- Provide material for publishable results with a high level of reliability, appropriate to a high-stakes university entrance qualification
- Reflect the international-mindedness of the program whenever possible, avoiding cultural bias and making appropriate allowances for students working in a second language
- Pay appropriate attention to higher-order cognitive skills (synthesis, reflection, evaluation, and critical thinking) in addition to the more basic cognitive skills of knowledge, understanding and application
- Include a suitable range of tasks and components to insure that all objectives for each subject are assessed

Internal Assessments

These assess student work evaluated by teachers of each subject, who score the work and then may send it to external examiners to insure international parity aligned to IB assessment criteria in that subject area. They provide students with the opportunity to show their work over time, outside of the restrictions of the formal external examination setting, allowing for greater student flexibility in exhibiting their acquired knowledge and skills. Among the types of internal assessments employed at Desert Academy are: oral examinations in Group 1, Language A and in Group 2, Language B, practical lab work in Group 4, Science, projects and portfolios in Group 5, Mathematics, artistic performances and presentations in Group 6, Arts, and presentations in TOK.

IB DP External Assessments

These also allow students to show their work over time, outside of the restrictions of the formal external examination setting. Like internal assessments, external ones are evaluated according to established criteria for each subject area. However, they are not evaluated by the subject area teacher but are instead marked externally by IB examiners. Among the items

assessed externally are Extended Essays, Theory of Knowledge Essays, written tasks for Languages A and B, etc. These assessments focus heavily on the quality of a finished written product.

IB DP Formal External Examinations

Administered in May of each year, these subject area examinations occur under strictly controlled conditions. Examination papers include a variety of assessment vehicles, including short-answer, essay, data-analysis, case studies, open-ended problem solving, commentaries and multiple choice. Students must complete all required internal and external assessments for a subject area in order to be able to sit for the exam in that subject area. Completed examinations are mailed within 24 hours following the examination to external examiners around the world for assessment. Examination marks are then combined with internal and external assessment marks to arrive at the final subject grade.

Academic Honesty

Our Academic Honesty Policy was developed to embody our focus on principled behavior and the ethos of the IB programs. Our mission statement refers to “build[ing] character,” and academic honesty is central to our concept of good character. At Desert Academy, students are taught to differentiate between sound academic practice and dishonesty in all its forms. They are informed about the gap between authorized collaboration and illegitimate collusion. We educate them about cheating and plagiarism, as well as about protecting the integrity of their own work by guarding it from peers who might want to claim it for their own. For more information about our scaffold approach to educating students on this topic, as well as about our sequence of consequences, please see our Academic Honesty policy.

Accountability

It is the responsibility of our DP Coordinator to insure that all faculty members understand our assessment policy and the IB rubrics, to provide access to key IB documents and to offer personal training when necessary. Additionally, we send faculty members to IB trainings in their subject areas to insure that there is widespread “buy-in” by our teachers for implementation of all aspects of IB assessment.

Teachers are responsible to use our online progress reporting system, ManageBac, in a timely and comprehensive manner to communicate about expectations (specifically, assignments and due dates, as well as course overviews and learning objectives) and student progress with parents and students themselves. Department chairs check to see that their subject area teachers are complying with this requirement on a bi-weekly basis.

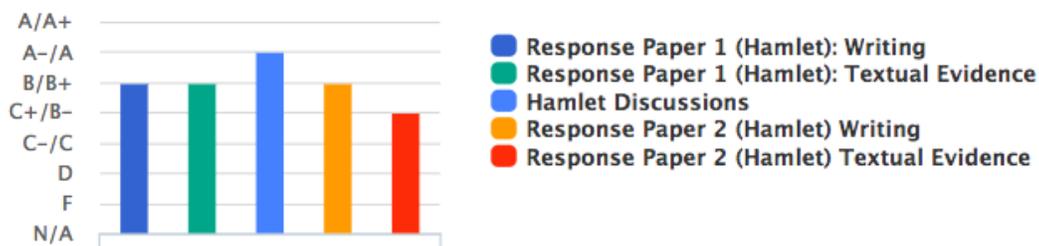
Our teachers use the IB DP numerical grading scale, and our parents are informed about how this translates to traditional American percentage letter grading, both via individual conferences with teachers and in each report card, where they receive the following chart:

DESERT ACADEMY GRADING AND ASSESSMENT GUIDE

BASIC DESCRIPTOR	DETAILED DESCRIPTOR	LETTER GRADE	OVERALL IB GRADE
EXCELLENT	<p>PRODUCES EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH QUALITY WORK</p> <p>CONSISTENT AND THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING APPLIED CREATIVELY IN A WIDE VARIETY OF SITUATIONS</p>	A/A+	7
VERY GOOD	<p>PRODUCES CONSISTENTLY HIGH QUALITY WORK</p> <p>CONSISTENT AND THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING APPLIED IN A WIDE VARIETY OF SITUATIONS</p>	A-/A	6
GOOD	<p>PRODUCES GENERALLY HIGH QUALITY WORK</p> <p>DEMONSTRATES A CONSISTENT AND THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS; ABLE TO APPLY THEM IN MOST SITUATIONS</p>	B/B+	5
SATISFACTORY	<p>PRODUCES WORK OF A SATISFACTORY QUALITY</p> <p>DEMONSTRATES A GENERAL</p>	C+/B-	4

	UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS; OCCASIONAL SUPPORT NEEDED		
ACCEPTABLE	PRODUCES WORK OF AN ACCEPTABLE QUALITY DEMONSTRATES A SOMEWHAT LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS; ABLE TO APPLY THEM WITH SUPPORT	C-/C	3
POOR	PRODUCES WORK OF LIMITED QUALITY DEMONSTRATES A VERY LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS; UNABLE TO APPLY THEM, EVEN WITH SUPPORT	D	2
VERY POOR	PRODUCES WORK OF VERY LIMITED QUALITY DEMONSTRATES NO/MINIMAL UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	F	1

The translation information is also contained within ManageBac, and it is here for easy reference.



It is the role of our Head of School and our Assistant Head of School to provide on-site professional development, with the assistance of the DP Coordinator, to insure compliance with this policy.