



ASSESSMENT POLICY
SWORDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

October 2025

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal (Secretary to the Board)

Date: _____

Introduction

Swords Community College is a post primary school which opened in August 2018 under the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board. The college is built on the foundation of our four pillars; excellence, resilience, respect and teamwork.

As Swords Community College continues to grow rapidly within its catchment area, the Board of Management will review the enrolment policy on a yearly basis.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

School Mission Statement

Swords Community College is a warm, welcoming, inclusive, innovative, multi-belief college, which puts the learners at the centre of all activities. We encourage the development of 21st Century learning skills, allowing learners to take ownership of their learning; to explore, enquire and direct their own learning experiences. All our learning practices are facilitated by a team of passionate and dedicated teachers. Swords Community College will provide technology-enhanced learning environments, as we aspire to be a Digital School. This alongside traditional methods combines to create our 'tradigital' school. Learners use iPads and other technologies in the classroom on a daily basis, allowing us to build the school of the future, now.

Swords Community College will strive for the highest academic standards, yet these will be built on the foundation of exceptional pastoral care structures. Our learners will be safe and respected in school, which then allows them to succeed and achieve their full potential. We work with learners to develop the knowledge and skills they will need for third level education and for life itself.

Introduction to Assessment

Swords Community College values assessment as a key component of the teaching and learning process. Assessment provides valuable information to the student, teacher and parents and guardians about progress in learning and achievement in developing skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Assessment strategies should be used to promote self-esteem and motivation amongst students. It should also be used as a method for informing future teaching and learning practices for the classroom teacher. Through the use of efficient reporting strategies, assessments can also allow parents and guardians to track the progress of the student and encourage them to achieve their individual goals.

All assessment practices used in Swords Community College are grounded in fairness and strive to provide students with the opportunity to experience success and achieve their full potential.

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and consistent guidelines for assessing student progress, to encourage reflective processes and responsibility for one's own learning and to support students in achieving their academic goals through the process of academic tracking.

Relationship to School Self Evaluation (SSE)

Assessment was chosen as an SSE focus for the academic year 2025-2026 with a specific focus on increasing the use of the Athena Tracking system amongst second and fifth year students.

The upcoming SSE plans include:

- Surveying staff to compile a list of current assessment practices being used.
- Surveying staff to assess the use of Athena Tracking.
- Creating focus groups of students to interview.
- Discuss assessment with these focus groups to gather student voice.
- Use the results of these surveys and interviews to inform and build on the assessment policy.
- Encourage the use of Athena Tracking and address any concerns with the platform amongst staff.

Surveys are being completed in 2025 and this policy may be updated accordingly.

Core Principles of Assessment	
Accountability	Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning journey and strive to improve using feedback and reflection.
Fairness	All assessments should be designed to be equitable with the success criteria and expectations explained to the students in advance of each learning experience.
Inclusivity	All students including those with additional educational needs should be given the opportunity to access the assessment and achieve success.
Growth	This policy aims to promote student growth through the processes of reflection and goal setting but also to improve teaching strategies and methodologies used by teachers.
Reporting	It is crucial that accurate methods of reporting are established to ensure that student progress can be tracked over periods of time to measure progress towards short term and long term goals and ensure that each student is reaching their own individual potential.

Characteristics of Good Practice in Assessment	
Promotes and Supports Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies what students know, understand, and can do • Enables consistent monitoring of student progress • Identifies individual learning styles and strengths and challenges • Encourages Progression in learning
Informs Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists lesson planning and informs review of content and skills • Promotes a variety of teaching methodologies • Enables consistent monitoring of teaching progress • Encourages self -reflection
Combines formative and summative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes a shared learning culture & provides clear and effective feedback • Diagnoses learning difficulties • Measure student performance e.g. Cogitative Abilities Testing (CAT4) (an assessment that is designed to help students and their teachers understand how they learn and what their academic potential might be. It assesses how students think in areas that are known to make a difference to learning) , New Group Reading Test (NGRT), (this is a standardised assessment to measure reading skills of students aged 5-16 years against the national average). • Identifies clear and shared targets for student progress • Promotes differentiation by outcome e.g. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (UDL provides an inclusive learning environment which creates a culture of engagement and inclusion). • Informs subject choice and career decision making • Provides effective and progressive student records & informs regular reporting to Parents/Guardians
Uses Appropriate and Diverse Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is both formal and informal & accommodates a variety of learning styles • Tests a range of skills • Encourages effective and standardised marking procedures • Is both quantitative and qualitative & is carried out in a range of contexts
Recognises all pupil progress and achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards progress, effort, and achievement • Fosters motivation and promotes a commitment to learning • Creates opportunities for self-direction & fosters self-esteem and social development

Develops the Capacity for Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares learning outcomes and assessment criteria & gives sensitive and constructive feedback • Supports students in self and peer assessment activities • Engages students with realistic target setting
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Types of Assessment	
Formative Assessment	Formative assessment involves ongoing evaluation to provide continuous feedback, enabling students to identify strengths, areas for growth and strategies for improvement. It is used as a daily tool by teachers to inform the pace and progression of the lessons, which allows for more effective planning. This is called 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) and aims to impact positively on student engagement and to guide progress.
Summative Assessment	Summative Assessment, also known as Assessment of Learning (AoL), evaluates learning at specific intervals through structured tests and state-certified assessments, providing clear benchmarks of student performance. This provides a 'snapshot' of student attainment and progress at a given time with the purpose being to evaluate student learning at the end of a teaching unit by comparing it against an identified standard.
Assessment Instruments	These are used by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Guidance Departments

Formative Assessments
<p>Formative assessment involves ongoing evaluation to provide continuous feedback, enabling students to identify strengths, areas for growth and strategies for improvement.</p> <p>It is used as a daily tool by teachers to inform the pace and progression of the lessons, which allows for more effective planning.</p> <p>This is called 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) and aims to impact positively on student engagement and to guide progress.</p> <p>Examples of AfL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing learning intentions • Teacher observations and verbal feedback • Peer and self-assessment

- Quizzes e.g., Kahoot/Blooket/Socrative etc
- Checking in on previous class learning/understanding
- Project work
- Classroom questioning – lower to higher order questioning
- Co-construction of success criteria
- Group work
- Feedback only grading

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- End of Chapter Tests
- November Exams
- Summer Exams
- Mock Exams
- State Examinations
- Assessment Components (LC)
- Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) (JC)

Table outlining the timing of various assessments

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	TY	5 th Year	6 th Year
CAT4	Yes					
In house Exams	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mocks			Yes			Yes
State Exams			Yes			Yes
AfL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AoL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assessment Components					Yes	Yes
CBAs		Yes	Yes			

Assessment Instruments / Tests

These are specialist tests which are administered to support a student's educational development and learning.

There may be on occasion a need to administer tests on an individual basis to a student however these will only be administered following consultation with parents/guardians.

Examples of such tests are outlined below.

Carried out by the SEN / Guidance Departments

- Standardised Ability Assessments
- Diagnostic Assessments
- Guidance Interest Assessments
- NGRT
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) III
- Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH)
- Different Aptitude Tests (DAT)

Summary of Assessment Instruments Used

Assessment	Test Type	Purpose	Additional Information
CAT 4	Ability	To plan and support mixed ability teaching. To screen for potential learning difficulties.	Carried out with Incoming 1 st Year students.
WIAT III	Attainment	To assist with Reasonable Accommodations for State Exams Irish Exemptions	Usually completed in 1 st , 3 rd and 6 th Year.
DASH	Handwriting	Reasonable Accommodations for State Exams	Completed in 3 rd Year
DAT for Guidance	Differential Aptitude Tests	Supports vocational guidance and career investigation.	Usually completed in Transition Year.
EAL Language Proficiency Test	English Language Proficiency	Supports appropriate EAL provision.	The Cambridge testing model is used with new first year students presenting with an English language difficulty.

Definition of Assessment Instruments for the Purposes of this Policy

Defining Ability and Achievement tests

Ability tests are designed to establish what a student can know, while achievement tests measure what is known and has been learned or achieved to date.

A standardised ability test is designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. They measure what a student can know rather than what is known.

A standardised attainment test (sometimes referred to as achievement tests) measure what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these areas.

On foot of information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests, further information may be gathered through the administration of diagnostic tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.

A diagnostic test is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example, word identification skills or understanding of number concepts.

In addition, guidance counsellors may use the outcomes of ability, interest, values and motivation tests to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior- cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for further and higher education, training, apprenticeships and the world of work.

Roles and Responsibilities for Assessment	
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	<p>Use assessment procedures and processes to drive whole school improvement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ensuring that all teachers know what is expected of them in assessing students. o Monitoring that Assessment for Learning (AfL) is a key factor in planning for teaching and learning. o Monitoring the accuracy of the information provided to parents about their child's attainment and progress. o Tracking the attainment and progress of individual/groups of students over time. o Using assessment information when planning staff training and CPD. o Comparing the progress made by different groups of students to ensure that no group is disadvantaged. o Ensuring flexibility in assessment expectations facilitating individual departments to adopt processes that are most conducive to progress in their particular subject. o Ensuring students are supported in making informed curriculum choices. o Using assessment and monitoring to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of students.
Year Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Monitoring the accuracy of the information provided to parents about their child's attainment and progress. o Tracking the attainment and progress of individual/groups of students over time. o Comparing the progress made by different groups of students to ensure that no group is disadvantaged. o Ensuring students are supported in making informed curriculum choices. o Using assessment and monitoring to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of students.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Liaise with SLT and/or SEN Department regarding student progress. o Report to Parents/Guardians as required.
Subject Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lead subject teachers in planning assessment opportunities for students. o Lead subject teachers in preparing standardised assessment for November and Summer assessments.
Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Liaise with Year Head and/or SLT and/or SEN Department regarding student progress. o Prepare assessment opportunities for students. o Mark and evaluate assessments from students in a positive, accurate, meaningful, and diagnostic way. o Compile and maintain individual student records. o Provide constructive feedback to students. o Report to Parent/Guardian as required. o Update Athena with in class summative assessment results and analyse student progress. o Use Athena as a means to communicate student attainment to parents and guardians.
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Understand that everyone has the potential to learn and succeed. o Accept responsibility for learning and value learning. o Help foster a positive learning environment through positive behaviour. o Set personal goals and targets for learning. o Active engagement in learning activities. o Preparation for assessments. o Act on feedback provided on learning. o Ask for support and help.

Parent / Guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Support their child in interpreting the results of Assessment. o Affirm the positives and encourage their child to ask for help and support around challenges. o Support their child's learning by attending and contributing positively at Parent-Teacher meetings. o Schedule meeting with school personnel if concerned about their child's progress. o Provide the school with any assessment that has been completed externally relating to Additional Educational Needs.
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Reporting to Parents and Guardians Following Assessment Process	
Term Assessments	Reports are sent to guardians twice in the academic year for all year groups. These are via VSware and include comments from subject teachers and tutors regarding progress.
Mock Exams	Reports are sent via VSware to guardians of Third and Sixth Year students. Detailed feedback is also provided to the students on their progress and targets for the State Examinations.
State Exams	Students receive their Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate grades from SEC. This is a grade only report.
JCPA	Students who have completed the Junior Cycle course receive a Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement which collates CBA results as well as any other areas of learning and wellbeing that the student has engaged in. These are collated by the school in the form of a certificate.
Athena Tracking	Upon completion of the CAT4 Assessments, student results are uploaded to Athena. This creates a baseline for the individual student. All other term assessments are synced to this system and a colour coded system shows how the student is progressing with respect of their baseline ability in each subject. This is used by teachers to assess progression towards goals and can be shared with parents at Parent Teacher meetings.

Parent-Teacher Meetings	These allow for more detailed and formative feedback to be shared with parents and guardians and enable any issues to be addressed.
Assessment Instruments	Should individualised testing be required, consent will be sought from parents and guardians by the SEN and/or Student Support Team where the process will be outlined. Results of which will be shared with parents and guardians usually via a meeting, phone call or email where future steps can be decided and any concerns can be clarified. All data and information stored follows GDPR guidelines.

Benefits of Reporting Assessment Results to Parents / Guardians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Enables Parents/Guardians to be involved in their child's learning. o Provides an overview for the Parent/Guardian regarding how their child is progressing. o Provides opportunities for Parent/Guardian to reaffirm progress and hard work by their child. o Enables Parent/Guardian to discuss education/career paths with their child and assist them in working towards the next stage of the educational path/career. o Highlights any challenges which their child may be encountering and can open a discussion on additional supports their child may need. o May encourage Parent/Guardian to schedule additional meetings with the school to support their child in reaching their potential. o Enables Parent/Guardian to monitor and track the progress during the transition period from primary to post primary schooling.