



Mount Sackville Secondary School

Assessment Policy

Introduction

The educational philosophy of Mount Sackville Secondary School is the holistic development of the student: religious, spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, physical, social and cultural. We strive to bring about this process of maturing in a Christian context. Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care. As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be diminished or devalued, and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

The school is committed to respecting the individuality of each student and helping her to realise her full potential.

The school encourages the pursuit of academic excellence, and a high standard of teaching and learning opportunities is offered.

Regular opportunities for prayer and reflection are offered.

The school community works together to create a caring school community based on respect, integrity, honesty, kindness and justice underpinned by our Catholic ethos. We prepare our

students to take their place as self- confident, articulate young women who will meet the challenges of modern life with serenity and courage.

1. Definition of Assessment

Assessment is the process of generating, gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting evidence of learning in individuals, groups or systems. Educational assessment provides information about progress in learning and achievement in developing skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes. ⁱ

2. Rationale

The Assessment Policy of Mount Sackville Secondary School is designed to support high quality teaching and learning by ensuring that assessment is fair, consistent, and meaningful for all students. The policy recognises assessment as an integral part of the learning process, helping students to understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and develop greater independence in their learning. It promotes a balanced approach that includes both formative and summative assessment, with a strong emphasis on constructive feedback to enhance student wellbeing, confidence, and academic achievement. The policy also aims to ensure clear communication with students and parents regarding progress and attainment, while supporting teachers in making evidence-based decisions about the teaching and learning process.

3. Core Principles

The assessment policy is guided by the following principles:

- Fairness: Assessments are designed to be equitable, with clear criteria provided to students in advance.
- Inclusivity: The policy ensures that all students, including those with additional educational needs (AEN), are given the support they need to meet their true potential.
- Growth and improvement: Assessment is used not only to measure achievement but to guide learning, set targets, identify next steps and develop potential.

4. Types of Assessment at Mount Sackville

Summative Assessment

Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.ⁱⁱ

In Mount Sackville Secondary School, summative assessment is conducted by the following methods:

- Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate practical examinations.
- Leaving Certificate oral examinations
- Pre-Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- October tracking assessments.
- Winter house examinations.
- Spring tracking assessments.
- Summer House Examinations.
- Oral and aural language assessments.
- Classroom Based Assessments (CBA) for Junior Cycle (Appendix A)
- Additional Assessment Components (AAC) for Senior Cycle.
- Standardised testing for incoming 1st year and TY students.
- Class based assessments: i.e. class tests, projects, presentations, oral assessments etc.

Formative Assessment

Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress and to

suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. Assessment for learning covers all aspects of formative assessment but has a particular focus on the student having an active role in her learning.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Mount Sackville, formative assessment is conducted using a wide variety of methods selected by individual teachers and/ or subject departments. The formative assessment methods used in Mount Sackville remain cognisant of best practice and each student's individual needs. Our schemes of work recognise all learners and include differentiation opportunities, ensuring that all students can experience success and reach their full potential.

Formative assessment methods may include but are not limited to the following:

- Sharing learning intentions at the beginning of each lesson.
- Questioning during each lesson.
- Class discussion.
- Groupwork.
- Written feedback on homework.
- Oral feedback on homework.
- Project work.
- Presentations.
- Oral communication tasks.
- Written tasks.
- Worksheets.
- Practical work.
- Experiential work.
- Quizzes: oral/ written/ digital.
- Student self-assessment.
- Peer assessment.
- All written and verbal feedback, with next steps guidance for improvement.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Effective assessment involves the entire school community.

Senior Leadership Team

- Support effective assessment practices by setting clear expectations for assessment and promoting a balanced approach to formative and summative assessment.
- Encourage and support development of best practice in assessment and reporting.
- Analyse and evaluate assessment and reporting within the school.
- Liaise with the staff on reporting deadlines, ensuring the timely entry of results for reporting to parents/guardians.
- Review and evaluate assessment and reporting procedures, making recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Co-ordinator of House Examinations

- Plan and coordinate the examination schedule for house examinations in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team.
- Communicate key dates and procedures to staff and students in advance of each examination period.
- Coordinate the submission and organisation of examination papers, ensuring that papers are submitted on time and in the correct format.
- Oversee the storage and distribution of examination papers to maintain confidentiality and integrity.
- Timetable examination supervision rotas, including the preparation and circulation of staff supervision and timetables.
- Ensure examination procedures are followed, including guidelines for conduct during exams and the management of any irregularities.
- Coordinate with the AEN department on arrangements for students requiring reasonable accommodations.

Deans of Year

- Monitor student progress and wellbeing: The Dean of Year will monitor the academic progress and overall wellbeing of students in the year group, working with the AEN department and subject teachers and using assessment information to identify students who may need additional support or intervention.
- Inform students of relevant examination related information: CBA Calendar, timetables, assessment venues etc.
- Support the SLT and Co-ordinator of House examinations in the running of the house exams.
- Liaise with parents/guardians in relation to assessment when required.

Subject Teachers

- Monitor and record student progress through regular formative and summative assessments.
- Record student progress using the Athena Tracker.
- Provide regular formative feedback to students, ensuring that students are aware of their achievements, as well as next steps for improvement.
- Liaise with parents/guardians in relation to assessment when required.
- Share learning intentions and success criteria with students.
- Adhere to the school homework policy.
- Allow students adequate time at the end of each lesson to record homework in the student journal.
- Prepare students for assessment by exploring methods of study, layout of exams, awareness of equipment and materials needed, timing of questions and approaches to answering exam questions.
- Prepare revision plans for students in advance of house examinations at winter and summer.
- Prepare students for Leaving Certificate project work, Senior Cycle AACs and Junior Cycle CBAs.
- Use assessment data, available on Athena Tracker, to inform lesson planning and assessment methods.

- Ensure a balanced approach to assessment, combining formative and summative approaches.
- Plan and implement differentiated teaching, learning, assessment and reporting methodologies. Seek guidance from AEN team when necessary.
- Collaborate with subject department colleagues, ensuring that tracking assessments and house examinations are common papers.
- Complete formal school reports in a timely manner.
- Facilitate and support the running of House/ Mock examinations.

Students

- Strive to do their best and meet their full potential in all areas of school life.
- Set targets, reflect on feedback and take steps for improvement in consultation with their teachers.
- Take responsibility for their own learning, becoming self-guided critical thinkers and independent learners.

Parents/Guardians

- Support and encourage their daughter's learning by working in partnership with the school, e.g. attending Parent-Teacher Meetings, monitoring homework, being familiar with the school's assessment procedures, accessing the Athena Tracker, reviewing school reports with their daughter.
- Support their daughter's learning by providing an environment conducive to study and homework.
- Communicate with subject teachers and/or Deans of Year regarding concerns related to learning and assessment.

6. Monitoring

Homework and Assignments

- Regular homework and assignments play an important part in consolidating classroom learning and developing independent study skills (Appendix B)

Athena

- Results from class assessments, winter assessments, summer assessments, autumn tracking assessments, spring tracking assessments and pre-Junior Cycle and leaving Certificate examinations are uploaded to Athena. This creates a centralised record of student achievement over time.
- Athena allows teachers, students and parents to compare results with previous assessments, identifying patterns of improvement, decline or consistency in performance.
- Athena provides teachers with detailed insights into student progress, enabling early identification of students who may require additional support.

7. Assessment Practices to Include Students with Additional Educational Needs

Assessment instruments play a vital role in supporting students with an Additional Educational Need (AEN). Some students may already have completed an assessment with an Educational Psychologist e.g. for Dyslexia. If students have a report from an Educational Psychologist, we request parents to submit a copy for the Student Support File (SSF), this will be held securely by our AEN Department. With parental consultation, only relevant information is distilled and shared with teachers.

If a student has no prior professional documentation, concerns may be raised by a parent, Dean of Year, Tutor, or teacher indicating that a student may be experiencing difficulty in certain academic areas. In such cases, we review all assessment evidence, including:

- CAT4 entrance tests
- Athena Tracking assessments
- School-based academic performance
- Consultations with Tutor/Dean on academic and social interactions

Where the school and parents feel that accommodations may be of benefit, we can assess the student to determine whether they meet criteria for the Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme.

Important: Schools cannot diagnose Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, ADHD, or any other learning need. However, school-based observations and assessments can contribute meaningfully towards a broader professional evaluation.

8. Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Exams (RACE):

Who is Assessed:

- Students whose entrance exam results suggest a difficulty
- Students with recent professional assessments placing them within the required range
- Students referred by teachers for literacy or numeracy concerns

Grounds for Accommodations

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) considers applications based on four main grounds:

- Learning difficulty
- Hearing difficulty
- Visual difficulty
- Physical difficulty

Main Examples of Accommodations

- Additional time (including an extra 10 minutes for all RACE-eligible students in the 2026 exams)
- Spelling and Grammar Waiver (English, Irish and MEL)
- Reading Assistant or reading pen. Exam invigilator can read parts of exam questions verbatim to students (cannot explain questions).
- Enlarged print, modified papers, or Braille
- Use of assistive technology / Typing

Application Timelines (Department of Education / SEC)

Important: Schools may only assess students within one year prior to the application deadline.

- Leaving Certificate:
 - o Deadline: November of 6th Year

- o Testing typically begins at the end of 5th Year
- Junior Cycle:
 - o Deadline: December of 3rd Year
 - o Testing typically begins at the end of 2nd Year

Note: Accommodations granted at JC will carry forward to LC (via a re-activation form).

RACE certificate should be retained.

Key Principles

- A diagnosis or report alone is not sufficient; students must have record of a specific need over a sustained period.
- The school applies for accommodations based on evidence of need and prior use of supports.
- All assessment and application processes follow DEY, NEPS and SEC guidelines. Schools are open to audit by the Department of Education at any time.

9. Guidance Department: Standardised Testing

Definition of Assessment Instruments for the purposes of this policy

Mount Sackville Secondary School recognises that information from ability tests, attainment tests, teacher observations, the Education Passport, the Student Support File, parental reports as well as the views of the student are important aspects of a thorough assessment.

This evidence-based approach facilitates the identification of individual students' strengths, interest, values, motivation and learning needs and helps to inform the actions and interventions that best address those needs.

This section of the policy refers to standardised tests which may be utilised in a post primary school setting such as Mount Sackville Secondary School.

Results of any one standardised test are not used in isolation, nor used as baseline data for predicting student's future achievements, nor for solely informing decisions regarding the provision of interventions or targets within learning plans for students.

Types of Standardised Tests

Standardised ability tests: aim to measure what a student can know rather than what is known. They are designed to be curriculum independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning.

Standardised achievement tests: aim to 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 the 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 support students' decision-making regarding subject choices and Senior Cycle options and to support career development, including planning for further and higher education, training, apprenticeships and the world of work" ^{iv}

Assessment results should not be regarded as definitive nor interpreted in isolation.

Rationale for Standardised Testing

At Mount Sackville Secondary School, students will have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of assessment activity as part of normal teaching and learning. Other specialist tests may also be administered to support an individual student's educational development and learning as well as her career development.

There may also be reason to administer tests on an individual basis to support a student's learning, progress, and achievement. Such tests will only be administered following consultation with parents/guardians.

Information gathered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests, and further information gathered through the administration of diagnostic tests provide a detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.

Standardised tests are used for gathering baseline data and to track progress as well as identifying emerging needs that will help to inform actions that will best address them.

Obtaining Consent

Information is provided to parents and students regarding the purpose of the assessment and with whom the assessment results may be shared and why.

The consent of parents (for students under 18 years of age) and assent of students over 18 is obtained in advance of the assessment instrument being administered, in line with the school's assessment and data protection policies.

All consents/permissions are part of the school's admission form which parents/guardians are asked to sign when accepting a school place and therefore an individual consent form for every set of assessments is not issued.

Selection of Assessment Instrument

Assessment instruments are selected for use in the school based on the suitability, reliability and validity of the instrument and resulting data. It is ensured that the versions in use are the most up-to-date and appropriate for administering to the specific student cohort.

The school considers the qualifications required to administer, score, interpret and provide feedback on the test prior to selection. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provide information and advice on the use and appropriateness of certain assessment instruments/tests.

The school engages with the relevant primary and post-primary schools to inform decisions around the selection and timing of assessments for students new to post-primary education or transferring from another post primary. The Student Support File and the Education Passport are key elements in supporting the sharing of relevant data, including assessment results, as students transfer from primary to post-primary school.

Administration of Standardised Tests.

The school when administering standardised tests follows the guidance of the Department of Education (DEY) which states:

“The administration of ability tests in schools should be restricted to appropriately qualified personnel who have been specifically trained in specialised psychometric testing, including the selection and administration of such assessment instruments, interpretation of assessment results, scoring and feedback. Typically, in the case of psychometric instruments of general ability (and individually administered achievement tests), such personnel will be qualified guidance counsellors or teachers of special education with appropriate qualifications to administer specific tests. Such personnel should engage in ongoing training and continuing professional development”^v

The administration of standardised tests in the school is undertaken by appropriately qualified staff only, which in some instances involves subject teachers, guidance counsellors and/or the Additional Needs Coordinator (AENCO) depending on the nature of the test.

Some assessments, such as standardised group achievement tests, can be administered by subject teachers, under the supervision of a suitably qualified person.

Other tests should only be administered and interpreted by appropriately qualified personnel depending on the nature of the instrument used.

The school in line with best practice administers standardised tests under standardised conditions with the students made aware that they are taking a test and that the usual expectations and constraints of a test session will be in place.

Key administration points:

- Students are given clear instructions
- Accommodations provided for AEN or EAL students
- Invigilators ensure academic integrity and appropriate behaviour

10. Sharing of Results and Data with Students, Parents/Guardians

The school endeavours to ensure that appropriate, accurate and constructive feedback is provided in a timely fashion to students and parents/guardians by appropriately qualified personnel (e.g. guidance counsellors or suitably qualified personnel).

- Results may be shared confidentially with students, parents/guardians, and relevant school staff (teachers, Guidance Counsellor, SET, Resource Team).

- External agencies (e.g., NEPS, CAMHS) receive information only, when necessary, in line with data protection policies and parental/guardian consent.
- Results are interpreted alongside academic progress, teacher observations, and student interests; they are never used in isolation.

In giving feedback, students and parents/guardians are made aware of the limitations of assessment results tests during this discussion and the importance of other factors including the students' interests, motivation, talents and experiences, and information available from other sources.

Assessment results are only one element of the whole picture of a student in education.

Students are provided with the opportunity to explore their assessment results in the context of the educational options available to them in the school and to inform their future educational and vocational development, career choices and decision making.

Storing of Assessment Data

The school ensures full compliance with all requirements of current GDPR legislation, and is cognisant of GDPR data processing and retention requirements, for example, ensuring compliance in relation to who controls and has access to the data, the purposes for which this data is used, the retention of the data and where the data is stored i.e. within or outside the EU.

11. Reporting and Provision of Formative Feedback

Reporting is the part of the assessment process that provides feedback in support of student learning. There is strong evidence that when reporting on progress is done effectively, students feel involved in their learning, are helped to see how well they are progressing and how they can improve. Reporting goes beyond giving marks and grades, it is an important way of sharing progress between teachers, students and parents/guardians.

Formal reporting on summative assessments benefits the students' progress in the following ways:

- Helps students understand what they did well as well as helping them identify next steps for improvement.
- Promotes reflection: Encourages students to reflect on their performance and take greater ownership of their learning and progress.

- Builds confidence and motivation: Constructive feedback highlights strengths as well as areas for development, supporting student confidence and motivation to improve.
- Involves parents/guardians with an overview of their daughter's progress.

Reports are made available on VShare to all parents/guardians at the following points in the academic year:

- **Following winter assessments**
- **Following Pre-Junior Cycle examinations**
- **Following Pre-Leaving Certificate examinations**
- **Following summer assessments**
- **Results of Autumn and Spring tracking assessments are published on VShare**

Parents/Guardians are notified via the Mount Sackville App when results and reports have been published.

Further reporting on achievement and progress is provided to parents/guardians at Parent Teacher meetings.

Participation in the Forbairt Programme supported the school in reviewing and enhancing its approach to reporting on student learning. Through engagement with the programme, the school reflected on existing reporting practices and introduced improvements to ensure that school reports provide clearer, more meaningful information for students and parents/guardians. In particular, greater emphasis has been placed on the inclusion of formative comments alongside grades, supporting students to understand their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and take the next steps in their learning. As a result, school reports now provide more balanced feedback that promotes reflection, progress, and ongoing development (Appendix C).

12. Assessment in State Examinations

The Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate State Examinations are conducted, nationally, each June by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for students in 3rd and 6th year.

For 3rd year students, these results, along with CBA descriptors and a description of Other Areas of Learning (OAL) are included on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

During the State Examinations, the school operates as an exam centre. Exam centre regulations are issued by the SEC and apply throughout the duration of the exam period.

Students of Mount Sackville must adhere to the school's Code of Positive Behaviour during the State Examinations.

For students who have been granted Reasonable Accommodations in the state examinations, appropriate arrangements will be put in place for the proper conduct of students' exams in order that the assessment procedures are applied in a fair manner so as to not disadvantage any student.

13. Review Procedure

Mount Sackville Secondary School is committed to continuously improving its assessment practices. Policy review will be guided by the School Self-Evaluation process, curricular developments and developments in State Examinations.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on 24th March 2026.

ⁱ <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/glossary/>

ⁱⁱ <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/glossary/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/assessment-and-reporting/glossary/>

^{iv} <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/0b56acf8-00842024-.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/0b56acf8-00842024-.pdf>

Appendix A

CBA Calendar

CBA 1 CALENDAR 2025 2026
2nd Years

ENGLISH 23 RD FEBRUARY - 13 TH MARCH	GAEILGE 27 ^U AIBREÁN - 15 ^U BEALTAINNE		MATHS 12 TH JANUARY - 30 TH JANUARY	HISTORY 23 RD FEBRUARY - 13 TH MARCH
SCIENCE 24 TH NOVEMBER - 17 TH DECEMBER	MEL 13 TH APRIL - 27 TH APRIL		BUSINESS 3 RD NOVEMBER - 5 TH DECEMBER	GEOGRAPHY 13 TH APRIL - 1 ST MAY
ART 5 TH JANUARY - 6 TH MARCH	HOME ECONOMICS 1 ST DECEMBER - 13 TH FEBRUARY		MUSIC 3 RD NOVEMBER - 8 TH MAY	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 19 TH JANUARY - 9 TH FEBRUARY
	CSPE 3 RD NOVEMBER - 17 TH NOVEMBER		PE 15 TH SEPTEMBER - 3 RD OCTOBER	

CBA 2 CALENDAR 2025 2026
3rd Years

ENGLISH 23 RD FEBRUARY - 13 TH MARCH		MUSIC 23 RD FEBRUARY - 6 TH MARCH
GAEILGE 24 ^U SAMHAIN - 12 ^U MÍNA NOLLAIG		BUSINESS 24 TH NOVEMBER - 12 TH DECEMBER
HOME ECONOMICS 5 TH JANUARY - 11 TH FEBRUARY		CSPE 3 RD NOVEMBER - 17 TH NOVEMBER
ART 8 TH SEPTEMBER - 7 TH NOVEMBER		SPHE. 3 RD NOVEMBER - 19 TH DECEMBER

Appendix B

Mount Sackville Secondary School Homework Charter



MOUNT SACKVILLE SECONDARY SCHOOL

HOMEWORK CHARTER

STUDENT AND TEACHER GUIDELINES FOR HOMEWORK

STUDENTS

- I know that there are many types of homework. Some examples are reading, writing, revision, research, oral work, study.
- I will record my homework / classwork in my journal.
- I will ask the teacher if I do not understand the homework assigned.
- I will do my own homework as required by my subject teachers.
- I will record the time allocated by the teacher for the homework assigned.
- I will complete written homework at home. Non-written homework may begin in class.
- I will have my journal signed by a parent/guardian if my homework takes more than the allocated time.
- I will give my best effort to my homework.
- I will catch up on any homework missed

TEACHERS

- I will explain the homework to students and allow them time to record it in their journal.
- I will write up assigned homework on the board.
- I will not assign homework online, outside of school hours. Notes and other resources may be uploaded outside of school hours.
- I will give students an estimated completion time, following the Time Guidelines for Homework.
- Parents/Guardians will be informed if homework is not completed regularly.
- If written homework has not been assigned, I will remind students to review material covered in class.
- Written homework is always to be completed at home. Non-written homework may be started in class.
- I will be mindful of the amount of homework assigned in the week preceding exams.

TIME GUIDELINES FOR HOMEWORK

1st Years 10 – 15 minutes per class

2nd Years 15 – 20 minutes per class

3rd Years 15 – 20 minutes per class

4th Years 10 – 15 minutes per class for core subjects

5th Years 20 – 25 minutes per class

6th Years 25 – 30 minutes per class

There will be 7 REVISION ONLY weekends for 3rd year - approximately one a month.

There will be 7 REVISION ONLY weekends for 5th year - approximately one a month.

There will be 7 REVISION ONLY weekends for 6th year - approximately one a month.

Appendix C

Forbairt Guidelines for Effective Reporting



REPORT

R– Reflect on Progress

Take time to consider each student’s development over the term, noting academic growth to date.

E – Evidence-Based Comments

Base your feedback on specific examples and assessment data to ensure accuracy and credibility.

P – Personalise Feedback

Tailor comments to the individual student, avoiding generic phrases to make the report meaningful and constructive.

O – Objective Tone

Maintain a professional and balanced tone, ensuring that all feedback is task linked and not solely related to praise of the student and their personality.

R – Recognise Effort

Highlight areas where students have shown commitment, even if progress has been slow—it encourages resilience. Remember to nurture confidence and always consider student wellbeing.

T – Targets for Improvement

Include clear, actionable suggestions to help students and parents understand the next steps for learning.