1. Rationale

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle seek to recognise the individuality and dignity of young people and foster the development of each one’s unique potential and spirituality (A Vision Statement for Catholic Schools, 2002). Subsequently, the Catholic Schools Office is committed to providing high quality teaching and learning programmes that enable all students to maximize their individual talents and capabilities for lifelong learning (BOS K-10 Curriculum Framework 2002).

Within this context, the Catholic Schools Office acknowledges that assessing student knowledge, skills and understanding and providing high quality feedback are critical in assisting students and parents to participate fully in the learning process. It also fosters responsibility for learning by ensuring that teachers provide students, within the context of everyday classroom activities, as well as planned assessment events, with varied opportunities to demonstrate their learning (BOS Syllabuses 2004).

The Catholic Schools Office acknowledges that in order to improve student outcomes, it is essential that assessment practices be consistently integrated into the teaching and learning processes from K to 12, and be grounded in the Standards Referenced Framework. The policy assists schools to develop effective assessment practices based on a set of agreed principles that encapsulate both assessment for learning and assessment of learning.

This policy sets out the requirements that will inform school and classroom practice, recognizing that schools, in establishing assessment policies and procedures should take into account the wide diversity of students enrolled in our schools. It also acknowledges that assessment practices must be inclusive and consistent with the Catholic ethos.

In implementing this policy, all members of the system need to ensure that privacy laws are upheld and that confidentiality of individual students is maintained.

2. Aims

This assessment policy aims to:
- Set direction for schools in the development of their school-based assessment policy
- Provide stimulus for schools to assist them in developing their assessment strategies and implementing an authentic assessment program;
- Ensure a consistent and effective approach to assessment across the Diocese.
3. **Implementation**

3.1 **Definition**

3.1.1 Assessment is the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting information and describing student performance in relation to stated learning outcomes on a K to 12 learning continuum.

3.2 **Assessment Requirements**

3.2.1 All Diocesan schools are required to ensure that assessment:

- is an essential and integrated part of teaching and learning
- reflects a belief that all students can improve
- is inclusive of all students
- is varied and meaningful for students
- is appropriate and manageable in relation to the outcomes being addressed
- provides the opportunity to monitor, evaluate and inform the teaching and learning process.
- provides feedback for students as to their learning
- as a process, assists teachers to identify and monitor students' achievements and the extent of their progress in relation to the outcomes
- allows schools to plan for improvement in learning and set realistic priorities.
- provides the basis for reporting to parents, caregivers, government authorities and others where appropriate.

3.3 **Specific assessment requirements for Stages**

3.3.1 Schools need to ensure that specific requirements of the Board of Studies relating to assessment for particular Stages are adhered to. Consequently a guide is provided in the Support Material.

3.4 **Assessment responsibilities**

3.4.1 Teachers will be responsible for:

- ensuring that their assessment practices and processes meet the requirements of this policy, the school implementation plan and Board of Studies Syllabus and Registration requirements
- ensuring that students clearly know the 'what when and why' relating to assessment and assessment tasks
- ensuring that students develop the necessary skills to participate in self and peer assessment
- planning tasks and activities which provide evidence that particular learning outcomes have been achieved
- using assessment information to inform their teaching and learning
- providing feedback to enable students to improve learning
- regular review of and reflection on assessment purposes, tasks, strategies and practices
- engaging in dialogue and collegiality in regard to standards and consistency
- systematically analysing student work samples to moderate and develop 'on-balance' judgements within the standards framework
- maintaining accurate and easily understood records in relation to student performance and progress
- using assessment information to inform teaching and learning
• ensuring that data from Basic Skills Tests and Primary Writing Assessment in Years 3 and 5, CSA6, ELLA and SNAP in Years 7 and 8, is used to guide the design of targeted learning and assessment activities
• using their professional judgement, together with reliable data to build an image of what each student knows and can do
• engaging in professional development to enhance their understanding of assessment practices and standards.

3.4.2 Principals and/or their delegates will be responsible for:
• responding to system initiatives in relation to assessment
• leading the development, implementation and review of the school policy
• ensuring that staff are kept up to date with Board of Studies requirements
• ensuring that assessment policies and procedures are enacted by all teachers in the school
• committing appropriate resources to the ongoing development of assessment practices
• participating in the analysis and discussion of assessment data both internal and external
• providing ongoing opportunities for collaboration between teachers to ensure consistency of judgement
• managing and maintaining accurate records of assessment practices and student assessments
• providing regular opportunities for parents and carers to be informed about student progress
• informing parents and the wider community of assessment policies and practices
• reporting student achievement as required by government authorities.

3.4.3 The Catholic Schools Office will be responsible for:
• providing direction to schools in the implementation of this policy through the involvement of consultants and advisers
• ensuring that schools are briefed in regard to Board of Studies registration and accreditation requirements
• providing advice, support materials and opportunities for professional development in relation to assessment
• developing or negotiating processes and materials to support consistency of judgement between teachers
• ensuring that each school develops, and reviews assessment policies and practices
• communicating with the wider community regarding assessment
• analysing external assessment data, providing data and feedback to schools
• monitoring the implementation of the school’s assessment policy, practices and procedures through SEVDEV and annual reporting.

4. Budget

The CSO will provide support for schools in developing their policy through the provision of personnel and professional development opportunities.

5. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required by Board of Studies amendments.
Support Material Part A

(Source: Based on BOS Syllabuses, ACE Manual 2002 & SEVDEV Documentation)

Specific Requirements for Stages

Early Stage 1 to Stage 3
Schools should refer to the ‘General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating’ contained in each Syllabus

Stage 4
Schools should refer to Section 10 of the revised Stage 4/5 Syllabus documents, the ‘Advice on Programming and Assessment’ documents for each subject, as well as the ‘Assessment for Learning in a Standards-Referenced Framework’ CD provided for each subject by the Board of Studies in 2003.

In terms of ‘best practice’ schools are advised to develop practices and procedures for assessment that reflect requirements for Stages 5 and 6.

Stages 5 and 6
Secondary schools need to ensure that in their procedures for implementing their assessment policy, the following requirements are specifically addressed:

- Organisational details of the school’s assessment program for each course, giving the number and types of assessment tasks, components and weightings and scheduling of the tasks
- Marking, recording and reporting student achievement in assessment tasks
- Administrative arrangements associated with absence from an assessment task, late submission of tasks due to illness or misadventure, malpractice and invalid or unreliable tasks
- Student appeals against assessment rankings and marks
- ‘N’ determinations
- providing students with written advice about the school’s requirements for assessment in each course
- Construction of task templates incorporating the task number, weighting, outcomes, criteria and description
- procedures for transferring students
- Weightings from syllabus documents
- N Awards
- Allocation of CPDs (2006 onwards DLAs)
- Penalties
- Calendar of tasks
- Task notifications (2 week rule)
- Special Provisions
Support Material Part B

(Source: NSW Board of Studies 7-10 Syllabuses Section 10 2004)

10.1 Standards

The Board of Studies K–10 Curriculum Framework is a standards-referenced framework that describes, through syllabuses and other documents, the expected learning outcomes for students.

Standards in the framework consist of two interrelated elements:
- outcomes and content in syllabuses showing what is to be learnt
- descriptions of levels of achievement of that learning.

Exemplar tasks and student work samples help to elaborate standards.

Syllabus outcomes contribute to a developmental sequence in which students are challenged to acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills.

The standards are typically written for two years of schooling and set high, but realistic, expectations of the quality of learning to be achieved by the end of Years 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

Using standards to improve learning

Teachers will be able to use standards as a reference point for planning teaching and learning programs and for assessing and reporting student progress. Standards will help teachers and students to set targets, monitor achievement, and, as a result, make changes to programs and strategies to support and improve each student's progress.

10.2 Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning is designed to enhance teaching and improve learning. It is assessment that gives students opportunities to produce the work that leads to development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. Assessment for learning involves teachers in deciding how and when to assess student achievement, as they plan the work students will do, using a range of appropriate assessment strategies including self-assessment and peer assessment.

Teachers will provide students with opportunities in the context of everyday classroom activities, as well as planned assessment events, to demonstrate their learning.

In summary, assessment for learning:
- is an essential and integrated part of teaching and learning
- reflects a belief that all students can improve
- involves setting learning goals with students
- helps students know and recognise the standards they are aiming for
- involves students in self-assessment and peer assessment
- provides feedback that helps students understand the next steps in learning and plan how to achieve them
- involves teachers, students and parents in reflecting on assessment data.
Support Material Part C

(Source: Board of Studies Revised Syllabuses 2003-04)

Quality Assessment Practices

The following Assessment for Learning Principles provide the criteria for judging the quality of assessment materials and practices.

Assessment for learning:
emphasises the interactions between learning and manageable assessment strategies that promote learning
In practice, this means:
– teachers reflect on the purposes of assessment and on their assessment strategies
– assessment activities allow for demonstration of learning outcomes
– assessment is embedded in learning activities and informs the planning of future learning activities
– teachers use assessment to identify what a student can already do.

clearly expresses for the student and teacher the goals of the learning activity
In practice, this means:
– students understand the learning goals and the criteria that will be applied to judge the quality of their achievement
– students receive feedback that helps them make further progress.

reflects a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark
In practice, this means:
– teachers use tasks that assess, and therefore encourage, deeper learning
– feedback is given in a way that motivates the learner and helps students to understand that mistakes are a part of learning and can lead to improvement
– assessment is an integral component of the teaching-learning process rather than being a separate activity.

provides ways for students to use feedback from assessment
In practice, this means:
– feedback is directed to the achievement of standards and away from comparisons with peers
– feedback is clear and constructive about strengths and weaknesses
– feedback is individualised and linked to opportunities for improvement.

helps students take responsibility for their own learning
In practice, this means:
– assessment includes strategies for self-assessment and peer assessment emphasising the next steps needed for further learning.

is inclusive of all learners
In practice, this means:
– assessment against standards provides opportunities for all learners to achieve their best
– assessment activities are free of bias.
Support Material Part D

(Source: NSW Board of Studies Advice on Programming and Assessment 2004)

Planning for Effective Learning and Assessment

The following diagram summarises a model for developing integrated assessment activities. It emphasises that outcomes are central to the decisions teachers make about the learning to be undertaken and the evidence of learning that needs to be collected. This evidence enables teachers to determine how well students are achieving in relation to the outcomes and to provide students with feedback on their learning. Evidence of learning assists teachers and students to decide if students are ready for the next phase of learning or if teachers need to adapt programs to provide further learning experiences to consolidate students' knowledge, understanding and skills.
ASSESSMENT IN THE TEACHING/LEARNING CYCLE

Assessment needs to:
- Be ongoing rather than occurring at the end of a program of work
- Be balanced within the Teaching/Learning cycle (Figure 1)
- Identify students at risk and assist in designing learning opportunities for them
- Identify students' achievements and the extent of their progress in relation to the outcomes
- Motivate students to learn because their learning is personalised
- Inform the effectiveness of teaching
- Allow students to set goals for their learning
- Inform students' learning
- Allow schools to plan for improvement and set realistic priorities
- Broaden home-school links that will enable parents to assist their children's learning.

Figure 1: highlights the central role of assessment in the teaching-learning cycle of an outcomes-focused approach.
Support Material Part F

(Source: www.eddept.wa.edu.au/outcomes/focus/c43.htm

The following series of questions may be used by schools as a guide in the development of their own Assessment Policy (refer Framework).

Whole-school Policies - support the implementation of a standards based outcomes-focused approach

- How are students' prior knowledge, skills and experiences included in the teaching and learning processes?
- Is the assessment based on outcomes described in the BOS Syllabus?
- Does the assessment facilitate and motivate further learning?
- Does the assessment process allow students to work both independently and collaboratively?
- Are students able to demonstrate their competencies according to their personal rates of development?
- Are the assessment practices inclusive of all students' learning styles?
- Are the assessment methods fair and do they accommodate students' needs relating to their gender, culture, language, disabilities, socio-economic status, geographic location or specific learning difficulties?
- What purpose should assessment serve in developmentally appropriate (Life skills) programs?

Whole-school Policies - are developed collaboratively

- Do the students understand the assessments and see them as being purposeful and authentic?
- Is the process of assessment based on judgments from teachers, peers, learners and parents?
- Are the advantages of including students in assessment procedures recognised?
- Does the assessment process help parents to assist their children with their learning?
- Is everyone in the school community informed about what the school values through the assessment process?
- Is information provided to the school community about how the school is performing?
Whole-school Policies - apply assessment procedures consistently

- What should be assessed?
- What assessment strategies are most appropriate?
- Are opportunities provided to allow students to demonstrate outcomes over a range of levels?
- Does the assessment identify strengths and areas for development in students' learning?
- Do students demonstrate they have achieved outcomes in a range of contexts?
- Are teacher judgments applied consistently?
- What are the procedures that ensure information is utilised to inform future Teaching / Learning practices?
- How are the developmental profiles of students’ achievement of outcomes tracked?

Whole-school Policies - ensure consistent judgments are made by teachers within teaching /learning programs and across the school

- Are judgments of achievement based on predetermined standards and consistent with the instructions identified to the students?
- Do teachers have a common understanding of the nature, purpose and expectation of the assessment task?
- Do the strategies used for assessment match the purpose?
- Is a variety of assessment strategies used to provide multiple sources of information?
- How is students' performance in all aspects of the curriculum described?
- Do teachers have a common understanding of the Student Outcome Statements levels?
- Do teachers have a common understanding of the Core shared values?
- Are there strategies for formal and/or informal monitoring of students' progress?
- Are judgments of achievement based on students actual demonstrating the outcomes?
- Are opportunities provided for teachers to work collaboratively within and across stages to assess levels of outcomes achieved?
- Are outcomes stated explicitly as identified in BOS syllabuses?

Whole-school Policies - Professional Development - How do teachers acquire the skills and knowledge associated with authentic assessment?

- What areas of Assessment Strategies and processes do we need assistance?
- Does the staff have a shared understanding of assessment and its purpose within the Teaching/ Learning Cycle?
- What processes have been put in place to ensure staff has a shared understanding of assessment and its place within the Teaching/ Learning Cycle?
- What Professional Development activities has members of the staff undertaken to improve their understanding of authentic assessment practices?
- What collegial structures can or have been developed to evaluate assessment strategies and approaches?
- What process has been put in place to assist teachers to unpack the outcomes?
- What process can be developed to assist teachers to develop networks for Professional Development in assessment?
- How can the CSO staff assist us in our understanding of Assessment processes and strategies?
- What are our future plans associated with Assessment practice(s)?
Support Material Part G

Glossary of Terms

(Source: adapted and developed from a range of documents and materials related to Assessment)

**Assessment** - is the process of gathering evidence of and making judgments about students' needs, strengths, abilities and achievements.

**Assessment Program** - An assessment plan is a document, that shows the elements or units of competency or learning outcomes to be assessed, when the assessment will occur, how the assessment will occur, the assessment methods to be used and the weighting of the task.

**Assessment for Learning** - is assessment that gives students opportunities to produce the work that leads to development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. *Assessment for learning* involves teachers in deciding how and when to assess student achievement, as they plan the work students will do, using a range of appropriate assessment strategies including self-assessment and peer assessment.

**Assessment of learning** - a process usually based on summative assessment practices, resulting is a summation of the learning process and is used to inform achievement against a predetermined standard.

**Authentic Assessment** - students complete particular assessment tasks as part of their learning program. The tasks are worthwhile, significant and meaningful with agreed learning frameworks. Such assessment fosters disciplined enquiry, integration of knowledge and value beyond the assessment period. Students maybe involved in completing a product over a period of time in collaboration with others.

**Formal Assessment** - Teachers and students make decisions about the learning goals and plan assessment events to provide information about student progress.

**Formative Assessment** - Teachers make judgments about student achievement and provide feedback coincident with learning in order to allow students to assess and review their progress towards learning goals. Informal assessment may be initiated by the teacher or student and may be oral or written.

**Informal assessment** - Teachers make judgments about student achievement and provide feedback coincident with learning in order to allow students to assess and review their progress towards learning goals. Informal assessment may be initiated by the teacher or student and may be oral or written.

**Learning Outcome** - Learning outcomes are the basic building blocks of a module of study. They describe an action or outcome, which is demonstrable and assessable. They describe the lowest logical, identifiable and discrete sub-grouping of knowledge/Understanding and skills, which contribute to and build a unit of work.
Standards referenced assessment - performance is measured against a description of expectations as determined in common curriculum frameworks. Each of the levels are described as a standard against which student progress can be described. The level represents an agreed benchmark and is based on an explicit description of level of outcomes already achieved. This assessment method supports students to continue striving to achieve their personal best.

Summative assessment - Processes, which enable a description of progress and recognition of learning at certain defined stages, are referred to as summative assessment. It can provide information to students and others to guide further learning.

Teacher professional judgment - Judgments by teachers about students' learning progress come from observations of students engaging in a range of activities and from the use of a number of different strategies for assessing achievement. Through the teaching and learning program, teachers have detailed knowledge of their students' achievements. Valid and reliable assessment depends on collaboration between teachers to develop shared meanings of commonly-used criteria. Discussion, common assessment tasks and quality assessment tasks and experiences assist teachers in this process.

Validity - An assessment is valid if it makes judgments and provides evidence relevant to the learning program and the intended purposes of assessment. The information collected is related to the explicit learning goals.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Source: Board of Studies NSW, ACE Manual 2002)

All new syllabus documents for both Primary and Secondary schools contain sections entitled, The K-12 Curriculum and Assessment (in Secondary School Syllabi) and General Principles for Planning, Programming, Assessing, Reporting and Evaluating (in Primary School Syllabi).

Assessment Monitoring and Reporting Policy. 2002. Tasmania Department of Education, Office of Educational Review


Principles for Assessment and Reporting in NSW Government Schools. 1996. NSW Department of School Education Pub.

WEBSITES

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

www.BOSNSW-K6.nsw.edu.au


www.eddept.wa.edu.au/outcomes/focus/c43.htm