

Student Assessment Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Student assessment and evaluation are core components of Nova Scotia's public education system. Assessment and evaluation provide evidence of learning and achievement to students, parents, and teachers. Teachers use assessment evidence to inform their decisions about instruction and student learning, monitor progress, and report on student achievement. Student assessment and evaluation also provide important data to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and its partners in education, such as the regional centres for education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), to inform the development and delivery of programs, services, and supports.

2. Definitions

assessment: the ongoing process of gathering evidence about student learning.

evaluation: the ongoing process of analyzing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment evidence to make professional judgements about student achievement.

fair assessment: all students are provided with equitable opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their learning. Fair assessment must consider access, equity, inclusion, and diversity.

feedback: information communicated to or by a student related to the defined criteria of what a student needs to know, what they need to show, what they need to be able to do, and where to go next.

final assessment: assesses students' understanding and application of the concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes for a subject or course. They can take many forms, including, but not limited to, presentations, portfolios, interviews, and examinations.

inclusive education: an educational commitment that uses principles and practices to affirm and validate all students in a school's community. It is anchored in a presumption of competence and high expectations, a culture of authentic belonging, and a shared accountability for students' well-being and achievement.

Nova Scotia Assessment (NSA): an assessment designed to evaluate student achievement related to selected curriculum outcomes in a subject area. NSA results do not contribute to students' final grades.

Nova Scotia Examination (NSE): exams designed to evaluate student achievement related to selected curriculum outcomes in a course. NSEs results account for 20 per cent of students' final grade in a course.

parent: includes parents, guardians, and people acting in the place of a parent (*loco parentis*).

Program Planning Process: an overarching term for the process to develop, implement, monitor, review, and update a number of possible programming options to most effectively support student success in the areas of wellbeing, academics, and behavior skill development.

professional judgement: judgement that is informed by professional knowledge, research, experiences, classroom context, and evidence of student learning.

provincial report card: a formal communication tool used by teachers to summarize and communicate information about individual students' achievement related to specific subjects and courses, as well as the Program Planning Process.

reliable assessment: an accurate assessment used to measure student learning that yields the same, consistent results each time it is administered.

valid assessment: an assessment that accurately reflects the expected learning outcomes that it is intended to measure. Inferences, conclusions, and decisions that are made and based on its results are appropriate and meaningful.

3. Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to provide clear, consistent direction with respect to assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices, focusing on enhancing all students' learning and achievement. As part of enhancing the learning and achievement of all students, this policy also supports inclusive and equitable practices related to student assessment, evaluation, reporting, and well-being.

This policy and any accompanying guidelines or procedures help inform effective practices respecting student assessment, evaluation, and reporting.

4. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles are the foundation for student assessment in Nova Scotia's public education system. All assessments conducted at the classroom, school, regional, and provincial levels must adhere to these principles. Assessments

- contribute to student learning, achievement, and well-being.
- are valid, reliable, and fair.
- are planned, purposeful, inclusive, and equitable.
- are aligned with the expected learning outcomes, instructional approaches, and individual student learning needs (e.g., assistive technology, extra time).
- provide students with multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate their understanding and application of concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes.
- provide ongoing information about student learning that is meaningful, accessible, and communicated to parents and students in a variety of ways.

5. Application

This policy applies to all primary to grade 12 students and everyone employed within Nova Scotia's public education system.

6. Policy Directives

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation must

- have a clear purpose and defined criteria of what students need to know, show, and do, that are communicated to students in advance of the related learning.
- be aligned with the expected learning outcomes and classroom instruction.
- be ongoing, to provide students with multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate their learning.
- provide students with frequent feedback as they are learning as well as periodic feedback on what they have learned. Feedback must be directly related to the defined criteria.
- provide students with opportunities to develop their self-assessment skills.
- not be used as a reward or punishment.

Evaluation must

- be based on evidence of individual students' achievement related to the expected learning outcomes and teachers' professional judgement.
- be based on criteria that is appropriate to the expected learning outcomes and the selected assessment method.
- summarize and report student achievement based on a sufficient body of evidence that accurately reflects a student's achievement of the expected learning outcomes at a given point in time.

Schools will have a process for students and parents to request a review of assessments and evaluations should they feel that the student's achievement is not accurately reflected.

Final Assessments

Final assessments (grades 9–12 only) are designed to assess students' understanding and application of the concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes for a subject or course. They can take a variety of forms, including presentations, portfolios, projects, and examinations.

If an examination is the chosen format for a final assessment, it must take place during the timeframe specified by EECD or a recognized outside examining agency (e.g., International Baccalaureate [IB] and Advanced Placement [AP]).

In courses that do not have an NSE, teachers determine the final assessment format for the course. They may provide students with alternative options or engage students in proposing options for the final assessment.

In grade 9, a final classroom assessment in a course will account for no more than 10 per cent of a student's final grade.

In grades 10–12, a final classroom assessment in a course will account for no more than 20 per cent of a student's final grade, with the exception of IB exams.

Regional, Provincial, National, and International Assessments

In addition to ongoing classroom assessment, students will participate in regional, provincial, national, and international large-scale assessments as determined by the department. These assessments provide feedback on student achievement, which provides regions and the province with evidence to measure the success of programs and initiatives, adjust policy direction as needed, and to report on the public education system.

Regional, provincial, national, and international assessments are not included in students' final grades.

In courses where the final assessment is an NSE, as prescribed by the department, the NSE accounts for 20 per cent of students' final grades.

Student Placement

Students in grades primary to 9 should be placed in the grade that is appropriate for their curricular, cognitive, social, and emotional learning needs.

Any decisions about a student's grade placement must consider the programming that best supports and extends the student's learning and well-being.

Note: Please see the *Student Grade Level Placement Procedures* for additional details.

Communication

A school communication plan must be provided to students and parents by the principal at the beginning of each school year. This plan will include information such as contact information for the principal, teachers, and other school staff, as well as for how to best reach them (e.g., email, online portal, app); school procedures; professional development calendar dates; and information for students and parents on the process to review an assessment or evaluation.

Teachers must also provide their own communication plan to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or semester.

Provincial Report Cards

Teachers will report on individual students' achievement on provincial report cards using grades, scales, and comments. If a student has a programming option under the Program Planning Process, it may be indicated on the report card, depending on the nature of the programming option.

Social skills, work habits, and behaviours are communicated in the Learner Profile section of the report card and are not included in students' academic grades.

The preparation and distribution of provincially authorized report cards occurs at set times throughout the school year, as determined by EECD.

Information provided in students' provincial report cards must align with information about individual students' learning that has previously been shared through ongoing communication between home and school.

Student transfers

In cases where a student transfers between public schools in Nova Scotia within three weeks of the end of the term or semester, the principal from the sending school will ensure that the sending school teacher(s) provide a completed provincial report card to the receiving school.

If a student is transferring from a school outside of Nova Scotia within three weeks of the end of the term or semester, and the principal at the receiving school is unable to obtain a report card from the sending school, the teacher(s) at the receiving school will use the code “insufficient evidence” on the student’s provincial report card.

Course Change or Withdrawal

Students in grades 10–12 may change or withdraw from courses. To do this, they must meet with a school counsellor or administrator to determine if the course change or withdrawal request is possible.

If a student changes or withdraws from a course within two weeks of the start of the course, the course will not appear on the student’s report card or transcript.

If a student withdraws from a course after the first two weeks and before the last day of class, the course will appear as a withdrawal on the student’s report card but not on their transcript. The student’s final grade for the course will be recorded as a withdrawal.

Due Dates

Teachers must ensure the process for setting due dates and negotiating extensions for assessments is consistent, equitable, and clearly communicated to all students. They must also communicate this information to parents.

Teachers must support students in building the skills they need to meet due dates and complete work on time. This work must be reflective of and appropriate for the age, grade level, and development of their students, and progressively build in more responsibility for students as they mature and advance.

Missing assessments may impact students’ in-progress marks, final grades, or both.

Note: Please see the *Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extension Procedures*.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Students

Students are responsible for

- engaging in their learning and responding to feedback from their teacher(s) to improve their learning.
- meeting due dates for assessment and evaluation that have been clearly communicated to them by their teacher(s).
- taking on more responsibility for meeting due dates and requesting extensions based on their grade level and appropriate learning development:
 - grades P–6—students learn about due dates and develop some autonomy and responsibility when working toward due dates.

- grades 7–8—students continue to receive support (e.g., regular check-ins, work planning) when working toward due dates, and a greater expectation is placed on them to meet due dates and negotiate extensions.
- grades 9–12—students are expected to adhere to due dates with increasing independence. They are expected to negotiate extensions with teachers prior to the original due date, except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents

Parents are encouraged to

- engage in and support their child’s learning.
- familiarize themselves with the school communication plan and teacher communication plans.
- maintain ongoing contact with teachers about their child’s progress and achievement.
- attend parent-teacher meetings, program planning meetings (when necessary), and participate in discussions about appropriate student programming.
- seek clarification when questions arise regarding assessment, evaluation, reporting, and educational programming.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for

- adhering to this policy.
- ensuring alignment between the expected learning outcomes, instructional approaches, student learning needs (e.g., assistive technology, extra time), and assessments.
- using a variety of assessment methods (e.g., observations, conversations, products) to gather information about individual student learning and using that evidence to inform and make decisions about their instruction.
- providing ongoing and timely feedback to students as they are learning, as well as periodic feedback on what they have learned.
- maintaining regular communication with students and parents regarding students’ learning, progress, and well-being.
- communicating with students and parents on how to request a review of an assessment or evaluation.
- establishing high expectations for each student and supporting each student as they work to achieve success.
- ensuring assessment strategies are reviewed and adjusted as needed to best support student learning and achievement.
- accurately reporting on student achievement in relation to the expected learning outcomes.
- administering regional, provincial, national, and international assessments and examinations in accordance with the established protocols for each one.

Principals

Principals are responsible for

- adhering to this policy.
- ensuring teachers adhere to this policy and are supported in further developing their assessment knowledge and practice as it relates to this policy and any associated guidelines.
- ensuring that all teachers prepare and communicate provincial report cards to students and parents within the regular reporting periods.
- informing students and parents about this policy.
- ensuring that the practices for assessment, evaluation, and reporting student learning are reasonable, clear, and consistently applied at their school.
- providing teachers with feedback related to their assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices.
- providing teachers with access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and communication practices to support student learning.
- monitoring the progress of all students.

Regional centers for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

The RCEs and CSAP are responsible for

- monitoring implementation of this policy in schools.
- ensuring that the practices for assessment, evaluation, and communication for student learning are reasonable, clear, and consistently applied at their schools.
- providing administrators and teachers with access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices to support student learning.
- monitoring the tracking and recording of student progress.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

EECD is responsible for

- communicating this policy to the RCEs and CSAP.
- providing the RCEs and CSAP with information and access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices to support student learning for regional staff, school administrators, and teachers.
- leading provincial, national, and international large-scale assessments in collaboration with the RCEs and CSAP.
- collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on student achievement with the department's partners in education.
- setting reporting and assessment dates for Nova Scotia's public schools.

8. Monitoring

EECD staff are responsible for monitoring this policy which will be reviewed annually. As part of the review, department staff will recommend amendments to the policy, as needed.

9. References

Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extension Procedures*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Student Grade Level Placement Procedures*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

Rogers, W. Todd. 1993. "Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada." *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* 9, no. 1 (December): 110–27. doi: 10.1177/082957358500900111.

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- Education Consultative Forum (ECF)
- Education Programs Committee (EPC)
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union
- Principals' Forum
- Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE)
- Regional Assessment Coordinators
- Regional Program Coordinators
- Parents and School Advisory Council (SAC) members
- Students
- Teachers