Ballyhaunis Community School

Assessment Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signature: _____

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Commenced:	September 2025
Next review due:	September 2028

1. Introduction

This Assessment Policy outlines the principles and procedures for assessment in Ballyhaunis Community School, which is committed to promoting academic achievement, personal development, and preparing students for life-long learning. Assessment in our school is designed to encourage and support student learning, provide feedback to students and teachers, and inform instructional planning.

2. Rationale

Assessment plays a key role in the educational process, helping to measure student progress, identify areas for improvement, and guide teaching. In alignment with the Irish education system, our assessments are designed to be fair, inclusive, and comprehensive, reflecting a broad understanding of the students' abilities and potential.

3. Assessment

Definition 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 (www.ncca.ie).

Assessment Methods: This is a term that encompasses the various strategies and techniques that can be used to collect information from students about their progress towards attaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be learned. The assessment method chosen should allow for the generation of evidence and provision of timely feedback to make appropriate instructional decisions and improve student learning (www.ncca.ie).

Types of Assessment

Assessment in Ballyhaunis Community School will be conducted in a variety of ways to accommodate the diverse needs and learning styles of students.

- **Formative Assessment (Assessment for Learning (AFL))**: Ongoing assessments conducted during the learning process. These assessments aim to provide feedback to students to help improve learning and allow teachers to adjust instruction. Examples include:

    o   Class discussions and questioning

    o   Peer and self-assessments

    o   Show-me boards

    o   Homework and assignments

    o   Project-based assessments

    o   Quizzes and tests

    o   Oral and Aural Language Assessments

- Field studies

- Learning Reflections at the end of a chapter/unit of learning

- Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) for Junior Cycle

- **Summative Assessment (Assessment of Learning (AOL))**: These assessments evaluate student learning at the end of a specific period, typically at the end of a semester or year. Examples include:

  - End-of-semester exams

  - Continuous assessment of coursework

  - Final project presentations or portfolios

  - Practical Performance Exam

- **Diagnostic Assessment**: Conducted in first year CAT 4 Test (Cognitive Abilities Test: Fourth edition). The CAT 4 test measures the four principal areas of reasoning. These are verbal, non-verbal, quantitative, and spatial tests and are key to supporting educational development and academic attainment. The CAT 4 will provide important information that can assist students in achieving their potential. During the first term all first year students also complete the Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis – English (PPAD-E) is a standardised test of literacy for use in post-primary schools as a screening and diagnostic tool for assessing literacy skills. The PPAD-E consists of five subtests: Word Reading, Spelling, Reading Speed, Reading Comprehension, and Writing Samples, which together assess key areas of students' literacy development. The PPAD-E together with the CAT4 help to identify strengths and weaknesses for individuals and groups of students as well as students who need additional support.

- **In School Screening** – Based on information received from primary schools through students' Education Passports upon first-year enrolment, students may undergo screening for special educational needs (SEN) to identify those who require additional support. Standardised tests, such as the Wide Range Achievement Test, Fifth Edition (WRAT 5), may be used to assess students' literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, where subject teachers have concerns regarding a student's literacy and/or numeracy skills, standardised screening assessments may be used to help determine whether further assessment or support is required. The Special Educational Needs Team coordinate these screenings and ensure that students receive the necessary accommodations or interventions.

- **CEFR Assessment:** This assessment is conducted when students enrol, and English is an additional language (EAL). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an internationally recognised standard for assessing language proficiency. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, ranging from A1 for beginners to C2 for those who have mastered the language. Students' language levels are assessed and monitored using this framework, with each student being tested twice during the

academic year. Following the assessment, the CEFR framework allows teachers to set targets that support students in progressing to the next level of language proficiency, enabling them to access the curriculum more effectively. Language support is provided to students across three progressive levels: A1, A2, and B1. Students are entitled to language support until they achieve B1 proficiency, in accordance with Circular 0015/2009. It is crucial to establish each EAL learner's English language proficiency level, so that the student, their family, their subject teachers, and the language support teachers are all aware of their starting point, their next learning steps, and their potential learning destination.

- **External Assessments**: State examinations such as the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate assessments are key components of our school's assessment approach.

4. Assessment Principles

All assessment practices at Ballyhaunis Community School are grounded in the following principles:

- **Inclusivity**: Assessments will be accessible to all students, considering their individual needs, abilities, and learning styles. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with additional needs. Spelling and grammar waivers are applied by teachers when correcting all assessments.

- **Fairness**: Assessment will be fair, transparent, and based on clear criteria. Teachers will ensure that assessments provide all students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

- **Validity and Reliability**: Assessments will be designed to accurately measure the learning objectives of each course. They will provide reliable results that reflect students' actual abilities.

- **Feedback and Improvement**: Students will receive timely, constructive feedback that supports their growth. Feedback will focus not only on what students need to improve, but also on their strengths. To maintain consistency, teachers will use a standardised exam cover sheet to provide this feedback.

- **Continuous Monitoring**: Student progress will be continually monitored throughout the year through regular assessments, both formal and informal, results recorded on academic tracking platform and reviewed by Year-head.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Teachers**: Teachers are responsible for designing and implementing assessments, providing feedback, and ensuring assessments are aligned with learning objectives. Teachers will use assessment data to adjust teaching strategies and provide additional support where necessary. Serious underachievement, persistent failure, or continuous presentation of sub-standard work, taking the student's abilities into consideration, is

brought to the attention of the Year Head and the parents. Appropriate action is then taken by the various interested parties.

- **Subject Departments**: In so far as is possible common themed examinations are set at all levels and in all years. Teachers work together to ensure consistency in assessment, recording and reporting procedures.

- **Students**: Students are encouraged to engage actively in the assessment process by preparing adequately, participating in self- and peer-assessment, and using feedback to improve their learning. Students should use the Assessment/Test Result Tracker pages in the student journal to record their assessment scores across subjects. Parents/Guardians should check their child's journal weekly. The Assessment Tracking pages provide a source of educational dialogue between parent and child, and an opportunity for encouragement, praise, and motivation.

- **Parents/Guardians**: Parents and guardians will be kept informed of assessment outcomes through semester reports on the school's VSware communication platform and parent-teacher meetings. Parents are encouraged to support their child's learning and to be involved in discussions about progress.

- **School Leadership**: The school leadership team is responsible for the consistent implementation of assessment policies. They oversee the administration of formal semester tests and mock exams under exam-like conditions. Additionally, they ensure that assessment data is used to enhance teaching and learning. Leadership also plays a key role in supporting staff through professional development focused on assessment practices.

6. Assessment Methods and Tools

- **Written Examinations**: Standardised examinations will be used to assess knowledge and understanding in specific subject areas.

- **Oral Presentations and Projects**: Assessment through oral presentations, projects, and practical work to evaluate understanding and skills.

- **Portfolios**: Students will compile portfolios that demonstrate their learning journey, showcasing their best work and reflecting on their development.

- **Peer and Self-Assessment**: To promote reflective learning, students will engage in peer assessments and self-reflection, fostering skills in critical thinking and responsibility for their own learning.

7. Recording and Reporting of Assessment

- **Record Keeping**: Teachers will maintain accurate records of all assessments, both formative and summative.

- **Reporting**: Assessment results will be communicated to students and parents at regular intervals throughout the academic year through:

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- o   Semester reports (issued at the end of each semester)

- o   Parent-teacher meetings

- o   Junior and Leaving Certificate results

- o   Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement

- o   Informal feedback (via email or phone calls)

- **Analysis of Results**: Subject departments conduct an annual analysis of State Examination results. Once the SEC issues results for the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations, the Principal provides the results to the Subject Coordinators, who then disseminate them to the relevant teachers. Each Subject Department uses Professional Time/Croke Park Hours to meet, as soon as is practicable, to discuss the analysed results and trends in their subject(s). Teachers in each Subject Department compare their Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate results with the national average and examine trends in their subject results over a three-year period. The analysis of the results is recorded in the minutes of the Subject Department meetings and noted in the Subject Plan. Reflections and strategies for improvement within each Subject Department are discussed, agreed upon and documented. As good practice, teachers are encouraged to collaborate and reflect on the results, setting targets that may lead to incremental improvements where possible. Areas of effective and innovative practice should be identified and discussed to ensure these results are maintained. This information will inform school improvement plans.

- **Academic Tracking:** Teachers enter an Assessment Result on VSware for each student, at the end of each semester. The Academic Monitoring Coordinator transfers CAT 4 scores and semester results to the Athena Tracker software. The Software formulates a profile for each student indicating how they are progressing in their academic results. The software pinpoints a student's baseline potential and alerts teachers when a student falls below it. The software also highlights when a student is performing above their potential. The data is monitored, and teachers will expect that students will be broadly in line with the indicators arising from their CAT 4 scores. A report for parents can also be generated which can be used at Parent-teacher meetings. Year Heads play a key role in academic tracking and identifying students who may be struggling academically as well as those who are doing very well and following up in this regard. Year Heads and Subject Teachers provide appropriate feedback to students to help them reflect on their academic progress and set and monitor improvement targets.

- **Reasonable Accommodations**: For students with special educational needs, accommodations will be made in line with Department of Education guidelines, including extended time, oral exams, waivers, and assistive technology, where appropriate.

- **Differentiated Assessment**: Assessments will be designed and adapted to meet the needs of all students, ensuring that tasks are appropriately challenging for all levels, and based on student's identified needs

9. Assessment for Learning and Well-being

Assessment at Ballyhaunis Community School will not only focus on academic achievement but also on fostering a sense of well-being, self-confidence, and motivation in students. We aim to:

- Encourage a growth mindset, where students view challenges as opportunities to improve.

- Maintain a well-ordered, calm environment with clear schedules and advance notice of exam timetables to support student preparation.

- Promote positive attitudes towards learning and assessment by reducing anxiety and fostering resilience.

- Support the development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and time management.

10. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Referencing in SEC Coursework

Ballyhaunis Community School recognises that digital tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), are increasingly accessible to students and can support learning when used appropriately. This policy section outlines the school's expectations regarding the ethical use of AI tools and the requirements for referencing when completing coursework for the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

<u>Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)</u>

Students may use AI-based tools (for example, text generators, grammar checkers, summarising tools, or research support tools) to support learning, provided that such use aligns with the principles of academic honesty and the specific requirements of the relevant syllabus and assessment task.

<u>Acceptable uses of AI may include</u>:

- Supporting brainstorming or idea generation.

- Assisting with proofreading, spelling, grammar, and clarity.

- Helping to summarise information for revision or understanding.

- Supporting research by identifying potential sources or themes.

<u>Unacceptable uses of AI include</u>:

- Submitting AI-generated work, in whole or in part, as the student's own original work.

- Using AI to complete coursework tasks that are intended to assess the student's own knowledge, skills, analysis, or personal reflection.

- Using AI to bypass the learning process or assessment requirements.

- Failing to acknowledge the use of AI where it has materially informed or shaped the submitted work.

Students must be able to demonstrate ownership of their coursework and an understanding of all content submitted. Teachers may ask students to explain, discuss, or reflect on their work to verify authenticity. Misuse of AI may be treated as a breach of academic integrity and may be addressed in line with school procedures and SEC regulations. (Appendix 1 – Rules for the Use of AI in SEC Examination Coursework (Coursework Rules & Procedures 2025-2026))

Referencing in SEC Coursework

Referencing is a compulsory and essential element of State examination coursework. Students must clearly acknowledge all sources of information, ideas, data, images, or material that are not their own. This includes information obtained from:

- Books, newspapers, magazines, and journals.

- Government and professional reports.

- Online sources, including websites, videos, podcasts, and digital media.

- Specialist organisations and relevant individuals.

- AI tools, where applicable.

All sources used must be listed in a reference section, which is not included in the word count. Referencing should be sufficiently detailed to allow the reader to locate and verify the source, such as page numbers, chapters, website sections, or timestamps for audio-visual material.

Failure to reference sources appropriately constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious breach of examination regulations and may result in penalties, up to and including the withholding of results, in accordance with SEC rules. (Appendix 2: Guidelines for Referencing in SEC Coursework (2025–2026))

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of students to ensure that:

- All coursework submitted is their own work.

- All sources, including AI tools where relevant, are appropriately acknowledged.

- They comply fully with SEC regulations and school assessment policies.

Teachers will provide guidance on acceptable use of AI and correct referencing practices and will support students in developing ethical and responsible research skills.

11. Review and Evaluation of the Assessment Policy

The Assessment Policy forms part of the Whole School Improvement Plan; it is an active document and will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from students, parents, and staff will be gathered to make necessary improvements. The school

leadership team will oversee this process and ensure that any changes align with educational best practices and national guidelines.

12. Conclusion

Assessment is a central part of teaching and learning at Ballyhaunis Community School. By ensuring that assessment is fair, inclusive, and aligned with curriculum goals, we aim to create an environment where students are motivated to reach their full potential. Through ongoing feedback and reflection, students will be empowered to take responsibility for their learning and development.

Appendix 1 – Rules for the Use of AI in SEC Examination Coursework (Coursework Rules & Procedures 2025-2026)

Introduction

Where Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (including software and applications) are used in State examination coursework, it must be conducted in a responsible and ethical manner. This is essential to maintain academic integrity and ensure that candidates' work reflects their own understanding and efforts. AI tools should **not** be used to generate coursework content. However, AI tools may assist in generating ideas, conducting research, or enhancing clarity, provided its use is clearly documented, in the same manner that all research sources are treated in coursework.

These rules set out the acceptable use and appropriate acknowledgment of AI tools in coursework.

1. **(a) Ensuring the Authenticity of Candidates' work**

Authentic and individual work

Candidates are required to sign the Authentication Form P.2 confirming that all submitted coursework is their own authentic and individual work and is free from any unacknowledged AI tool assistance. The use of AI tools should only be used to enhance the candidate's own learning process and not to replace the candidate's role in creating the coursework.

Candidates should discuss the proposed use of any AI tools with their class teacher before they undertake their coursework.

Class Teacher oversight

Class teachers play a critical role in guiding candidates on the responsible use of AI tools in State examination coursework. The Department of Educations and Youth AI Guidance aims to support school leaders and teachers to develop an understanding and knowledge of relevant considerations regarding the use of AI in teaching and learning and school leadership. Through the coursework authentication process, teachers confirm that the coursework was completed in accordance with these rules and can verify that an AI tool has not been used to produce uncredited material.

1. **(b) Consequences for misuse of AI tools**

The misuse of AI tools, including their use to generate unacknowledged content, is **plagiarism** and constitutes a breach of regulations (see Section 15). Penalties for misuse will apply and may include loss of the marks for the coursework, loss of the subject, loss of the entire examination in all subjects, or being debarred from the certificate examinations in subsequent years.

2. **Permissible uses of AI tools in coursework**

AI tools may be used for specific purposes in coursework, such as:
• Gathering background information on a topic from credible sources.
• Structuring coursework plans.
• Clarifying research material.

Candidates must be able to critically evaluate any AI generated output for accuracy, bias, and reliability including hallucinations. (a response / output from AI resulting from faulty code that generates credible but factually incorrect, invented or logically flawed information).

3. **Prohibited use of AI tools in coursework**

   Candidate's coursework must reflect their own knowledge, skills and understanding of a subject. The inappropriate use of AI tools may undermine this outcome, and result in the coursework not being marked.

   Prohibited uses include but are not limited to:

   - Using one or more AI tools to generate coursework content, responses, or creative elements directly.
   - Copying or paraphrasing AI generated material. Any ideas, prompts, or suggestions derived from the use of AI tools must be explicitly acknowledged; however, candidates remain responsible for expressing these ideas in their own words and developing their own original work.

4. **Acknowledging the use of AI tools:**

   When to acknowledge the use of AI tools:

   The use of AI tools **must be acknowledged** whenever it has contributed to the development of ideas, research, or other aspects of coursework. This includes summarising information, brainstorming ideas and conducting research.

   Minimum acknowledgment requirements:

   The use of all AI tools must be documented in a dedicated section of the coursework, such as an appendix section. **The following details must be included**:

   - The name and version of the AI tool used (e.g., ChatGPT-3.5 or Microsoft Copilot, version GPT-4 etc.).
   - The developer or publisher of the AI tool (e.g., OpenAI or Microsoft).
   - The date the AI output was generated.
   - A brief description of how the AI tool was used (e.g., "Used to refine initial research notes" or "Summarised data findings").

   Referencing AI tools

   Where applicable, candidates must include the prompt(s) used to generate the output from the AI tool. If the tool generates a shareable URL or session link, this should also be included in the appendix.

   Marking material sourced from an AI tool:

   Any material generated by AI software will be treated in the same way as any other material that the candidate has not generated themselves. Including it without quoting it as the work of AI software will be considered plagiarism, which can result in the forfeit of all marks for the

coursework component. Where any material generated by AI software is included in a coursework submission and is properly quoted or referenced, no credit will be awarded for any of that material itself. Credit can only be awarded for the effective use of this material in the support or development of the candidate's

own work. This is the established practice that already applies to the inclusion of quoted material, (whether that be text, images, or other forms of material,) created by human authors.

5. Examples of appropriate acknowledgement for the use of AI tools

Example of AI use in coursework:	AI tool:	Developer:	Date of Use:	Purpose:
Brainstorming	ChatGPT-4	OpenAI	14 February 2025	Used to suggest possible project themes during the brainstorming stage. No text was copied; final ideas were refined and developed independently.
Clarifying information	Microsoft Copilot (GPT-4)	Microsoft	20 February 2025	Used to clarify the distinction between fiscal policy and monetary policy. Notes from the explanation were paraphrased into my own words.
Supporting research/data sources	ChatGPT-3.5	OpenAI	25 February 2025	Used to identify potential data sources relevant to climate change modelling. Sources were then independently checked and verified before inclusion in the coursework.

An example of good practice for the candidate when acknowledging the use of AI tools, could include documenting the question posed and the response generated by the AI tool in a screenshot for preparatory and reference purposes

6. Useful indicators in the identification of AI generated material

When engaging with coursework and for authentication purposes, class teachers are urged to use the same skills and techniques that they currently use to assure themselves that any homework, project work or coursework produced by a candidate is their own authentic work.

Where the submission is a written piece of work, below are some key characteristics of AI generated material:

• Spelling and the use of grammar and punctuation e.g. an unusually high level of accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar or a consistent use of Americanised spelling.

• The style and tone of the writing e.g. material which is written in a different style in terms of vocabulary and composition from previous work.

- The use of atypical vocabulary.
- The complexity and coherence of the material submitted,
  - Inconsistent order of material. The material may lack a natural flow to it.
  - Series of false starts or endings. This may indicate that an AI tool has been prompted to provide further information.
  - May lack clear evaluation of a subject, or evidence of a personal point of view throughout. Material that is generated by an AI tool, will generally be strong on evidence but will lack expression.
  - A lack of direct quotations. Some material generated through AI tools may include false references.
  - The lack of a visual aid/ graph or data table in the coursework, where it would be expected.
  - The content is generic and lacks specific knowledge.
  - The accidental inclusion of caveats produced by an AI tool e.g. Sentence that highlights the limit of an AI tool's ability to find information requested in the prompt.

It is expected that coursework will be carried out under the supervision of the class teacher, in the classroom as part of teaching and learning. Candidates should be encouraged to keep drafts of their coursework to demonstrate their project journey.

7. Summary of key points

- Candidates should be made aware of all rules and requirements regarding the completion, authentication and submission of coursework.

- Candidates **should not** use AI tools to directly generate coursework content.

- The use of AI tools by the candidate must be clearly acknowledged and with sufficient detail to verify its role.

- The use of AI tools must align with the overarching goal of ensuring candidate's work is

- authentic and reflective of their individual efforts.

- By adhering to these rules, candidates demonstrate academic integrity, engage in the responsible use of AI tools, and contribute to a fair and equitable educational environment for all.

Appendix 2 – Guidelines for referencing in SEC Coursework (Coursework Rules & Procedures 2025-2026)

(to be read in conjunction with the NCCA Guidelines to support the completion of AACs)

Referencing is an important aspect of the completion of State examination coursework to verify the information provided in the reference. It is the most appropriate way for candidates to acknowledge the source of any information, ideas, material, or images not their own which they have included in their coursework. Referencing allows candidates to provide evidence of the research they have engaged in, it helps to support and give weight to arguments and conclusions, and it can be used to demonstrate that different perspectives have been considered and explored by the candidate.

Candidates should provide the appropriate details of any sources they have used in the completion of their coursework in the reference section. Sources such as:

• books, newspapers, magazines.
• professional journals and government reports.
• online sources including videos, podcasts etc.
• material from specialist organisations and relevant individuals.

The reference section is not included in the word count. Comprehensive referencing helps to show that candidates have engaged in honest and ethical research practices and have avoided plagiarism. Referencing should be as specific as necessary to communicate the particular research source, such as a page number or chapter in a book, a section in a website, timestamp on a podcast or video etc.

Plagiarism occurs when work other than the candidates' own is used without clear acknowledgement of the source of the work, which is a serious offence. Direct copying of material from any source without proper acknowledgement is not permitted and may incur penalties, up to and including the withholding of related results.

How to reference different sources:

• When citing written sources or information in print, candidates should give the author's name, the title of the publication, year of publication, and, if necessary, the page number or chapter/section of the publication. For example:
– Book: (p. 57, McLeskey, 2013)
– Newspaper/magazine article: (Hearne, J., 30/08/2024)
• When referencing an internet site or online source, there should be enough accurate detail to enable the reader to authenticate the reference, including the hyperlink and date read or downloaded.
    For example:
– Text/image accessed online: (thelatinlibrary.com/101/RhetoricalDevices)
– Audio accessed online: (Ep. 10, rte.ie/radio/podcasts/22093250)
– Video accessed online: (3:20 to 5:45, youtu.be/yCv4iyPqZKQ)