Assessment Policy Gymnasium Bäumlihof

1. Introduction/Philosophy

The assessment of student work is one of the central aspects in school today. As our globalised society puts more and more emphasis on performance, achievement and comparability, schools must try to nurture knowledgeable, caring and confident learners whilst assessing their work according to their individual performances. At the Gymnasium Bäumlihof we realise that assessment and marking are mostly inexorably linked. This creates both opportunities and challenges.

At the Gymnasium Bäumlihof we realise that both assessment and marking are highly complex fields. We wish to react both sensitively in assessing student work whilst also sensitizing students about the possible pitfalls that marking can entail, such as endangering a healthy and positive atmosphere between teacher and student, enabling students to absolve themselves from responsibility, using marks as a means for putting pressure on a student or developing the viewpoint that receiving good marks is the sole aim of learning. We are therefore highly committed to the idea of focusing strongly on formative assessment, as we believe this is a key requirement for developing healthy attitude towards learning and towards summative assessment.

For more information the school's teaching philosophy, see *Special Educational Needs Policy Gymnasium Bäumlihof.*

2. Formative assessment

a) Aims

The aims of formative assessment are to

- improve students' learning by providing guided and continual feedback on their performance
- enhance their capacity to self-reflect on their own learning, the effectiveness of their study techniques and their learning behaviour
- form a basis for improvement relating to the students' learning behaviours
- provide feedback to the teachers about their teaching methods and understanding of the students in order to improve the teaching process.
- create positive atmosphere between the student, the subject matter and learning.
- guide the students to better understanding of their own behaviour and personality in order for them to maximise both their interest and motivation to learn.
- give the students confidence in their own ability by emphasising strengths, identifying weaknesses and offering solutions to any problems that should arise.

b) Coaching

In the GBplus system we have developed and implemented a system of coaching, which offers both the students and the teachers formative assessment. Every student has a personal coach with whom he/she has semi-regular meetings (usually every 2-3 weeks).

The aims of these sessions are...

For coaches to...

- support and foster the planning of the learning process
- gain a better understanding of individual students and consequently to be in contact with parents whenever issues arise
- identify whether students are over- or underworked and to suggest measures which can improve the situation
- make students aware of any challenges that might appear should the students' behaviour and learning style be disadvantageous
- be in contact with the other subject teachers in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the students so that any feedback given incorporates multiple perspectives

For students to...

- reflect on his/her behaviour during the past 1-2 weeks and to plan the next 1-2 weeks
- manage school life and free time so that neither is neglected
- recognise the importance of asking for feedback and help from their subject teachers
- reflect on previous performance in various subjects and work towards optimizing results

For coaches and students to...

- to discuss how the allotted individual learning time has been used in order to fulfil the goals set by the various teachers and to complete their assignments
- to identify problems and to address them appropriately
- formulate clear and sensible guidelines together
- reflect on the time since the last meeting and plan the following weeks together

Our coaching system should give students time to reflect and improve on their previous performances, both academically and socially.

3. Summative Assessment

a) Aims

We believe that the aim of summative assessment is for students to show their understanding, knowledge and skills on the tested subject matter and to receive a standardised feedback in the form of a number.

b) Forms

Summative assessment occurs in many different ways, including (but not limited to):

- Written exams
- Oral exams
- Oral presentations
- Research papers
- Discursive essays
- Portfolios, Posters, Videos

We believe we can assess students' knowledge of a subject matter more fairly if the forms of assessment are varied.

In order for there to be as little interference as possible between testing and learning, all exams in each phase of the GBplus system are held within the same week. We therefore alternate between 5-6 weeks of instruction and learning and one week of testing. The aims and curricular goals are communicated to the students at the beginning of each phase.

c) Grading

The students generate a fixed number of marks depending on the subject in the course of the school year to generate the final grade. These marks are generated through summative assessment, but can also be part of formative assessment. The marks given in the Swiss school system range from 1-6, 1 being the lowest and 6 being the highest mark; 4 is sufficient, whereas every mark under 4 is insufficient. For more detailed information see *d) Internal requirements* below.

The grades are reported to students and parents twice a year. Depending on the students' grade average, the coach or class teacher informs the parents to discuss further steps if they deem it necessary. *IB external assessments* (excluding the IB DP final exams) are also always internally assessed and generate a school mark with the Swiss marking scale; this is to reduce the already high workload for IB DP for students and to generate enough marks for the Swiss school system. The school has generated a tool to convert the IB grade of the externally assessed Extended Essay into a Swiss grade. All other *IB internal assessments* generate two different marks per assessment: one is generated with the IB marking scale and one with the Swiss marking scale.

It is the subject teacher's responsibility to reward the marks/grades according to their best judgement based on clear and transparent criteria. Through occasional collaborative assessment and marking, teachers receive feedback on their judgement. The analysis of assessment data is also implemented at our school and teachers marking results are discussed with the head annually.

Internal requirements

By law, only students can be accepted to the school who fulfil the grade requirements and who will have not reached more than 22 years of age at the point of their final exams.

Once a student is accepted, the official reporting takes place once a year with the grade report card being issued in June. Parents are informed about the students' achievement and progress by a provisional grade report card in the January. Coaches stay in regular contact with parents should students' behaviour or performance be an issue of concern. On request, individual meetings can be arranged at any time throughout the school year. Teachers record the assessment results electronically in our "Notentool"[1] on a regular basis.

The students' achievements in their various subjects are assessed with a final grade system from 1.0 to 6.0 (6.0 stands for an excellent performance; 4.0 is a pass). In order for students to pass the academic year they muss have an average of at least 4.0. Furthermore, their total of negative points (i.e. marks below 4.0; a 3.5 = 0.5 negative points) must not exceed half of their positive marks (i.e. marks above 4.0; a 5.5 = 1.5 positive points.

Sources:

Systematische Gesetzessammlung SG 410.700. Verordnung über die Beurteilung und die Schullaufbahnentscheide der Schülerinnen und Schüler der Volksschule und der weiterführenden Schulen (SLV). Fassung vom 11.9.19, wirksam seit 12.8.19, https://www.gesetzessammlung.bs.ch/app/de/texts_of_law/410.700

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1 This is an online database of students' grades.