

# OBE INFO

FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CURRICULUM SERVICES APRIL 2003

## RECORDING OF ASSESSMENT

A key issue in the phasing in of OBE throughout the system with its heavy reliance on the Continuous Assessment approach is the amount of administrative work it entails for the teacher in keeping adequate records as evidence of achievement. The administration of record keeping needs to be considered piecemeal as requirements differ sometimes even from grade to grade.

Before considering how records should be kept, it is important to have a clear focus on what competencies are expected from the learners, firstly in terms of Grades R to 9. What is it that we are really looking for? Unfortunately it is very easy to lose sight of the bigger picture, particularly when we are dealing with the 66 Specific Outcomes, very many assessment criteria and innumerable performance indicators that we find in the original policy document, and we end up being bogged down in detail and lose focus.

Although the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum is going to happen in gradual stages, the streamlined and strengthened version helps us to focus on what we really want to assess in each learning area. Let us consider the learning areas one by one.

### LANGUAGES:

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner communicate correctly, effectively and appropriately in inter-personal, social and wider contexts in a sympathetic and caring way** by demonstrating competency in:

- Listening and Speaking
- Reading and viewing, including accessing information
- Writing, both functional and creative
- Language structures and use and how language is used for thinking and reasoning?

The expected level of communication is determined by the grade.

### MATHEMATICS / MLMMS:

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner solve problems in every day life in a thorough, accurate and correct way as well as communicating** by demonstrating competence in:

- Numbers
- Patterns
- Space and shape
- Measurement
- Handling of data?

The expected level of problem solving and symbolic communication is determined by the grade.

### NATURAL SCIENCES:

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner research and solve scientific problems in everyday life in an ethical and responsible way** by demonstrating competence in:

- The conducting of scientific investigations (with appropriate context regarding content)
- The construction of scientific knowledge in the appropriate context and using available content knowledge

- Demonstrating the relationship between science, society and the environment?

The expected level of research and consequent problem solving is determined by the grade.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner solve technological problems in everyday life in an ethical and responsible way** by demonstrating competence in:

- The application of technological processes and skills ethically and responsibly (with appropriate context regarding content)
- The construction of technological knowledge in the appropriate context and using available content knowledge
- Demonstrating the relationship between technology, society and the environment?

The expected level of problem solving is determined by the grade.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES (HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY)**

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner accurately and scientifically investigate the past and the present and his / her physical and social relationship to the world around him / her** by demonstrating competence in:

- The skills of enquiry, including research into and critical analysis of sources
- Historical, geographic and environmental knowledge
- Decision making based on valid interpretations

The expected level of investigation and research is determined by the grade.

## **ARTS AND CULTURE**

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner show personal development and increased participation in the arts as a cultural process** by demonstrating competence in:

- Creating, interpreting and presenting visual arts, drama, dance and music to promote healing and nation building
- Reflecting critically on artistic and cultural processes, products and styles
- Communication as it relates to the arts?

The expected level of self-development and depth of creation, interpretation, presentation, reflection and communication is determined by the grade.

## **LIFE ORIENTATION**

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner manage himself or herself and the situation around himself / herself (can they cope) while developing values, skills and knowledge** by demonstrating:

- A commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities (including human rights issues)
- Decision making skills after acquisition of relevant knowledge (also in terms of career development)
- General life skills to extend personal potential
- An understanding of and participation in activities that promote movement and physical development
- An understanding of the needs of healthy living (including the understanding of HIV / AIDS)?

How fully the learner needs to cope with the demands of society is determined by the grade.

## **ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

We want to assess the following:

**Can the learner show development as an entrepreneur, a manager, a consumer and a creator of a more productive society** by demonstrating:

- Problem solving skills in terms of the economic cycle
- Critical understanding of economic processes
- Responsible application of managerial, consumer and financial skills
- Entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and knowledge?

The expected level of entrepreneurial, managerial and consumer development and overall contribution to an improving society is determined by the grade.

**What has been set out above is what really needs to be assessed in each learning area. Let us now consider the impact of this for each phase in terms of recording:**

## **FOUNDATION PHASE:**

Under the umbrella of the original version of C2005 and the 1997 Policy Documents, some officials and teachers felt that it was necessary for progress in each and every assessment criterion (all 300 plus) to be recorded. Teachers have been burdened with an enormous amount of recording and this has all but destroyed any possibility of anything happening in the classroom but an endless assessment process.

**TEACHERS MAY NO LONGER BE BURDENED BY SUCH AN IMMENSE LOAD!**

As the Revised Curriculum Statement is introduced in Foundation Phase from 2004, teachers should concentrate on assessing the broader issues mentioned in the summary above which are expressed by clusters of assessment standards.

The easiest way to do this is to have a rubric for each one of the relevant learning outcomes (this rubric will be constructed using the assessment standards for each grade). The teacher will regularly check against this rubric to see where the learner best fits at any moment in time (in other words, where the learner satisfies the most assessment standards). Individual assessment standards are used for the rubric and for setting relevant assessment tasks, but need not be agonised over individually for each learner.

The teacher will constantly ask questions such as the following:

- How far has the learner progressed with reading? How can I help?
- How well is the learner working with numbers? How can I help?
- Can the learner solve a simple scientific problem? How can I help?
- Can the learner solve a simple technological problem? How can I help?
- Can the learner ask questions about the past, or about the world around her?
- Is the learner participating better each day in the arts? How can this be encouraged?
- Can the learner manage himself / herself appropriately for Grade 1? What is still needed?
- Can the learner work simply with money? Does she know how to buy and sell?

As Literacy and Numeracy have more time allocated in the Foundation Phase, far more questions on each one of these learning programmes will need to be answered and thus recorded. The list above merely represents a typical question from each of the eight learning areas.

In general terms, questions which need to be asked are the following:

- Is the learner developing the values and attitudes appropriate for the different learning areas?
- Is the learner developing the required knowledge to cope in the different learning areas?
- Is the learner developing the necessary skills to manage the knowledge needed for the different learning areas?

**ANSWERS TO BROAD QUESTIONS SUCH AS THESE NEED TO BE RECORDED AS THEY WILL FORM THE BASIS OF REPORTING.**

## INTERMEDIATE PHASE

One of the present difficulties with assessment in the Intermediate Phase is the fact that there are only 5 learning programmes for 8 learning areas. The combination of different learning areas has caused different assessment approaches within one learning programme. **From next year (2004) we suggest that schools present 8 learning programmes in the Intermediate Phase and if they wish to phase this approach in from later this year they are welcome to do so. Time allocation as in the Senior Phase (Grade 7) should also be used for the Intermediate Phase.** Remember though that the former grouping of learning areas into learning programmes is a useful indicator of how integration could take place.

The Free State Province is fully in control of the assessment practices in the Intermediate Phase and as such, it is not required that progress in every assessment criterion should be recorded for each learner. There are schools where the whole process has been computerised and it is a much simpler matter for teachers to comment on each and every assessment criterion. Schools where this has evolved are welcome to continue. However, by the end of the process, all recording must be done against clusters of assessment criteria leading to the outcomes.

**SCHOOLS SHOULD STREAMLINE THEIR ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS AT THIS LEVEL AND CONCENTRATE ON THE BASICS REQUIRED (AS SET OUT IN THE SUMMARY FOR EACH LEARNING AREA GIVEN EARLIER)**

## SENIOR PHASE

### Grades 7 and 8

The same applies here as for the Intermediate Phase.

### Grade 9

The pilot for the Grade 9 Certificate, due to be written fully for the first time at the end of 2004 continues. Consequently, the moderation requirements and general CTA requirements that have been nationally agreed upon, continue. As this is a pilot, it is incumbent upon the teachers to point out what is reasonably manageable and what is not, particularly in terms of the required recording and general administration. This can be changed before the actual certificate is put in place.

Furthermore, a task team comprising of representatives of teachers' unions and departmental officials will soon be in place and representations can be made to this task team.

**IN AN OBE SITUATION, WE WANT MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT WITH THE MINIMUM OF ADMINISTRATION WITHOUT COMPROMISING STANDARDS.**

## THE FET BAND

### Grades 10 and 11

Prescripts here are governed by a nationally approved Continuous Assessment (CASS) system and provincially devised recording forms.

We are very aware that teachers are finding the completion of the required forms an onerous burden. Before we comment further on this, let us consider the basic principles governing the whole CASS approach:

- **Assessment must be continuous** – in other words, it happens more regularly than in the past. Naturally this change of necessity brings about more work for the teacher than in the past.
- **Evidence must be given of learners' work, managed in portfolio form. This portfolio represents 25% of the final assessment weighting and as such needs to be validated by internal and external moderation.** This evidence must be in line with what is expected at Grade 12 level (dictated in 6 subjects by national expectations for the subjects written nationally, not provincially), although this evidence is less than what is expected at Grade 12 level. **Remember, portfolios cannot always be in file form – expense must also be factored in – and it is unreasonable of principals to expect these portfolios to be such items of beauty that the teacher is forced to do them all herself. It is educationally vital that learners learn to manage their own work.**
- Once the portfolio principle has been established, smaller administrative issues surface – an index is needed, some form of division into different sections is needed etc. **These issues must become the responsibility of the learner.**
- The teacher needs a portfolio in which relevant data is kept, such as class lists, tests, memos, records of assessment given, etc. This has always been part of the work expected from teachers. This evidence can also be kept in mark books, etc. The point is, it must be available and verifiable.
- **The evidence contained in the portfolio as well as the portfolio itself needs to be assessed.** The most time-consuming aspect of this is the use of rubrics or criteria where the teacher has in the past used an holistic approach. **We recommend that in grades 10 and 11 the holistic approach be used as far as possible to cut down on time spent on assessment administration.**

## GRADE 12

The situation here is more complex than in grades 10 and 11. **There are subjects which have national common papers, and for these papers there are national requirements as far as the contents of the portfolios are concerned.** If learners and schools do not uphold these national requirements for the common papers (these requirements are the same for all the provinces) Umalusi, the national quality assurance body, will not accept the provincial marks awarded in these subjects. In 2001 and 2002, Umalusi was very happy with the Free State approach and was satisfied with provincial marks awarded.

Provincially, the Free State is governed by these national requirements and produces forms interpreting what is required in terms of quality assurance. In other words, the province may not deviate from the portfolio and continuous assessment requirements, but has the freedom to produce the forms required for recording the prescribed evidence.

For example, if the national requirement is 10 marks for 20 pieces of Homework in Mathematics during the year, the Free State must produce a form to record the evidence. We could produce a form which merely records a mark out of 20 for each learner, but if the quality assurer or indeed the learner's parents (remember, assessment must be transparent) want to know why Thabo got 10 and not 15, we must be able to answer by giving the criteria we used to decide on the mark. We cannot simply ascribe it to 'professional judgement' or even worse 'gut feeling'. So for all marks awarded we must have clearly defined criteria explaining exactly what the marks are awarded for. If we have these, it makes sense to use them to assess accurately in the first place. Unfortunately, this then becomes a slower and more tedious process.

This is the heart of the problem we have. As a result of this, teachers accuse the department of losing touch with reality not realising that this criterion based approach moves the system to the safer ground of objectivity and satisfies the national requirement of openness. However, the department has realised the problems the teachers are facing and thus the task teams for assessment are being convened.

**In the mean time, it is suggested that an holistic approach be used where possible without compromising standards or national requirements for common papers.**

**Teachers are also encouraged to phone the contact numbers below with any concrete suggestions or ways which work at your school to make assessment more manageable for all Free State teachers.**

**REMEMBER TO CONTACT 0832981119 OR 051 4055077 FOR ANY FURTHER CURRICULUM INFORMATION**

**DON'T FORGET TO PHONE 083298119 OR 4055077 FOR INFORMATION**



