

**Verdala International School
Policy Manual 2020
B4. Academic Ver 2.**

Table of Contents

4. BOARD POLICIES – ACADEMIC	2
4/1. CLASS SIZE	2
4/2. FIELD TRIP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	2
4/3. SCHOOL LEAVING DOCUMENTS	3
4/4. ADMISSIONS POLICY	5
4/5. INCLUSION POLICY (FORMALLY CALLED SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY)	9
4/6. ATTENDANCE POLICY	14
4/7. STANDARD SCHOOL YEAR	15
4/8. SUBSTITUTES	15
4/9. LANGUAGE POLICY	16
4/10. ASSESSMENT POLICY	24
4/11. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY (FORMALLY KNOWN AS ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY)	30
4/12. DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY	33
APPENDIX 1- ACADEMIC POLICY CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET (ALL DATES WRITTEN YEAR/ MONTH/ DAY)	36

4. Board Policies – Academic

4/1. Class Size

At Verdala International School, we provide a student-centred learning environment. In order to achieve this, the following guiding principles are considered:

- The learning environment will reflect our 21st Century learning goals
- Space is essential for learning, collaboration and inquiry
- Individualised attention empowers the student
- Actual class sizes may vary in accordance with subject requirements and learning spaces
- National classroom standards are met
- Health and safety are ensured
- A staff to student ratio of 1 to 8 or better will be ensured
- The maximum size of any class will be:
 - Pre-Kindergarten: 16 students
 - Kindergarten: 18 students
 - Grades 1-12: 20 students
- At any grade level, classes may exceed the maximum limit with Board approval on the grounds of compelling educational need only.

Amended – 06/12/2016

4/2. Field Trip Policies and Procedures

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS (including Gozo)

Policies:-

- a) field trips are to be educational in nature and germane to the course of study as well as suitable to the age level of those students attending the trip.
- b) in a manner deemed appropriate by the teacher, students will demonstrate that they understood the relevance of the field trip to the course of study. Teachers will conduct a meaningful follow-up exercise with students to ensure that the students have understood the relevance of the field trip to the course of study and the stated objectives of the field trip.
- c) the safety of all students participating in the field trip should be the first priority of those staff organizing the trip.
- d) Staff to Student ratios:
 - a. All field trips (PK-12), regardless of the number of students, shall have at least two supervisors.
 - b. Overnight trips or events must include at least one male and one female supervisor.
 - c. PK-5 staff to student ratio at least 1:8.
6-12: staff to student ratio at least 1: 15
 - d. Water activities: 1:6 at the Elementary level and 1: 8 at the Secondary level.

- e) There must be one staff member present who is first aid certified.
- f) All trips require a well-stocked first aid kit
- g) Child Protection: The school should have a copy of all supervisors' police check
- h) If more than one bus is required, a member of staff travels on each bus

Procedures:-

- a) teachers submit a study trip request form to their principal.
- b) the request form is then submitted to the Head of School for final approval.
- c) if final approval for the trip is given, the the ASA Coordinator then arranges the necessary transport and supports the teacher to arrange necessary details.
- d) classroom teachers, with the support of the ASA Coordinator, will send parent permissions forms home with the appropriate students for parental signature. All students must have a permission slip signed by their parent/guardian and returned to their teacher in order to be able to participate in the field trip. Any student who does not have parental permission to participate in the field trip will stay at school and given appropriate activities related to the course of study.

2. INTERNATIONAL FIELD TRIPS: Secondary (grade 6-12) students only.

In addition to all of the policy and procedural requirements set forth under the 'Local Field Trip' section, staff members requesting to take an international field trip must submit a planned itinerary and rationale for the trip to the Head of School for presentation to, and approval by the Board of Directors at least two months prior to the proposed date of the trip.

- A. There must be at least two staff members (preferable one male and one female) accompanying the students.
- B. The ratio of staff members to students must be at least 1:8.
- C. Both staff members must be first aid certified.
- D. Students will be required to purchase travel insurance which will cover medical care and evacuation, lost luggage, and trip cancellation.
- E. For trips outside of the EU, the VIS insurance carrier must be notified and the trip added to the VIS policy coverage.

3. TIME NOTICE FOR FIELD TRIPS

Sufficient notice must be given to parents by those organizing trips:

- a) On Island trips during the day are covered by the 'blanket' approval system. Parents must, however, be notified at least 7 days prior to the trip taking place.
- b) On Island trips that involve an overnight stay require parental approval at least 2 weeks prior to the trip taking place.
- c) Off Island trips require Board approval 2 months prior to departure in principle, and will include the full details of the trip, including itinerary and costs.

Amended 17/10/2016

4/3. School Leaving Documents

High School Diploma Requirements

The VIS High School Diploma is a minimum requirement for entry into university education. All courses studied from Grade 9 onwards count towards the VIS HS Diploma. Where students transfer to VIS at a later stage (i.e. after the first semester of Grade 9) their previous records are considered towards their VIS HS Diploma, as detailed below.

The VIS HS Diploma is awarded to students at the end of Grade 12, subject to them meeting the credit and attendance requirements. Credits are awarded for each semester of study, according to the following system:

Grade 9-10 courses: A minimum of a D on the Semester Report

Grade 11-12 courses: A minimum of a 3 on the Semester Report (D in the case of TOK or EE)

Assuming the student has achieved the minimum level of performance required, credits are awarded as follows:

Year	Course	Credits per semester	Max credits possible
9 & 10	English & Science	0.75	3
	All other courses	0.5	2
11 & 12	Per HL subject	0.75	3
	Per SL subject	0.5	2
	TOK	0.25	1
	EE	0.25	0.5
	CAS	1 credit is awarded for successful completion of CAS at the end of Grade 12	

Credit Requirement

There are two factors – certain course prerequisites, and the total number of credits.

Course Prerequisites

In order to graduate, students must obtain minimum numbers of credits in certain courses, as follows:

Course	Minimum credits
English	4
Additional Language	2
Humanities	3
Science	3
Mathematics	3
Physical Education/Arts	2
CAS	1

Required number of credits

A High School Diploma is awarded to all students who achieve at least 24 credits and who meet the prerequisite course minimum credit requirements.

Recuperating Lost Credits

Students who lose a credit in a particular course can recuperate this credit by passing the external examinations at the end of that course. “Passing” is defined as obtaining the required minimum grade of a D or a 3.

If the credit is successfully recuperated, the student will be awarded the credits, however the original grade earned will still appear on the transcript.

Students in Grade 12 who need to pass IB DP examinations in order to recuperate lost credits will have to wait until the results are issued in early July before their graduation can be confirmed.

Attendance Requirement

At VIS we believe that learning is about more than just academic performance. Students at VIS are expected to participate in and take advantage of the range of opportunities available and we believe that learning does not take place to the level we expect if students are absent from school.

Therefore, in order for a student to be awarded credits for a semester, they are expected to have at least a 90% attendance rate. In practical terms, this translates into

- Students must have no more than 10 absences per semester and no more than 18 per academic year.

What counts as an Absence

Absences which are considered beyond a student’s control are exempted and do not count towards a student’s total number of absences, e.g.

- Medical (when supported by a parent note for 1 or 2 days’ absence, or doctor’s note in the case of 3 or more days of absence)
- External procedural requirements which must be completed during school time, e.g. visa paperwork. A parental note must be submitted.

All other absences, whether Excused or Unexcused, count towards the total number of Absences. Where a student’s recorded absences exceed the rate of 10 per semester or 18 per year, we will consider the justifications provided for those which have been considered Excused. In this case, the decision as to whether to grant the credits will be taken by the Principal in conjunction with the Head of School.

Awarding credit for courses from previous schools

Where a student transfers to VIS at a later stage (i.e. after the first semester of Grade 9) their previous records are considered towards their VIS HS Diploma. Credits will be awarded for courses similar to those taken in the corresponding VIS semester. Up to 4 credits per semester, or 8 per academic year, will be counted towards the required number of credits for graduation from VIS.

Revised 23/10/2017

** Note for 2018 BOD Manual – Order of 4/3 – 4/7 has changed from 2014-2016 Version 4/4 and 4/7 Admissions Standards and Admissions/Grade Placements merged one revised policy, and anti-discrimination policy inserted.*

4/4. Admissions Policy

Standards of Admissions

Admission to Verdala International School shall be open to elementary and secondary level students of any gender, nationality, creed and ethnicity.

VIS seeks to enroll students who will:

- Embrace the VIS Vision and Student Profile, and school ethos.
- Be positive and contributing members of a diverse international community.
- Embrace the academic programs which we offer.
- Have the requisite academic and English language skills.
- Embrace the arts, physical activity and community service.
- Honour the school's behavioral policies and behavioral expectations.

VIS expects families and guardians to support and actively engage with the School's Vision, Mission, Guiding Statements, and school ethos. Parents will be required to annually sign the Parent Code of Conduct.

Applications Procedures

Admission enquiries and applications are only accepted through VIS's Open Apply portal, available through the school's website. All relevant documentation must be submitted through this portal as outlined below; further documentation may be required at the discretion of the school. All documentation must be provided in English; translations must be certified by a recognised authority.

The following documentation must be provided:

- Grade reports, transcripts, and/or other records from previous schools.
- Recommendations from teachers and/or principals from previous schools.
- Educational psychologist reports or any other report pertaining to an applicant's individual needs e.g. learning, behavioral, emotional, medical.

Failure to provide documentation or disclose any individual needs as required may jeopardise the application process, or enrolment.

Preference is given to US Embassy children. However, all student applications take into consideration the following factors:

- best meet the student characteristics listed above.
- already have siblings enrolled at the School;
- have parents employed at Diplomatic Missions, European Commission bodies and any associated organizations located in Malta;
- are transferring from other International or American Schools or are transferring from schools where the medium of instruction is English;
- face compelling extenuating circumstances
- are children of the Head of School, Principals or teachers employed at the School as per the Fees for Staff Dependents Policy
- other aspects to ensure an appropriate balance within the year group.
- School Policies:
 - Class Size Policy
 - Special Educational Needs Policy
 - Language Policy

Admissions Process

Upon receipt of application, parents are informed about actual placement availability and offered to wait list if the class is full. For the application to be considered further, parents are required to pay the administration fee.

Applicants are considered for admittance as spaces become available. Each application is considered in light of the range of factors outlined above and at the discretion of the admissions team to determine the ability of the student to perform satisfactorily in that grade level or programme.

The following will be part of the process:

- Admissions assessments
- Interviews with the parent/guardian(s) and student
- EAL or SEN needs reviewed
- If required, a trial day in school

Students will normally be placed in accordance with their age on August 31, as per the table outlined in the Admissions documentation.

If a place is offered the Head of School will sign off on the offer letter which will outline the necessary financial obligations and a starting date (which will be at least two full working days after the financial obligations or any other requirements have been met). All registration fees must be paid in accordance with the conditions outlined in the offer letter. All financial obligations must be met before the student starts school.

Vaccination Policy

As part of our admission process, parents/guardians must submit the prospective student's vaccination records/documents. All students are required to have the minimum (all up to date) number of vaccinations required by the Maltese Legislation.

These legally required vaccinations as per the Prevention of Disease Ordinance (CAP 36 - article 57) are as follows:

- 3 doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio for all children.
- 1 dose of Rubella for all girls by the age of 13 years old.

VIS admissions has the right to refuse any application based on their inability to provide a copy of the vaccination document. As a school, we have the obligation to provide a report to the Department of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention stating the immunisation status of our newly admitted students.

Admissions to the Grade 11 & 12 Programme

In Grade 11 & 12 we offer the IB Diploma or IB Career-related programme and the VIS High School Diploma, equivalent to a US High School Diploma. All students admitted to Grade 11 will normally be expected to be eligible for the VIS HS Diploma. The school counsels all students in regards to their suitability for either the IBDP or IBCP course, as long they demonstrate the potential to be successful within either programme.

Various factors including prior academic performance are used as benchmarks to determine the likelihood of a student being able to meet the demands of the IBDP. For further details, see the IB DP Programme Performance Expectations, found in the VIS IBDP Handbook.

The IBCP is outlined in the VIS IBCP Handbook, as an alternative pathway for students who wish to pursue a more focused vocational course.

Conditional and Probationary Acceptances

There are cases in which a conditional or probationary offer of a place at the school may be made. These may include:

- Unclear educational backgrounds
- Insufficient documentation
- Learning, emotional, medical and behavioral details, including also EAL
- Mid-year transfers

When a conditional or probationary offer is made, the terms would be clearly outlined in the offer letter, including the review date.

Admission & Re-enrollment Restrictions

Admission/Re-enrollment will be restricted in that the School shall not admit students:

- to Pre-Kindergarten 1 who are not at least 3 years old by 31st August of the School year of entry; or to Pre-Kindergarten 2 who are not at least 4 years old by 31st August of the school year of entry.
- who will be over the age of 20 upon completion of studies
- who have learning, emotional, medical and behavioral details, including also EAL needs for which the school is not equipped which may include: physical, neurological, and/or psychological/emotional disorders (see SEN Policy)
- who have inadequacies in English which would preclude the student from studying in classes during the last two years of High School – grades 11 and 12. (See Language Policy)
- who desire to transfer from other schools, or who wish to return to VIS, who have not done well in these schools (either academically, behaviorally, socially) unless testing and interviews result in evidence of a strong potential for success.

Repeating students

The school reserves the right, after ongoing communication with parents, to require a student to repeat the grade if it is in the student's best interest for academic, social or emotional reasons.

Conditional enrollment

Conditional re-enrollment may be offered to students

- who fail to meet academic or behavioral standards.
- who fail to meet minimum attendance expectations as outlined in section handbooks

Readmission of students

Students who are readmitted after a period away will not be charged the registration fee if they have been away no longer than one year. Students who are readmitted after more than one year shall pay the full registration fee as per the Registration Fee policy.

Disenrollment

After school personnel have made best efforts to remediate problems, and after ongoing communication with parents, enrollment shall be revoked for any of the following reasons:

- Family provided inaccurate or incomplete information on the admissions application or as part of the application process.
- Student exhibits challenges and individual needs which the school cannot address
- Failure to meet academic, behavioral or attendance standards
- Failure to meet financial obligations to the school
- Parents do not respond to requests or recommendations from school personnel: i.e. attendance at meetings with staff, recommended counseling and testing, etc.

Exit Processes

Parents are expected to advise the school by a certain date of their intention to leave the school. Failure to abide by this expectation will result in retention of any deposit paid.

Data Protection

By submitting an application to the school, the parents/guardians are hereby giving their consent to Verdala International School to process data about the applicant for the purpose of admitting the applicant to the School. This data may also be shared internally at any time throughout their enrolment at the school for the purpose of supporting the applicant's education. VIS shall not use said data for any other purpose prior to receiving a fresh specific consent from the parents/guardians. Please refer to the VIS GDPR Policy Chapter for further GDPR details.

The school keeps documentation and provides references (subject to consent from the alumni or family in the case of a minor) up to 7 years beyond the student's departure from the school.

Reviewed: May 2018

Updated June 2019

Updated: January 2021

Next review date: January 2023

4/5. Inclusion Policy (formally called Special Needs Policy)

Access to Learning

As a non-selective school our aim is to ensure that all students are respected in an inclusive community fostered and supported within our school. We aim to provide a structure and system that can support individual needs within the parameters of our school resources.

We believe that the every student needs to experience success. Therefore, modification and differentiation techniques provide our students with equal opportunities to learning.

Modifications are implemented when the curriculum is either beyond the student's level of ability or when the student has already conquered such expectations. Modifications are made to the

curriculum in order for the VIS student to be a participant in the mainstream class. Such modifications may be implemented on:

- Content level
- Instructional level
- Performance/assessment criteria

Modifications at VIS are likely to be implemented as determined by the Individual Education Plan (IEP) or by the student's educational team.

Accommodations regulate the way a student at VIS gains access to information and learning within the same curricular expectations. These may include changes such as in presentation designs, instructional strategies or diverse differentiated techniques during lesson time, applied assistive technology and other resources that are deemed necessary to enhance the individual student's learning.

Admissions

As per the Admissions Policy, the Inclusion Coordinator (INCo) will vet all files and any students with potential, identified areas of needs. Any of the following options can be applied as relevant

- interview the student and family for further clarification on any concerns highlighted
- refer for further psychoeducational assessment
- create a provision plan as necessary

When necessary and for the best interest of the student, past reports may be requested and previous schools may be contacted for further information.

The above options are not exhaustive please refer to the Admissions Policy.

Standards

1. Wherever possible VIS will make every effort to facilitate parental efforts to obtain assessments of their child.
2. Wherever possible VIS staff will meet with outside professionals and make every effort to coordinate with them over a child's requirements.
3. Should the result of an assessment mean a child requires individual learning support in the classroom, the school will meet with the parents and discuss the appointment of a Learning Support Educator (LSE). During such a process the funding for the services of the LSE will be determined.
4. The norm is for two LSEs per year group, however under exceptional circumstances, the number of LSEs may extend to three per year group as determined by the Leadership Team (LT), INCo and teacher(s) through an evaluative process. In such cases, the needs & dynamics of the whole year group will be taken into consideration by the team.
5. The school may make an assessment a prerequisite of the child remaining in the school. VIS does not fund such assessments. The school will set a timeframe in which the assessment is to be carried out. As a condition of continued enrolment, parents must meet this timeframe. The School will coordinate with and implement, where possible, the recommendations.
6. Inclusive assessment arrangements are in place wherever necessary throughout all programmes to ensure students are able to access the curriculum.

Identification Process and Tracking Progress

Students who are not making expected progress and/or are struggling within the mainstream class are brought to the attention of the INCo. Such difficulties may be related to learning but also concerns may be raised that are linked to behaviour, emotional and social domains.

The INCo may determine that observations take place and when necessary evaluative, diagnostic assessments may be conducted. In general, concerns and provision plans are then raised and shared with parents/Legal Guardians in a meeting.

IPC, IMYC, IGCSE, IBDP, IBCP Curriculum

- All programmes focus on the students' learner profile and ensure that the approaches to teaching and learning skills (ATLs) are aligned with the learning outcomes of the programmes offered within the three sections of the school.
- All students are encouraged to take decisions about their learning, in order for them to take responsibility for their learning journey whilst providing them with the opportunity to develop an understanding of themselves as learners.
- VIS supports access for students to all programmes offered.

Statementing

The statementing process is managed by the Statementing Moderating Panel (SMP) which is appointed by the Maltese Minister of Education. The panel runs an assessment of the required support by the student to make sure that the student's needs are being met.

The INCo attends the board hearing upon the invite from the SMP. The INCo (or a representative of the school) together with the parents are part of the panel for the particular student with individual needs. During the panel's hearing, the parents, student, and professionals discuss the concerns met by the school and are presented to the panel. This will help determine the level of educational support required by the student. Periodic reviews of students' statements can take place.

The Application Process for the Statementing Moderating Panel takes place in the following manner:

- The INCo in liaison with the Principal and teacher/s, discusses with the parents/guardians what level of support or provision can be offered at VIS to the student with an individual needs.
- The INCo refers parents to the SMP when it is felt that added support other than the school can provide, is required.
- An application is filled with attached copies of reports to the SMP.

The Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

The IEP document contains diagnosis or assessment information, observation data and whether the student benefits from mainstream curriculum or not. The document also holds other relevant information such as what other areas of concern are observed e.g. behavioural, social, emotional etc.

The IEP document spells out the annual goals of the student and how progress will be measured. The document will describe the short term goals or steps to reach the annual goal. The IEP will hold information [but not exclusive to] such as:

- changes made to the curriculum and instructional methods
- assistive technology

- behaviour plans
- other related services
- types of assessment
- transition

An IEP conference is held so that the above information is accessible and discussed with the IEP team i.e. all stakeholders. Reviews are held quarterly.

Roles and Responsibilities

Inclusion Coordinator (INCo)

The main role of the INCo is to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of this policy and related actions, thus providing equitable access to a relevant curriculum for students with individual needs. This role includes the following:

- Overseeing the formulation, implementation and review of IEPs for students with individual needs;
- Accessing and regularly monitoring the records of students with individual needs;
- Ensuring the coordination of the provision of special examination arrangements (mainly internal testing and examinations, NWEA MAP testing, IGCSEs and IBDP);
- Coordinating and liaising with LSEs assigned to students with individual needs;
- Liaising, advising and collaborating with parents/legal guardians of students with individual needs.
- Liaising with staff, multidisciplinary teams and external agencies, who are in contact with students with Individual needs;
- Ensuring that students with IENs are encouraged to develop autonomy and where possible to begin to take responsibility of their own learning;
- Recommending and liaising with the LT on the procurement and management of resources.
- Coordinating professional development opportunities related to individual needs for staff in particular for LSEs;
- Ensuring that a proper transition process is implemented before moving from VIS to another institution or from one section to another and participating in the development of such transition programmes, where applicable;
- The INCo may refer families to specific professionals as part of the assessment process. Parents are at liberty to select other avenues of assessment but are required to inform the INCo of this.

Teachers

- Teachers will promote a class and school environment that supports and celebrates inclusion.
- Teachers are responsible for implementing any IEPs, modifications, adaptations and differentiation in collaboration with LSEs/Teacher Assistants /INCo as necessary.
- Collaboration with INCo and LSEs as well as other teachers and stakeholder for the curriculum planning will take place as necessary.
- Teachers are involved in evaluation and assessment processes as well as Mapping Action Planning sessions, IEPs, Parent meetings.
- Teachers may, on the basis of behaviour or educational attainment level, believe that a child warrants assessment. In such cases the teacher is required to inform the INCo and Section Principal.

- Teachers will participate in professional development as and when needed, on inclusion and differentiated learning in order to inform themselves for any modifications or improvements for future planning.
- Grade level teachers will abide by the referral process system when there are concerns regarding a student. The INCo determines whether observations or an evaluative process needs to be carried out before such concerns are communicated to the parents.

Learning Support Educators (LSEs)

The responsibilities of the Learning Support Educator employed at VIS include the following:

- Supporting and collaborating with the class teacher and other colleagues. With advice and guidance from the teacher, the LSE will assist in the education of all pupils, however giving priority to pupils with special educational needs in order to make sure that their needs are being addressed.
- Participating fully in Making Action Plans sessions (MAPs), which happen before the start of the scholastic year.
- The LSE will participate in and attend IEP conferences. Together with the INCo, class teacher and any other professionals, the LSE will develop and implement an IEP.
- Under the guidance of the INCo, the LSE will write the IEP document for the student with a statement, or the student(s) supported by the LSE.
- The LSE will adapt and/or differentiate lesson plans and resources as necessary and as required by the IEP.
- The LSE will assist in the preparation of educational materials and play an active part in all the components of the instructional and educational process in class under the direction of the class teacher.
- In collaboration with the INCo and class teacher, the LSE will participate in the observation, assessment and documentation process of the performance and behaviour of students.
- The LSE will promote an inclusive community of learners, in collaboration with the INCo, specialists, resource workers, teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders, where all students are valued and respected. This includes collaborative work in school and with other agencies, such as the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU), Resource Centres, NGOs and other educational and therapeutic organisations.
- Promoting at all times the aims, ethos and policies of the school.

Teaching Assistants (TA)

The TA's role is to support the whole class however TAs can also support small groups of students and work with them on a specific area such as literacy and numeracy. Such groups may include children with individual needs.

It is imperative to note however that TAs are not assigned to support one specific student for an extended period of time during the school day.

The TA should be aware of the role of the teacher and provide support as necessary.

Outside services

The school may reserve the right to refer students to outside services such as but not limited to Speech and Language Pathology, Occupational services, Psychological Assessment and therapeutic support. In such cases, the parents will always be consulted.

Re-endorsed – 29/11/2001

Amended – 28th November 2007
Revised 4 June 2018
Updated Jan 2021

4/6. Attendance Policy

Attendance Philosophy

At VIS we believe that learning is about more than just academic performance. Students at VIS are expected to participate in and take advantage of the range of academic and other opportunities offered by the school and we believe that learning does not take place to the level we expect if students are absent from school.

VIS therefore emphasises the important of attendance, requiring that students maintain at least a 90% attendance rate, and recognises that any student with more than 10 absences in any semester and/or more than 18 in total may not be promoted to the next grade at the end of the school year. For students in Grades 9-12, they may be denied VIS High School Graduation Diploma credits for that semester.

In recognition of the significance of regular attendance, VIS distinguishes between **Excused** and **Absent**.

Excused

Excused absences are those which are considered beyond a student's or families' control. Some examples of acceptable excuses would be:

- External procedural requirements which must be completed during school time, e.g. visa paperwork, visiting new school. A parental note must be submitted in advance.
- Bereavement leave.
- Medical (when supported by a parent note for 1 or 2 days' absence, or medical certificate in the case of 3 or more days of absence)
 - Note that when the absence coincides with the deadline for a Summative Assessment task a medical certificate will always be required even for a one-day absence - see the Assessment Policy for details.
- Participation in an externally organised event, e.g. a sports competition, music recital.
- Suspension
- at the Principal's discretion: other similar reasons beyond the parental control.

Please note that these may be recorded using various categories in ManageBac.

Absent

Any absence not covered above will be recorded as **Absent**, including vacation- or travel-related absences during school days.

Lateness

Students are expected to be punctual for all obligations. Repeated or persistent lack of punctuality is treated as a disciplinary issue.

Missed work

It is the student's responsibility to catch up on missed work, including all assessments. It is at the teacher's discretion to allocate extra time to support them.

If the student is **Absent**, it is their responsibility to catch up on missed work. The school is not obliged to provide work in such cases.

If the student is **Excused**, the school will support their learning in their absence as far as possible.

Students are expected to liaise with their teachers ahead of any pre-planned *Excused* absence to make appropriate arrangements to take the assessment in advance, or for the teacher to reschedule it for all students.

Consequences of excessive absences

All absences, whether *Excused* or *Absent*, count towards a student's total number of absences. Where a student's absences exceed the rate of 10 per semester or 18 per year, the reasons for any Excused absences will be taken into consideration when determining whether to promote to the next grade/award the credits. In the case of IBDP students, attendance per subject may also influence this decision. This decision will be taken by the Principal in conjunction with the Head of School.

Re-endorsed – 25/10/2001
Revised Sep 10 2018

4/7. Standard School Year

An annual school calendar will be developed by the Head of School with input from the faculty and approval by the Board. It will contain at least 175 school days (including half days associated with vacation periods) plus sufficient staff work/in-service days to meet the needs and goals of the School.

4/8. Substitutes

For a number of reasons, it may be necessary that a teacher be absent from his/her teaching post for varying lengths of time. It is the policy of the School that at no time should an absence occur without some form of responsible supervision and coverage. Depending on the circumstances of the absence, coverage should be arranged in the following manner:

1. absences of up to a full day – a fellow member of staff may be called upon to provide coverage.
2. absences of more than one day – provided that sufficient warning is given, an attempt will be made to secure the assistance of a substitute teacher.

The Head of School will develop and maintain a list of teacher substitutes to include Maltese and expatriate members of the community. In the case of absence the Head of School shall secure the

services of the individual who is best qualified to substitute for the teacher. Individuals legally permitted to work in Malta shall be compensated for their services at the established substitute rate. Any individuals not permitted to work in Malta shall be asked to volunteer their services and will be compensated for transportation and expenses associated with the payment of babysitters, housekeepers etc.

4/9. Language Policy

Language Philosophy

At Verdala International School (VIS), we believe that it is important to foster multilingualism and intercultural understanding within the increasing diversity of our international community.

We recognise the role of language in maintaining and developing personal and cultural identity as well as in developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

We aim to develop English as the common language of communication and academics, and we support the acquisition of other languages. At the same time, we also aim to honour the host country language and to actively encourage the development of the Mother Tongue.

We believe that it is the responsibility of all members of the VIS community to actively support and engage with this philosophy.

Language Profile

VIS caters to both national and international students, with over 40 nationalities present amongst the students, parents and staff. The vast majority of students are proficient in at least two languages and have previously attended English-language schools.

Practices

VIS values all language backgrounds and recognizes their contributions to the school language fabric.

The English language is an international language and its use as the school's medium of instruction contributes to students' future academic opportunities. Students learn through the English language and about the English language in their classrooms. Every classroom teacher is essentially a language teacher.

Families are actively encouraged to continue with the support and development of their Mother Tongue with their children. A strong Mother Tongue foundation facilitates the acquisition of additional languages and is key to cognitive and academic success.

Our whole school language practices at VIS are outlined below, organised into six main sections:

1. [English Language and Literature/Literature](#)
2. [English Language Acquisition](#)
3. [Language Acquisition \(Language B\)](#)
4. [Mother Tongue Support](#)
5. [Host Country Language and Culture](#)
6. [Non-Language Subjects](#)

Upon application to Verdala, every student will complete a [Student Language Profile](#).

Elementary

The English of students entering the Elementary school for whom English is not their Mother Tongue is assessed through parental intake information, the Student Language Profile and informal supportive assessment.

Secondary

Students in Secondary who are not native English speakers will take an internationally recognized CEFR-aligned English placement test. The language profile will be used in conjunction with other admission information and academic records to place students in the appropriate language classes. Placement in all language classes will be determined by a committee of language teachers.

Language classes

Students are expected to study a minimum of two languages at VIS:

- All students study English Language & Literature or English Acquisition.
- An additional language:
 - From Kindergarten to Grade 5, students are introduced to the learning of a foreign language through Spanish.
 - From Grades 6-10, students study a Language Acquisition course (French, Italian, Spanish).
 - Grades 11 & 12
 - From Grade 11 onwards, students can instead opt to study their Mother Tongue through the IBDP/IBCP School Supported Self-Taught (SSST) Language A: Literature SL Course.
 - IBCP Students are required to take the Language Development course as part of their IBCP Diploma

English Language and Literature/Literature

Elementary

Our learning goals identify both the technical and the developmental aspects of Language Arts. These relate to children's ability to use speaking, listening and writing as means of communication and reading as a means of research and pleasure. The English Language Arts Programme intends to develop the learner's ability to read with comprehension, to write with clarity and accuracy, and to grow in their appreciation of literature within the context of various genres. As a programme, it provides for differentiated learning to accommodate the various levels of student ability. The English Language Arts Programme in the Elementary section is inclusive with all students participating, regardless of Mother Tongue.

Secondary

English Language & Literature/Literature is an integrated course throughout Secondary. English teaching in Secondary strives to develop a love for and understanding of English language and literature.

Practices

- Following the IMYC Language Arts Curriculum, middle school students read and analyze a variety of texts with the intention of learning and appreciating authors' literary devices.

Written tasks include the study of techniques, proofreading and editing with an emphasis on grammar, sentence construction and spelling. Oral skills are taught in order for students to learn how to address different audiences for a variety of purposes.

- IGCSE English seeks to develop academic communication skills and cultural literacy through the focus on language, and the function of context, audience and purpose in literary and non-literary texts.
- The IBDP Language and Literature/Literature course aims to develop skills of textual analysis and the understanding that texts reflect the culture from which they come. An understanding of the ways in which formal linguistic elements are used to create meaning in a text is combined with an exploration of how meaning is affected by culture.

English Language Acquisition (ELA)

The full scope of Language Acquisition services is thoroughly covered in "[English Language Support - Scope of Services](#)" and "[English Acquisition Transition Years](#)". However, it is strongly recommended that students entering grades 3 – 5 have an A2 level according to the European Union Framework. Verdala reserves the right to decline entry if appropriate language support is not available within the school at the time of application."

Elementary

The English Language Support Programme (ELS) provides extended time for working on the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing). The emphasis is on enhancing students communicative skills and their confidence with academic language.

English Acquisition Practices

- The Elementary School has open enrollment and inclusive policy but reserves the right to decline acceptance if adequate language support is not available at the time of enrolment for a student. Entry queries are for placement purposes and will be assessed individually. Entry queries are for placement purposes.
- New students will be assessed for placement through a [Student Language Profile](#), a parental interview and a student interview with an ELA specialist. Further placement tests may be used if required.
- Current students can be [referred to ELS by classroom teachers](#).
- All of the English Language Learners (ELL) are monitored formatively in close conjunction and cooperation with their classroom teachers. The decision for [exit from ELS](#) is based on their development in the four language domains that is age appropriate and at a proficient level to allow for continued classroom academic language success.

Secondary

English Acquisition in the IMYC and the IGCSE programmes are text-based English classes with a heavy focus on the development of the English Language for academic purposes. Students read and study a variety of text types. Texts are analysed, leading to discussion and evaluation of topics of personal and global importance. A heavy emphasis is placed on language development, comprehension, expression of ideas, persuasive discourse, organizational techniques, and analysis, all in spoken and written form. The IBDP/IBCP Language B global topics serve as the content basis for the Language Acquisition course. Students are also introduced to literary analysis, effects of language, terminology and techniques, in preparation for potential transition to the Language and Literature track.

English Acquisition Practices

- All students new to VIS will be required to take an English placement test and complete the [Student Language Profile](#). In some cases, further diagnostic assessments may also be required. Students will be placed accordingly after this process. (see [Appendix](#))
- Clear standards exist for placement and transition at every grade level.
- Students placed in ELA for Grade 9 will normally remain through the end of Grade 10 to ensure IGCSE preparation continuity and exam success, as well as long term preparation for appropriate [Grade 11 placement](#).
- If the school accepts a new student who scores below the stipulated threshold for each grade level, then the parents will either be required to enlist an English tutor paid for by the parents, or the school will provide additional English Language Support, taught by an English teacher.

Language Acquisition: Other than English (Language B)

Elementary

Non ELA students are taught Spanish from Kindergarten to Grade 5. This course is an introduction to language acquisition. By the end of Grade 5, a student who has been at Verdala from Kinder to Grade 5 is expected to achieve a foundational level in Spanish (e.g. being able request and provide basic information about everyday topics; being able to talk about routine everyday activities; being able to express simple opinions, preferences and feelings)

Students are taught in their class groups and are differentiated as far as possible within the limitations of our staff.

The main aims of the programme are:

- to develop positive attitudes towards foreign language learning.
- to make children aware of the multilingual and multicultural world we live in.
- to provide children with the basic skills needed to communicate in Spanish.

Assessment is carried out on a weekly basis through classroom interactions, teacher observations, questioning, quizzes and projects. Assessment is also differentiated.

The Spanish teachers who teach Grade 5 and Grade 6 work in close collaboration to ensure continuity across the Elementary and Middle School Spanish programmes.

Secondary

VIS currently offers French, Italian and Spanish in the Language Acquisition Programme.

Language Acquisition is a core feature of the IMYC, IGCSE and IBDP programmes. In addition to language instruction, the courses offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where the target language is spoken, thus encouraging positive attitudes towards language and culture. Through learning world languages, students develop an understanding of their own culture and language in a global context.

General Language Acquisition Practices

- When entering a language programme, students are highly recommended to continue with that language for the duration of the programme (IMYC, IGCSE), except for the IBDP where it is compulsory to study the language throughout the two years.
- Students entering a programme mid course will be encouraged to opt for a language that they have previously studied.
- Students with no prior experience of any of the languages offered in the programme will be referred to the Coordinator to discuss their options.

Academic Integrity when Choosing a Language

“It is essential that Diploma Programme Coordinators and teachers ensure that students are following the course that is best suited to their present and future needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. The degree to which students are already competent in the language and the degree of proficiency they wish to attain by the end of the period of study are the most important factors in identifying the appropriate course. Coordinators, in conjunction with teachers, are responsible for the placement of students. The most important consideration is that the course should be a challenging educational experience for the student.” (IBO Language B Guide, pg. 4)

At Verdala, we strive to promote academic integrity and encourage students to take challenging courses that push them beyond their ability levels in all programmes.

Due to the international nature of the school, it is recognized that time abroad affects the language proficiency level of students; therefore, the following list of conditions may exclude some students from Language Acquisition courses or examinations:

- students who are native speakers of the language
- students who have attended schools where the chosen language has been the language of instruction for two years or more
- students who are fluent in the language

If the student falls under one of the three above categories, the following process will be followed:

1. The student will take a language test to evaluate his/her writing and speaking skills based on the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages \(CEFR\)](#).
2. A language committee (including the Principal and Head of the Language Acquisition Department) will review the [Student Language Profile](#) and language test results.
3. The parents and student will meet with the committee to discuss the student’s overall academic future and goals and how the language choice may impact their academic plans .
4. The committee will take the final decision on the student’s language option.

Switching Languages within a Programme

In the eventuality that a student requests to change languages within a programme, the following process will be followed:

1. Parents must send a written request to both the Principal and the Head of Department, clearly stating the reason for requesting the change.
2. The Principal and the HOD will examine the request, calling for a meeting with parents if they deem it necessary.
3. The Principal and the HOD will make the final decision on where the student should be placed.

Integrating English Language Learners

English Language Learners who are entering the Language Acquisition Programme (third Language) will do so, depending on their English proficiency level and general academic success. Please refer to [Appendix](#).

IGCSE Foreign Language Examination

The school is an examination centre for CIE and Edexcel IGCSE syllabus examinations. Each board offers a range of native and non-native language examinations.

- Students taking an IGCSE Foreign Language course have the option to take the IGCSE examination at the end of the course or an internal VIS Examination.
- Students wanting to take the IGCSE Examination, but not taking the course, must refer to the above section on *Academic Integrity when Choosing a Language*.

Language Development within the IB Career-related Programme

Language development is one of the four compulsory components of the IB Career-related Programme (CP) core.

Language development ensures that all students have access to and are exposed to a language programme that will assist and further their understanding of the wider world.

The aims of language development are to:

- enable students to understand and use the language they have studied in context;
- encourage an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures;
- provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language;
- provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

These aims are applicable to all students, regardless of the level of linguistic proficiency they have when they begin the CP; language development is designed to accommodate all students.

The current language of choice for the IBCP Language Development course at VIS is Mandarin, however the Language choice within the IBCP is subject to review as an integral part of the IBCP review cycle.

CP students are required to maintain and complete a language portfolio to document their learning activities and provide evidence of language engagement and development.

Mother Tongue support

The term “Mother Tongue” is used at VIS to refer to the language in which a student possesses, or might be expected to possess native or near-native skills. Such a language might be one of the languages of their home country, the language of a country in which they lived for many years, or the language of at least one of their parents. Some students will possess more than one Mother Tongue.

Due to family circumstances, some students will not have developed the necessary skills in all four domains (reading, writing, listening, speaking) to enable them to study a literature course in their “Mother Tongue” language to an advanced level.

As a school, VIS celebrates the cultural and linguistic diversity in our community. It is viewed as a strength and resource. Mother Tongue proficiency encourages and facilitates cognitive development and supports the development of advanced academic skills. It is also significant for the students’ identity, cultural ties and feelings of self-worth.

Although English is the medium of instruction at VIS, and it is desirable that students develop their skills in this language to a high degree, research shows that bilingualism and multilingualism are highly desirable qualities. ([Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), [Article 3](#)) Families are strongly encouraged to preserve their children’s Mother Tongues by actively developing their speaking, reading, and writing skills at home.

Mother Tongue Practices

- The Language Curriculums offered by VIS consistently encourage students to reflect on their own culture and language.
- Based on the [language profile](#) completed upon admission to VIS and in discussion with the programme Coordinators, careful consideration should be given to the student’s specific future language plans and programme.
- If the student plans to continue with studies in their Mother Tongue, it is highly recommended that the family engage the services of a tutor to maintain the development of academic language in the Mother Tongue.
- Irrespective of the students future language plans, parents are highly encouraged to maintain fluency in and appreciation for the Mother Tongue in the home context. Should families need support on that matter, they can seek advice from Language teachers.
- The school promotes the different languages and cultures of the world throughout the year with different events such as Maltese Week, French Day, Mother Tongue Day or International Night.
- Mother Tongue talks and why we should value it are offered to VIS families during the year.
- Projects and reading in the student’s Mother Tongue are strongly encouraged in classes.
- Extra curricular Mother Tongue conversation classes will be facilitated as the need arises.

Elementary

Children are encouraged to use their Mother Tongues within the classroom to facilitate understanding and to help newcomers with integration. After-school programmes to support Mother Tongue are being offered on a need-to basis and where support exists from within the parent community.

Secondary

Mother Tongue Self Study

- Grade 6 to Grade 8 students are not required to take external examinations. In light of this, their practices from the section above regarding Mother Tongue support will be followed.
- Grade 9 and 10 students have the option to take the IGCSE First Language in their Mother Tongue.
 - The exam is prepared for as a self-study.
 - Students may register for the exam after consultation with the IGCSE Coordinator.
- From Grade 11 onwards, students can opt to study their Mother Tongue through the IBDP School Supported Self-Study (SSST) Language A: Literature SL course.
 - Students studying in two Languages in the Language and Literature course will receive a bilingual diploma. Furthermore, students taking a subject in Individual and Society or Science in a Language different from their Language option in Language and Literature, will also fulfill the requirements for a bilingual diploma.
 - Enrollment in the SSST Language A course is dependent on consultation with the IBDP Coordinator.
 - Families are required to provide a tutor. Failure to provide a tutor will result in the student not being allowed to take this course.

Host Country Language and Culture

The National languages of Malta are Maltese and English. While Maltese Language is offered to Maltese Nationals as an after-school activity (as required under Maltese Law), students are not required to take the course.

Knowledge of Malta as the host country is supported throughout the school including but not limited to:

- Maltese Week
- Maltese lessons on demand
- IMYC Entry and Exit Points
- Field trips
- Sports, drama and music activities
- IPC inquiries and learning activities

Non-Language Subjects

All subject areas contribute to the language development of the students through the practice of reading strategies and the implementation of writing across the curriculum. All teachers are language teachers within the context of their academic programme requirements.

Implementing across the curriculum

- All curricular programs include writing strands, which are to be fully implemented.
- An EAL specialist is available to help with implementation at the department or individual teacher level.
- An EAL specialist is available to modify the curriculum for individual students with exceptional needs.
- English teachers use common terminology across the programs and grade levels.

Professional development

- Teachers can request the EAL specialist to help on an as-needed basis with curriculum implementation, classroom practice strategies, modifying curriculum, and meeting student needs.
- Regular, periodic workshops are offered to the faculty, based on the needs of the faculty at the time.

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IBCP Language Development Guide

<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/career-related-programme/>

Languages Policy reviewed January 2021

Next review 2023

4/10. Assessment Policy

Assessment Philosophy

Assessment plays a crucial role in supporting learning as well as measuring learning. It also plays a key role in achieving our whole school mission to ensure that all of our students become knowledgeable, inquisitive and ethical contributors to our world. By gathering and analyzing data from formative and summative assessments in various forms, the students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians can evaluate the students' knowledge and understanding and guide their progress towards reaching their learning goals.

GLOSSARY

MAP: Measures of Academic Progress

IEYC: International Early Years Curriculum

IPC: International Primary Curriculum

IMYC: International Middle Years Curriculum

MYP: Middle Years Programme

IGCSE: International General Certificate of Secondary Education

IBDP: International Baccalaureate Diploma Program

IBCP: International Baccalaureate Career-related Program

BTEC: Business and Technology Education Council - specialist work-related qualifications

Principles of Assessment

1. Assessments are used to keep track of student progress and to determine the effectiveness of student learning.
2. Effective assessments provide feedback to teachers, students and parents/guardians in order to improve instruction in the classroom and student approaches to learning.
3. Assessment is student-centered and students are encouraged to reflect and use peer and self-assessment as part of the process of becoming lifelong learners.
4. Student learning is evaluated according to program standards and is differentiated according to student needs and abilities.
5. Assessments should be used to help parents/guardians understand and support what is going on in the classroom.
6. In order to encourage learning and help students to achieve their learning goals; students, teachers and parents/guardians must have a good understanding of the assessment criteria.
7. Assessments should take a variety of forms in order to assess knowledge, understanding and skills.
8. Access arrangements are provided throughout the academic year and in all assessments whenever students have a diagnosed need, in order to ensure they are best able to demonstrate their learning.

Understanding Formative Assessment

1. Ongoing formative assessment takes place throughout the teaching and learning process to inform teachers, students and parents/guardians about the progress of learning.
2. Formative assessment can take a variety of forms (including, for example: draft assignments, practice problems, oral presentations, questioning, discussion, visual representations and quizzes, role play, modelling by example, hands-on activities, games, investigations, etc.)
3. Formative assessment engages students actively in the process of learning. Students should learn to self-assess, peer-assess, and to improve their performance with the aid of each teacher's timely and meaningful feedback.

4. Formative assessment provides students with a safe environment in which to learn new skills and to take the risks necessary for improved learning.

Understanding Summative Assessment

1. Summative assessment usually takes place at the end of a teaching and learning process and is planned for in advance.
2. Summative assessments can take a variety of forms (including for example: tests, examinations, lab reports, oral and visual presentations, essays, projects, performances, role play, oral examinations, simulations, oral contributions)
3. Summative assessments are designed so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and apply their skills in a variety of ways. The tasks involved are usually modelled on those required by the curriculum programme and are assessed in accordance with the programme criteria.
4. External Summative Assessments include examinations in the IGCSE and IBDP/IBCP secondary school curriculums, which take place at the end of each two-year programme. These external examinations identify students' academic abilities and skill level in each of their courses, and can be used to determine their placement in future academic programs.

Assessment Tools and Reporting

A range of assessment techniques are used by our teachers to provide valuable feedback to the student on their own learning. These techniques also provide feedback to the teacher, allowing them to differentiate their instruction according to the needs within the class and to inform their planning. Self and peer assessments allow students to begin to take personal responsibility for their learning, to reflect on their own learning and identify areas of strength and need.

ManageBac is used as our assessment and reporting system, as outlined in the Section Handbooks.

External Assessments

The school assesses students in accordance with the programmes on offer. The school is not required to comply with any national assessment standards.

Understanding Assessment in the Elementary School

Elementary Assessment Practices

Students are assessed based on their progress with key skills from the International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC) and International Primary Curriculum (IPC) Learning Goals. These curriculums provide:

- specific skills assessment for Early Years and Mileposts 1, 2 and 3*
- a system that provides learning advice
- rubrics (success criteria) may be used and are written for teachers and children
- tracking through beginning, developing and mastering

*Mileposts cover two years schooling, i.e. Milepost EY is Pre-Kindergarten 1 and 2, Milepost 1 is Kindergarten and Grade 1, Milepost 2 is Grades 2 and 3, and Milepost 3 covers Grades 4 and 5.

Grades are not given to the child in Elementary, but feedback and advice using rubrics with a continuum.

B= Beginning to work on a skill.

D= Developing that skill

M=Mastering that skill.

I= Independent (Pre-Kindergarten only)

Rubrics are designed to give the student every opportunity to succeed and thus build up his/her self confidence.

Progress is ongoing and monitored, based on a wide variety of assessment types, not one single assessment or event.

The elementary section does not have examinations.

1. Why do we assess?

In the IEYC: To observe, acknowledge and record that the students are developing appropriately for their age group and reaching satisfactory learning goals and skills. These ongoing observations are used towards writing reports twice yearly. They are also used to give parents/guardians feedback throughout the year and at parent conferences. Assessments also assist teachers in gathering evidence in areas of learning that may require more attention.

In the IPC: Assessment is a part of the instructional cycle. It provides evidence of students' learning and progress as well as a framework for planning, self-reflection and collaboration for teachers. Assessment is also done to aid accurate report writing.

2. What do we assess?

In the IEYC: Social and emotional development, motor skills (fine and gross), pre-literacy skills, pre-numeracy skills, and the students' understanding/interaction with the themes and topics covered.

In the IPC: Assessments include, but are not limited to: social and emotional development, organisational skills, fine/gross motor skills, numeracy/literacy skills, collaborative group skills. We assess knowledge, skills and understanding per subject in addition to the IPC personal goals.

3. How do we assess?

In the IEYC: Observations of students are an ongoing process throughout the year. From time to time, formal assessments take place to document student progress.

In the IPC: Assessment is an ongoing process throughout the year and incorporates the formal and informal collection of evidence. It may consist of: observations, documentation, collecting prior knowledge, rubrics, checklists, comments and recommendations, marking (Beginning, Developing, Mastering), formal testing e.g. reading and/or spelling assessments.

Communication about performance

Teachers provide regular verbal and/or written feedback to both students and parents that supports a growth mindset. Feedback and advice can compliment specific skills observed, and shares constructive next steps that supports student growth.

Teachers document student progress in a range of ways, examples of which may be shared with parents formally or informally.

Formal examples of communication about student progress include:

1. Celebrations of Learning (CoL): This is an opportunity for students to share with their parents their learning, involving oral presentations and displays of their learning process. The classroom teacher will invite the parents in for at least one CoL per Year.
2. Conferences: At least one conference is scheduled each Semester. This may be in the form of Parent-Teacher, Parent-Student-Teacher, Student-Led.
3. Written Reports are published near the end of each Semester.

Understanding Assessment in the Secondary School Secondary Assessment Practices

1. Why do we assess?

We assess students to determine the quality of students' knowledge, skills, and understanding within each subject area. We also aim to develop self-reflection and personal goal setting as students take ownership of their learning and prepare themselves for the demands of their future studies, either here at VIS or elsewhere.

2. What do we assess?

We assess students' ability to display their knowledge, understanding and skills according to determined learning goals and programme-specific assessment criteria.

3. How do we assess?

We use a wide range of assessment tools, both formative and summative, which enable students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding through a range of contexts and methods. Where courses are taught by more than one teacher, standardization of assessment takes place to ensure consistency.

For the IGCSE and IBDP/IBCP two-year programmes, in addition to the classroom assessment, students sit formal examinations at the end of the first year and towards the end of the programme in the second year in order to prepare for the experience of external examinations.

For the BTEC programme, a modular course, assessment is coursework-based and ongoing throughout the two years.

For further details, please refer to the course handbooks.

4. Supporting learning at home

Learning beyond the school day is an essential part of the learning experience. Study at home should be meaningful and help to consolidate concepts, knowledge, skills and understanding. Work completed at home is usually considered formative, though some may involve summative assessment tasks, especially in the IGCSE/IBDP/IBCP.

As students get older they will need to invest more time in studying outside of school time. Guidelines can be found in the Parent or Section Handbooks

If students are required to move to Distance Learning mode they follow the guidelines outlined in the VIS Distance Learning Policy.

Communication about performance

Teachers provide regular verbal and/or written feedback to students which highlights their successes and helps them identify areas for growth. Teachers document student progress in a range of ways, examples of which may be shared with parents formally or informally.

Grades are given on Summative Assessments, in accordance with the guidelines found in Parent or Section handbooks. On Formative Assessments, teachers should always provide feedback which students can use to improve performance; grades may also be provided from time to time but these are not required.

Formal examples of communication about student progress include:

- Progress Reports, issued about halfway through a semester, provide a brief summary of progress so far during that assessment period.
- Semester Reports, issued at the end of each semester, include grades based on the summative assessments completed during that semester, and written feedback from teachers on strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Parent-student-teacher conferences, which take place several times a year, are an opportunity for parent/guardians and students to meet with teachers and discuss progress and explore opportunities for improvement.

Implementation and Review Process

The ES/MS/HS Principals ensure that processes are in place in their sections to ensure that assessment practice is in line with this policy and programme expectations, with particular attention paid to teachers new to the school. This includes the scheduling of faculty and team meetings as necessary.

Rewritten 2018, Updated Jan 2021

Next review: 2022 in line with MYP Candidacy

4/11. Academic Integrity Policy (formally known as Academic Honesty Policy)

Philosophy & Purpose

In a world where knowledge, information, and opinions are so easily available, developing the ability to recognise the difference between one's own ideas and those of others is an essential life skill which contributes to the development of openness, transparency, critical thinking and respect for intellectual property.

Verdala International School considers academic integrity to be a core component of our curriculum, leading to the whole community and especially our students becoming ethical contributors to the world, as stated in our Mission; and our educational practices provide opportunities for all students to learn good practice in producing original work and respecting the contributions made by others.

This policy outlines the parameters for academic integrity at VIS to ensure confidence among students, parents, staff, and stakeholders in the value and credibility of our assessment processes and results. All community members are expected to actively support and uphold this policy.

This policy clearly outlines:

- the school's expectations for honest academic conduct and integrity;
- the various stakeholders' roles and responsibilities;
- the consequences of academic misconduct.

What is Academic Integrity?

Academic integrity is a set of values and skills that promote a culture of personal integrity and good practice in teaching, learning, and assessment.

At VIS, we aim for all students to understand how to produce authentic work, how to cite correctly the ideas of others, how to make ethical use of technology, and how to adhere to honest practice at all times. Concepts that relate to academic integrity include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Academic misconduct** - a behaviour that results in any student gaining an unfair advantage in one or more assessment components.
2. **Plagiarism** - the representation of the ideas or work of another person as one's own (regardless of format). Simple paraphrasing without acknowledgment of the source is also a form of plagiarism;
3. **Collusion** – supporting academic misconduct by another person, e.g. allowing one's work to be copied or submitted for assessment by someone else;
4. **Duplication of work** – presenting the same work, including any form of creative expression, for different assignments for different classes;
5. **Other behaviour** – any other behaviour that offers an unfair advantage to a student or that affects the results of another student. These include, but are not limited to, the following
 - a. Misconduct during an exam, such as distracting others or taking unauthorized material into an examination or other assessment;
 - b. having unauthorized prior knowledge of an examination or other assessment;
 - c. fabrication of data - making up data/information for an examination or other assessment;
 - d. offering bribery to an examiner/teacher for preferential treatment;

- e. obtaining or giving aid during an examination or other assessment;
 - f. presenting another's work as one's own or doing work for another student.
6. **School maladministration** - action by VIS or an individual that infringes exam board rules and regulations.

Academic Integrity Processes and Procedures

This policy has been developed to support the various programmes on offer throughout the school. School leadership, staff, students, and parents have a responsibility to be aware of the expectations within this policy and the subsequent consequences of academic misconduct.

Citation Style

APA (American Psychological Association) is the citation and referencing style used throughout the school. Middle and Elementary school use an appropriately modified form of APA. (See other documents.)

Roles and Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

- ensure that their work is authentic, with the work or ideas of others fully and correctly acknowledged;
- seek advice from their teachers and/or librarians for clarification on matters related to academic honesty (e.g. citing sources);
- comply with academic integrity guidelines at all times;
- reflect on understanding of academically honest practice;
- submit acceptable quality work when a case of academic dishonesty is identified.
- sign, when required, the *Declaration of Understanding: VIS Academic Honesty and End of the Year Examination Rules*

Parents are expected to:

- support academic integrity by encouraging the student to acknowledge other people's ideas and work;
- encourage and help the student to conduct original research and plan for each component in advance;
- support teaching staff when educating students on the principles of academic honesty;
- support the expectation that students submit acceptable quality work when a case of academic dishonesty is identified.

Staff are expected to:

- support and comply with this policy;
- be positive role models for academically honest practice;
- incorporate instruction and clear expectations for the production of academically honest work into planning, teaching, and learning, including the teaching of age- and subject-appropriate academic writing and referencing skills;
- teach and use the appropriate referencing style as defined by the School;
- design assessment tasks that do not facilitate academically dishonest practice;

- confirm, to the best of their knowledge, that all candidate work accepted or submitted for assessment is the authentic work of the student;
- pro-actively assist in the detection of instances of plagiarism;
- provide clear guidelines on the procedures of conducting and assessing group work with emphasis on the difference between collaboration and collusion
- deal with cases of academic dishonesty in accordance with the guidance in the relevant Handbooks.
- comply with appropriate exam board rules and regulations.

School leadership is expected to:

- establish a school culture that actively encourages academic integrity;
- establish annual processes to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of their responsibilities and have the skills to be academically honest;
- ensure alignment of practice across the school;
- provide staff professional development as necessary;
- ensure the academic integrity policy is consistently and fairly applied when problems arise.

Consequences of academic malpractice

Academic dishonesty is considered a disciplinary issue which takes into account the learning process and age of the student involved. Consequences can include one or more of the following:

- reflection on their understanding of the requirements for academically honest practice
- re-submission of the work
- loss of award of assessment results
- removal from an examination subject or programme
- suspension or expulsion

For further details, refer to the relevant Section Handbooks.

School Leadership has an obligation to report any examination-related incidents of malpractice to the relevant examination board, and to the VIS Board of Directors.

References

International Baccalaureate [IB]. (2019). *Academic Integrity* Retrieved January 5, 2021 from

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4/12. Distance Learning Policy

Guiding Principles

We are proud at Verdala International School of the high-quality education we offer and of our efforts to fulfill our mission to ensure that all of our students become knowledgeable, inquisitive and ethical contributors to our world. As part of our vision of being the international school of choice in Malta we strive to prepare our students for the world of tomorrow, and one way in which we do this is by ensuring we offer high quality experiences through both local and distance learning experiences.

In the event that circumstances require a partial or full campus closure, or students are unable to attend school for any other authorised reason, our commitment is to provide an alternative means of education in the form of Distance Learning. Distance Learning designates the experience students will have when school remains in session but when students are unable to physically attend school. While Distance Learning cannot replicate onsite learning, our teachers can deliver powerful instruction that allows students to meet expected standards in an online environment.

The VIS Distance Learning experience aligns with our Definition of Learning@VIS. Our students will apply problem-solving skills to think critically and creatively in order to collaborate and take responsibility for their own learning. Learning experiences will be meaningful, inclusive and inquiry-based. We aim to ensure that learning is effective, occurring in a positive and nurturing environment, and fosters a reflective growth mindset. The result of such learning experiences will expand student academic progress and attend to student social and emotional well being.

The purpose of this document is to outline how VIS will continue to offer an effective education through Distance Learning in the event of school closure/restricted attendance conditions, and to do so within an approach to teaching and learning which combines both Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning Experiences, both of which are recognised as key educational processes. “Synchronous Learning” means that students and teachers will work together through virtual means at agreed times; “Asynchronous Learning” does not require students and teachers to be online at the same time.

The Distance Learning Policy is designed to address the following scenarios:

- Complete school shutdown, with all students working remotely through synchronous and asynchronous learning methods.
- A Hybrid situation, with a combination of on- and off- campus learning throughout the school day.
- Isolated vulnerable students who are not physically attending school for an extended period.

The Distance Learning Policy outlines the Roles & Responsibilities for the various stakeholder groups.

Specific details of practices and procedures within each section for these scenarios can be found in the Distance Learning Practices and Procedures document.

Roles & Responsibilities (School)

Leadership+ Team

- Develop sectional plans for distance learning.
- Communicate with faculty/staff and parents.
- Support faculty/staff and parents during Distance Learning.
- Ensure effective implementation of Distance Learning plan and accountability to student learning.

Subject/Homeroom Teachers

- Ensure that the agreed educational technology platforms are up-to-date with appropriate work for all students.
- Collaborate with colleagues to design Distance Learning experiences for students in accordance with sectional plans.
- Develop high-quality student learning experiences.
- Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students.
- Communicate with parents, as necessary.

EAL Teachers

- Support co-teachers in the development of high-quality student learning experiences in accordance with sectional plans.
- Curate and/or develop resources to support EAL students.
- Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students.
- Communicate with parents, as needed.

Learning Support Educators

- Partner with classroom teachers to accommodate the online learning curriculum they are providing to the learning support students on their caseload.
- Communicate with all parents of students on their caseload daily regarding the online learning plan and how they will co-plan with the teachers for the students to access the content of the distance learning lessons.
- Recommend to parents and teachers other online learning platforms that learning support students might be able to access at this time.

Programme Coordinators

- Remain in contact with external organisations as necessary (e.g. Fieldworks, CIE, Edexcel, IBO).
- Communicate relevant information to teachers, parents and students, as it becomes available.

Counselors

- Create developmentally appropriate videos regarding self-regulation, anxiety and/or wellness strategies that students can practice during this time of Distance Learning.
- Provide developmentally appropriate “blog-type” statement/s that include resources regarding anxiety, isolation, health and wellbeing particular to grade level(s).
- Respond to counseling needs of students, as needed, through virtual channels as necessary and appropriate.

Guidance Counselor

- Ensure continuity of the processing of student files for university applications.
- Actively monitor all university processes through appropriate channels (e.g. BridgeU, Common App, etc).

- Support school advocacy with universities, IB and other external bodies to ensure campus closure and its effects are understood.

Librarians

- Curate resources for teachers to support the development of high-quality online learning experiences for students.
- Create screencasts, videos, podcasts or other how-to resources for teachers.
- Support teachers in the development of Distance Learning experiences, as needed.

Teaching Assistants

- Provide support and assistance to assigned grade level and/or subject area teachers as requested.

Tech Support Team

- Provide timely training and responses to student, family, and faculty requests regarding technology needs.
- Explore and test online options to support teaching and learning, and ensure usage is in line with GDPR requirements.

Roles & Responsibilities (Students)

To ensure their own success, students should:

- Dedicate appropriate time to learning, comparable to a school day and/or as guided by your teacher/s.
- Check the appropriate school platform(s) daily for information on courses, assignments, resources.
- Be present online for all synchronous learning activities.
- Identify a comfortable and quiet space to study/learn.
- Engage in all learning posted with academic honesty.
- Submit all assignments in accordance with provided timeline and/or due dates.
- Ensure their own social and emotional balance by keeping healthy habits.

Roles and Responsibilities (Parents/Guardians)

Parent/Guardians should support their child/ren in their learning by:

- Providing an environment conducive to learning (access to technology, safe and quiet space during daytime, minimal distractions).
- Engaging in conversations on posted materials, assignments.
- Monitoring appropriate systems as necessary to ensure awareness of work assigned.
- Ensuring that students are present online for all synchronous learning activities.
- Monitoring time spent engaging in online and offline learning, including variables like that of preferred learning times (morning, afternoon, evening).
- Support emotional balance by providing ample room and time for reflection, physical activity, conversation, and play.

Educational Technology to support distance learning

A range of tools will be used by students and staff (e.g. ManageBac, G-Suite apps, Zoom, Seesaw). A collection of resources will be developed and collated by staff, and then used as appropriate with students & parents, who will be informed as necessary.

Care must be taken to ensure compliance with GDPR at all times. We have processes in place to ensure personal data is used appropriately.

Policy Approved: March 2020

Policy Amended: 17 August 2020

Appendix 1- Academic Policy Control Information Sheet (All dates written year/ month/ day)

Document references <i>Title/no.</i>	Document Control <i>BOD approval</i>	Authorisation <i>Person making change</i>	Modification History <i>With effect from</i>
Ver 2.	Revision of Admissions, Inclusion, Languages, Assessment and Academic Integrity (Honesty) policies in line with candidacy for IBCP programme.	Head of School	Jan 18 2021