



Verdala
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Verdala International School

Policy Manual 2020

B4. Teaching & Learning

Academic Ver 4

Date	Review/Update
Oct 2020	Full Review
April 2024	Update
25-26	Full Review

Contents

4. Board Policies – Teaching & Learning.....	3
4/1. Class Size.....	3
4/2. Field Trip Policies and Procedures.....	4
4/3. School Leaving Documents.....	5
4/4. Admissions Policy.....	8
Standards of Admissions.....	8
Applications Procedures.....	8
Data Protection Notice.....	9
Admissions Process.....	11
Vaccination Requirements.....	12
Residency.....	13
Parentship/Guardianship.....	13
Admission & Re-Enrolment Restrictions.....	14
Readmission of Students.....	15
Exit Process/Disenrollment by Parents/Guardians.....	16
4/5. Inclusion Policy.....	17
Implementation.....	18
4/6. Attendance Policy.....	29
4/7. Standard School Year.....	31
4/8. Substitutes.....	31
4/9. Language Policy.....	32
Language Philosophy.....	32
Language Profile.....	32
Language Classes.....	34
English Language Arts/Language and Literature.....	35
English Language Acquisition (ELA).....	35
Language Acquisition: Other than English (Language B).....	36
Switching Languages within a Programme.....	37
Language Development within the IB Career-Related Programme.....	38
Home language support.....	38
Host Country Language and Culture.....	39
Language Development across the Curriculum.....	40
References.....	40
4/10. Assessment Policy.....	41
Assessment Philosophy.....	41
Principles of Assessment.....	42

Assessment Practices.....	42
Roles and Responsibilities.....	51
References.....	51
4/11. Academic Integrity Policy.....	51
What is Academic Integrity?.....	52
Academic Integrity and the Learner Profile.....	53
Note on Collaborative Work.....	53
Elementary Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures.....	53
Middle School Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures.....	55
High School Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures.....	58
Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI).....	61
Review and Updates.....	63
References.....	63
4/12. Distance Learning Policy.....	63
Appendix 1- Academic Policy Control Information Sheet (All dates written year/ month/ day).....	67

4. Board Policies – Teaching & Learning

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

1. 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 aide 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 aide 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 ('VIS' or 'School') shall be open to elementary and secondary level students of any gender, nationality, creed and ethnicity.

VIS seeks to enrol students who will:

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

VIS expects families and guardians to support and actively engage with the school's [Guiding Statements](#). Following enrolment of the student(s), parents/guardians are required to sign the Parent Code of Conduct annually.

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, behavioural, 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 are evaluated by taking into consideration various factors, including:

- Applications that best meet the student attributes listed above;
- Whether the prospective student(s) already has/have siblings enrolled at the School;
- Whether the parents/guardians are employed at Diplomatic Missions, European Commission bodies and/or any associated organisations located in Malta;
- Whether the prospective student(s) is/are being transferred from other international schools or being transferred from schools where the primary language of instruction is English;
- Whether the prospective student(s) is/are facing compelling and/or extenuating circumstances;
- Whether the prospective student(s) is/are closely related to a member of staff (in line with internal policies on the matter such as the Fees for Staff Dependents Policy);
- Other aspects to ensure an appropriate balance within the year group; and
- Other School Policies such as:
 - Class Size Policy;
 - Inclusion Policy;
 - Language Policy.

Data Protection Notice

We at Verdala International School (VIS) of Fort Pembroke, Pembroke PBK1641, Malta, as a data controller, take our student's privacy very seriously. Parents are required to read through the information below before submitting any applications containing personal data.

WHY DO WE NEED YOUR PERSONAL DATA? – We need your and/or your child's personal data (the information you may include in the admissions application form and/or which you may otherwise provide as part of the admissions procedure, that identifies you and/or your child as an individual) to provide you and/or your child with the requested services, namely to evaluate your application as part of our admissions procedure and, in due course, inform you whether your child has been accepted for enrolment at VIS, to process and/or provide you with information concerning your and/or your child's application status and/or admission requirements, and also for the assessment of the said application and related documentation. Therefore, in this case, our **legal basis** for processing the said personal data is necessary for the performance of a contract with you or in order to take steps at your request before entering into any such contract, necessary for compliance with our legal obligations as well as specific grounds under the Processing of Personal Data (Education Sector) Regulations (S.L. 586.07).

Any health data and/or other sensitive personal data we collected from you and/or your child (and/or in connection therewith) will be processed based on your and/or your child's explicit consent (provided to us in the admissions application itself or otherwise). YOUR CONSENT CAN BE WITHDRAWN AT ANY TIME by contacting us as explained below. However, do note that withdrawing consent may lead to the admissions application not being further processed and/or even terminating services you may expect from us if the application is processed successfully (including your and/or your child's enrolment with our School).

WHO DO WE SHARE YOUR PERSONAL DATA WITH? – Your and/or your child's personal data will be made available to those people in our organisation who need it to carry out their duties and provide you with the services you expect from us. We also share personal data with regulatory and/or official authorities in all instances where we are compelled to do so by law. We will not disclose your personal data to any other persons besides those mentioned here unless we are required to do so by law. Unless we tell you otherwise, your and/or your child's data will at all times remain within the EU/EEA.

FOR HOW LONG WILL WE KEEP YOUR PERSONAL DATA? - We will keep your personal data only for as long as necessary. Necessity depends on the legal obligations we may have. For example, if any personal data can be deemed as records of 'income and expenditure', we are obliged by Maltese tax laws to keep those data for nine [9] years after completion of transactions, acts or operations to which they relate. We are also entitled to retain personal data in some cases (as opposed to being obliged to do so). For example, when we believe that the personal data are necessary for us to defend ourselves against civil claims that may be brought against us, we are allowed to keep the data for as long as that risk subsists (this is usually five [5] years from the end of our contractual relationship with you or two [2] years from the date of a relevant incident if no such contractual relationship exists). With your and/or the student(s)' consent (if the student attains the age of consent) we may process the student's personal data for periods longer than five (5) years following the end of our contractual relationship. This is normally done to assist the student with references and/or retention of academic records.

WHAT ARE YOUR DATA PROTECTION RIGHTS? You (and/or your child), as a 'data subject' as understood under applicable data protection laws, have several rights that are applicable under certain conditions and in certain circumstances, including your:

- **Right of access** to your personal data processed by us;
- **Right to** ask us to **rectify** inaccurate personal data concerning you;
- Right to have us erase your personal data (**'right to be forgotten'**);
- **Right to** ask us to **restrict** (that is, store but not further process) Your personal data;

- Right to ask us to provide Your personal data to You in a structured, commonly used, machine-readable format, or (where technically feasible) to have it 'ported' directly to another data controller (**'right to data portability'**)
- **RIGHT TO WITHDRAW ANY CONSENT YOU MAY HAVE GIVEN US AT ANY TIME (for example consent you may provide in the admissions application to process health data)** subject to the consequences described above;
- **Right to object** to our processing your personal data (where we process personal data on the basis of our legitimate interests and/or the public interest);
- **Right to lodge a complaint** with the relevant supervisory authority (in Malta, the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner, 'IDPC').

WHERE CAN YOU READ OUR FULL PRIVACY POLICY? This section represents a condensed explanation of how we use your and/or your child's personal data. For more information including more detail on your rights, we strongly recommend you read our user-friendly and layered **Master Privacy Policy**, available here: <https://www.verdala.org/en/privacy-policy>. You can ask us for a paper copy of the Master Privacy Policy at any time, by contacting us at gdpr@verdala.org.

You may also contact us by writing to us at **Verdala International School Foundation**, Fort Pembroke, Pembroke PBK1641, Malta or calling us on +356 21 375 133 or visiting our offices.

Admissions Process

Upon our receipt of the duly complete admissions application, parents/guardians shall be informed about actual placement availability and offered to join a waiting list if the relevant class in question is full. For the application to be considered further, parents/guardians are required to pay the indicated 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. A key determining factor is the ability of the student(s) to perform satisfactorily in the relevant grade level or programme.

The following will be part of the evaluation process:

- Admissions assessments;
- Interviews with the parent/guardian(s) and student(s);
- English language or learning needs reviewed;
- If required, a trial day at the School.



VIS is an inclusive school. Therefore, Elementary and MYP applicants are considered subject to meeting the above criteria, the availability of places and standards of admissions.

In Grades 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 regarding their suitability for either the IBDP or IBCP course. 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 IB Brochure available on the website.

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

Students will normally be placed in accordance with their age group on August 31, as per the Placement Policy included in Appendix 1 of this document.

If a place is offered, the Head of School will sign the offer & acceptance letter which will outline the necessary financial and other obligations as well as other details such as the starting date (which will be at least two full working days after the financial obligations and/or any other requirements have been met). The offer & acceptance letter must be countersigned by the authorised parent(s)/guardian(s) and will constitute a contract between the said parent(s)/guardian(s) and VIS.

All registration fees must be paid in accordance with the conditions outlined in the offer & acceptance letter. Fees are annually reviewed and posted on the School website. All financial obligations must be met before the student(s) start(s) school and are outlined in the Finance Policy available on the School website.

Vaccination Requirements

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 applicable Maltese Legislation.

These legally required vaccinations as per the Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Article 57 of Chapter 36 of the Laws of Malta) are as follows:

- 3 doses of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio for all children.
- Children 16 or more years old require a Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio boost

- 1 dose of Rubella for all girls by the age of 13 years old.
- BCG (Tuberculosis) booster for all students 12-14 years old.

Vaccinations are compulsory by law for all Maltese children. Parents are subject to being fined if they do not comply.

Since we understand that different countries have different vaccination protocols, children who are missing vaccinations can go to Floriana Health Centre whose staff will make sure they are compliant with Maltese regulations.

VIS has the right to refuse any application based on the parent(s)/guardian(s)' inability to provide a copy of the relevant vaccination documentation. As a school, we have the obligation to provide a report to the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate stating the immunisation status of our newly admitted students.

Conditional and Probationary Acceptances

There are cases in which a conditional or probationary place at the School may be offered. These may include the following scenarios:

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

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

Residency

Students and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) must be able to provide the required documentation demonstrating the student's legal residency status in Malta for the duration of their time at the School.

Students are not permitted to live in Malta unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.

Parentship/Guardianship

When submitting the admissions application (and/or subsequent documentation as required, including but not limited to the Offer & Acceptance letter, as applicable), VIS may accept the signature of one parent/guardian provided that the signatory confirms that he/she is duly authorised to sign alone and that he/she presents all necessary documentation as may be required.

In some cases, the signature of both parents/guardians may be required, for example, in the case of Court-mandated joint custody. In such cases, the relevant legal documentation must be presented to VIS for the application (and/or subsequent documentation) to be deemed valid.

For the avoidance of all doubt, in those cases where the signature of both parents/guardians is required, it is incumbent upon the applicant(s) to inform VIS and present all necessary legal documentation. If one parent/guardian whose signature is legally required disagrees or is not informed about the admissions application by the other parent/guardian and/or has not given consent/authorisation (where this is legally required), the application and/or any related or subsequent documentation will be deemed **invalid**. If this emerges when the student has already been enrolled and/or commenced studies at VIS, VIS hereby reserves the right to terminate the contractual relationship between the parties and suspend/expel the student(s) as required, as well as all VIS' rights at law.

The signatory/ies are obliged to immediately inform VIS of any changes to custody arrangements that may be in place affecting any student(s) enrolled at VIS (even if such changes occur after the said enrolment process).

Admission & Re-Enrolment Restrictions

Admission/Re-enrolment will be restricted in that, to the fullest extent permitted by law, VIS shall not, in its sole and absolute discretion, 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/or behavioural problems, including also EAL needs, for which the School is not equipped (or well-equipped) which problems or needs may include: physical, neurological, and/or psychological/emotional disorders (see Inclusion 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 to VIS for the first time or who wish to return to VIS from other schools but who have not done well in these schools (either academically, behaviourally, or socially) unless any VIS testing and interviews result in evidence of a strong potential for success.

Repeating Students



The School reserves the right, after communicating with parents/guardians, to require a student to repeat the grade if it would be in the student's best interest to do so and this is for academic, social and/or emotional reasons.

Conditional Enrolment

Conditional enrolment or re-enrolment may, at VIS' sole and exclusive discretion be offered to students:

- who fail to meet academic and/or behavioural standards.
- who fail to meet minimum attendance expectations as outlined in VIS Academic Master Policy which is available on the school's website.

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 academic year. Students who are readmitted after more than one year away shall pay the full registration fee as per the Registration Fee policy, provided the student(s) meet(s) all entry requirements and that all required documentation is in place.

Disenrollment By VIS

Enrolment of (a) student(s) may, in the School's sole and absolute discretion, be revoked for any of the following reasons:

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) provided inaccurate or incomplete information in the admissions application and/or as part of the application process (for example, legal documentation proving authorisation to sign alone and/or jointly with another parent/guardian, where required);
- Student exhibits challenges and/or individual needs which the School cannot address;
- Failure to meet academic, behavioural, or attendance standards;
- Failure to meet financial obligations to the School;
- Failure to comply with any legal or contractual obligations;
- Parents/guardians do not respond to requests or recommendations from School personnel: i.e. attendance at meetings with staff, recommended counselling and testing, etc.

Wherever possible, School personnel shall use their best endeavours to attempt to remediate any problems mentioned above, and shall, wherever possible, communicate frequently with parents/guardians.



Exit Process/Disenrollment by Parents/Guardians

Following the successful enrolment of a student for a scholastic year (or part thereof), each subsequent scholastic year shall require re-enrolment prior to the commencement thereof. At that re-enrolment stage (subject to terms of this policy), parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to disenrol the student.

Disenrolment must take place **not later than thirty (30) days before the beginning of the next applicable scholastic year**. Failing to submit such notice within such timeframe will result in the forfeiture of any applicable deposit(s) and/or fees paid unless the Head of School in his/her sole and exclusive discretion determines that there is a justifiable reason and/or extenuating circumstance(s) for such forfeiture to be waived.

Following successful enrolment of the student(s) and once the relevant scholastic year commences, the authorised parent or guardian may disenroll the said student by submitting a written notice to this effect (which must include the student's departure date) to the VIS admissions office by **not later than thirty (30) running days before the start of the next applicable school term**. Failing to submit such notice within such timeframe will result in the forfeiture of any applicable deposit(s) paid unless the Head of School in his/her sole and exclusive discretion determines that there is a justifiable reason and/or extenuating circumstance(s) for such forfeiture to be waived.

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

Reviewed Nov 2023

4/5. Inclusion Policy

Context

At Verdala International School (VIS), we believe that every student deserves an education that is both inclusive and equitable, where all individuals are valued, respected, and provided with the necessary support to thrive academically and personally. Our commitment to these principles is at the heart of our mission to prepare students not only for academic success but also for active, engaged, and responsible citizenship in a diverse and ever-evolving world.



We recognize that each student is unique, with their own strengths, needs, and aspirations. It is our fundamental responsibility to ensure that every student has equal access to educational opportunities, resources, and support, regardless of their abilities, or circumstances.

We are committed to implementing the Salamanca Framework for Action (1994) and acknowledging the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which calls for the development of inclusive policies, curricula, and teaching methods to ensure the inclusion of all students in the educational process. We recognize that inclusion is not just a policy but a shared vision that promotes diversity and equal opportunities.

Our philosophy on inclusion is a guiding principle that informs every aspect of our school community. We embrace the idea that diversity is a source of strength, and we actively seek to create an inclusive environment where all stakeholders, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, or sexual orientation, feel welcome, safe, and valued. We believe that learning is enriched when students from diverse backgrounds come together and learn from one another. VIS' commitment to equity and inclusive education is evident in our policies, practices, and daily interactions within the school community. We are dedicated to:

Creating Inclusive Classrooms - where our educators receive training and resources to adapt their teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of all students.

Supporting Individual Growth by providing personalised support and accommodations to students who require them, recognizing that each student's journey to success is unique.

Promoting Respect and understanding to embrace and celebrate diversity. We actively engage with parents, guardians, and the wider community to ensure that our commitment to equity and inclusion extends beyond the classroom

Implementation

Individualised Support and Accommodations

VIS offers personalised support to students with diverse learning needs, ensuring equitable access to the curriculum. This requires students to be identified who may require additional support through assessment and collaboration with professionals. Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualised Support Plans (ISPs) are developed for students with diverse learning needs. The school ensures that all staff members are aware of and implement the accommodations specified in these plans.

Accommodation refers to the process of making adjustments or changes to aspects of teaching and learning environments to support individuals with diverse needs and abilities. Accommodations can take various forms and are tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals, allowing them to participate fully and effectively in educational activities.

Some examples of what accommodations may look like include the following:

- Offering course materials in multiple formats.
- Integrating assistive technologies like screen readers, speech-to-text software, or communication devices to assist students with disabilities in accessing and engaging with course content.
- Arranging classroom seating to accommodate individuals with diverse needs.
- Creating designated spaces or times for students with sensory sensitivities to reduce sensory overload.
- Note-Taking Support
- Offering alternative ways to demonstrate knowledge or skills, such as oral presentations or project-based assessments, for students who struggle with traditional written exams.
- Developing personalised education plans that outline specific accommodations and support strategies for students with disabilities, ensuring their unique needs are met.
- Using visual aids, communication boards, or alternative communication methods to assist individuals with speech or communication disorders.
- Allowing for flexibility in attendance requirements for students who may experience anxiety related to school or related difficulties.

Our objective is to involve parents, guardians, and the broader community in supporting and reinforcing the inclusion policy. The school establishes regular meetings for parents to understand the school's inclusion policy, their role, and how they can support inclusive practices at home. Moreover partnerships and collaborations with local organisations and support services are created as these can provide resources and guidance is fostered.

VIS ensures that the Inclusion Policy is effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the school community. The school ensures that the responsibility for implementing and upholding the inclusion policy is clear at all levels of the school. The Director of Wellbeing is responsible for overseeing the policy's implementation by ensuring that regular accountability meetings are held along with discussions involving school leadership, teachers, and support staff to assess progress and address challenges.



Implementing an approach that acknowledges and accommodates learner variability ensures that all students have access to the curriculum. This is carried out by encouraging the creation of diverse instructional materials and assessments that cater to different learning styles and abilities as well as continuously evaluating and adjusting teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of the student body. Moreover, our Inclusion Policy goes hand-in-hand with our Teaching and Learning Policy. By fostering an inclusive environment through our practices, we create a safe space where students can fully engage in the learning process.

Modifications

VIS is an inclusive school. We acknowledge that students are continually growing and developing and we provide opportunities to support the needs of individuals throughout all stages of their learning.

We keep academic pathways open and craft opportunities to accommodate students and find creative ways to both check and demonstrate their knowledge skills and understanding.

In the rare case that a student cannot access the curriculum and after all forms of accommodation have been exhausted we use the following procedure.

The Director of Wellbeing (DoW), Inclusion Practitioner, Teachers, LSEs work together to identify students who require curriculum modifications. This is based on individualised education plans (IEPs). The plans are continuously reviewed and outline specific goals, accommodations, and modifications. Student evaluation is ongoing to determine the effectiveness of existing strategies and the need for modifications.

The curriculum when modified may include adjusting content, teaching methods, materials, and assessment strategies to meet the student's needs. Ongoing support is provided to both teachers and students to ensure the successful implementation of the modified curriculum. In the case when all the above examples of modifications are exhausted and the student is still not accessing learning, then the need for the student to be an alternate curriculum will be determined. In an alternate curriculum, the content of what is taught is adjusted to align with the student's abilities and interests. This may involve simplifying or breaking down complex concepts, focusing on essential skills, or using alternative resources and materials that are more accessible.

Teaching methods are adapted to cater to the student's learning style. This can include using visual aids, hands-on activities, multisensory approaches, and repetition as necessary to reinforce learning. It is important to note that an alternate curriculum does not limit a student's potential but rather provides a more personalised path to success. The focus is on developing the student's abilities, independence, and

self-confidence. It promotes the idea that every student, regardless of their challenges, can make meaningful progress and achieve their potential in a supportive and inclusive educational environment. Furthermore at VIS the Teaching and Learning Policy emphasises the importance of tailoring instruction to meet the diverse needs of our students. Our inclusive principles help ensure that all students can participate and learn, regardless of their challenges.

Detailed records of curriculum modifications for each student is maintained. This includes documentation of changes made, strategies employed, and the impact on student performance. Documentation of modifications are recorded on IEPs, ISPs, managebac and progress reports.

The achievements of students benefiting from curriculum modifications are recognised and celebrated. Best practices and success are encouraged among teachers and LSEs to promote a culture of inclusivity and support.

Identification and Assessment:

The school is responsible for establishing a systematic process for early identification of students with additional learning needs. Steps towards achieving this include the following:

- Conduct regular screenings and observations to identify students who may require additional support.
- Collaborate with teachers and members of the student support services as well as outside professionals to conduct assessments and create individualised support plans when needed.

In order to ascertain the suitability of our school to meet the diverse needs of all students, a comprehensive assessment and evaluation process will be conducted. This process will involve:

- Review of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)
- Initial and Ongoing Assessment - Regular and ongoing assessments will be conducted to identify individual strengths, challenges, and areas requiring additional support. This includes academic, social, and emotional assessments.
- Consultation with Parents

A multidisciplinary team, composed of the Director of Wellbeing, Inclusion Practitioner Learning Support Educators, counsellors, and administrators, will be responsible for reviewing the assessment data, setting appropriate goals, and determining the best approaches to meet the diverse needs of our students.

In cases where a student's needs can be effectively met within the inclusive classroom setting, we will implement a range of strategies and accommodations to ensure their success. If a student's needs cannot be fully met within the inclusive classroom, we will provide access to support services. These may include pull-out sessions, counselling,



speech therapy, or other specialised interventions, as outlined in the student's Individualised Education Plan (IEP).

In some cases, it may be determined that our school is unable to provide the necessary support for a student's unique needs within the inclusive setting. In such instances, we will recommend alternative educational settings or placements, while continuing to provide support for the student's transition to the next school.

Regardless of the chosen approach, we emphasise the importance of maintaining open and continuous communication with parents, guardians, and relevant professionals to ensure that the best interests of the student are paramount throughout the decision-making process.

As we embrace the principles of inclusivity, it is essential to understand how access arrangements play a pivotal role in ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities during assessments. Assessments are varied and allow students to demonstrate learning in multiple ways. Students are provided with choice over the process and production style. We adapt assessment methods to support students who may face unique challenges, as stipulated in our Assessment Policy. Access arrangements are reasonable adjustments made to assessment procedures, formats, or timing to accommodate the diverse needs and abilities of our students. In the following section, we delve into the specific access arrangements available and the process for requesting and implementing them in the context of assessments.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements refer to special accommodations or support provided to students with documented disabilities or specific learning needs. These accommodations are designed to ensure that all students, including those with diverse needs, have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in both formative and summative assessments.

Access arrangements can include various accommodations, such as extra time on exams, the use of assistive technology, separate testing rooms, or the provision of a scribe or reader. These arrangements are intended to create a fair assessment procedure that allows students with neurodiversity to showcase their abilities without being hindered by their disabilities.

Formative assessments are ongoing assessments used by teachers to gauge student learning progress and adjust instruction accordingly. Summative assessments, on the other hand, are final evaluations conducted at the end of a course or unit to measure overall learning outcomes. Access arrangements aim to ensure that students with

disabilities can participate in both types of assessments effectively and demonstrate their understanding and skills to the best of their abilities.

Request for access arrangements must be based on:

- Similar learning and teaching methods in the classroom
- Eligibility criteria for access arrangements
- Supporting documents such as psychological and medical reports submitted by the deadline
- Educational evidence

List of Access Arrangements that can be used (but not limited to) for IB, BTEC, CP and MYP assessments include :

- Additional time (10%, 25%) for oral, listening and written examinations.
- Human assistance such as a prompter
- Rest breaks
- Extensions on deadlines
- Retakes only for exceptional circumstances
- Modified papers on screen and based on exam
- Scribe or audio recording of responses
- Visual and hearing aids
- Reader, reading software, reading pen, text to speech

To support a request for access arrangements, students typically need to provide documentation that demonstrates the nature of their needs. This documentation may include medical records, psychological assessments, or educational assessments. The documentation should clearly state the nature and extent of the student's condition or disability.

In the case of external examinations, the formal request for access arrangements is submitted to the IB Organization. This request is usually directed to the IBDP coordinator and Director of Wellbeing responsible for managing access arrangements. Access arrangements are implemented during assessments. This may include adjustments to exam timing, additional breaks, assistive technology, or any other necessary accommodations.

Legal Requirement

The statementing process is managed by the Statementing Moderating Panel (SMP) appointed by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation. The panel meets to determine the level of support required by the student to make sure that the student's needs are being met.

The parents are invited for a meeting with the panel. During the panel's hearing, the parents, student, and professionals discuss the concerns met by the school which 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 Director of Wellbeing (DoW) 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 Director of Wellbeing refers parents to the SMP when it is felt that LSE support other than the school can provide, is required.
 - An application is filled with attached copies of reports to the SMP.
- Referral to the Statementing Moderating Panel is normally carried out when the resources of the school have been exhausted and all recommendations given by professionals implemented and recorded.

Admission

As per the Admissions Policy, the Director of Wellbeing together with the section Principal when necessary and for the best interest of the student, request past reports and previous schools may be contacted for further information. As part of the application process, 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
- Conditional enrolment

The above options are not exhaustive as highlighted in the Admissions Policy.

Practices and Procedures

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 coordinate with them over a student's requirements.
3. If the outcome of an assessment indicates that a student requires LSE support within the classroom, the school will discuss this process with the parents and assist with the Statementing process. Learners who are eligible for an official Statement of Needs have a Statement of Needs Report issued by the Statementing Moderating Panel. Other families who are not eligible for the

statementing process will discuss the appointment and the allocation of funding for services of a LSE with the school.

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) and Director of Wellbeing 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.

IB standards and practices

At VIS, we are committed to fostering an inclusive educational environment that aligns with the values, mission, and practices of the IB programme. Our inclusion policy is designed to mirror the IB's emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and equitable access to education. Our commitment to inclusivity aligns with the IB Learner Profile, which encourages students to be open-minded, caring, and principled individuals. We embrace differentiated instruction which highlights the importance of adapting teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students. Our school promotes a collaborative approach to learning, involving teachers, support staff and parents. We prioritise ongoing professional development for our staff, providing training and resources to enhance their understanding of inclusive practices, special education, and strategies for supporting students with diverse needs. Lastly, our assessment practices are designed to be fair and valid, accommodating students with additional learning needs and allowing them to demonstrate their understanding and skills as outlined in our Assessment policy.

VIS is committed to continuous improvement and we regularly review and refine our inclusive education practices to align with the evolving needs of our community.

We aim to create an educational environment that not only supports the diverse needs of our students but also reflects the broader educational philosophy of the IB programme.

Roles and Responsibilities

These roles and responsibilities serve as the guiding framework that empowers individuals at VIS to actively contribute to the promotion of inclusion, equal opportunity, and belonging. The next section will delve into delineating these roles and responsibilities highlighting their significance in creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, and every member is valued and respected.

Director of Wellbeing (DoW)

The Director of Wellbeing plays a crucial role in fostering a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment within the VIS community. This DoW is responsible for promoting the overall wellbeing and mental health of students, staff, and the broader school community. The Director of Wellbeing works collaboratively with educators, parents, members of the student support services team and other staff members to create a supportive and inclusive school environment.

- Develop, implement, and oversee a comprehensive wellbeing strategy that aligns with the school's mission and values.
- Provide guidance and support to students and staff in managing mental challenges, ensuring that students have access to support as needed.
- Overseeing the formulation, implementation and review of IEPs for students with diverse needs;
- Collect and analyse data on student wellbeing, student academic progress using this information to make data-driven decisions and adjustments to the wellbeing and inclusion strategy.
- Ensuring the coordination with programme coordinators and principals of the provision of access arrangements (mainly internal testing and examinations, NWEA MAP testing, MYP, IBDP and IBCP);
- 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.
- Ensuring that students with neurodiverse needs 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 for staff
- Ensuring that a proper transition process is implemented before moving from VIS to another educational institution or from one section to another and participating in the development of such transition programmes, where applicable;
- The DoW 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 DoW of this.

Teachers

Teachers are key to promoting a class and school environment that supports and celebrates inclusion.

- Teachers will be a part of Individual Educational Planning where teachers will work with LSEs in order to discuss and plan provision of appropriate support, accommodations and modifications.
- Collaboration between teachers and LSEs for curriculum planning will take place consistently. Teachers work collaboratively with LSEs on adaptations and differentiation. Teachers share their unit plans and relevant lesson resources with LSEs in advance so as for LSEs to have the time to adapt accordingly,
- Teachers should obtain and be provided with knowledge and understanding on diverse challenges of learners so responsibility in class is shared rather than expecting this to be sole responsibility of the LSEs.
- Professional development will be provided to enhance teachers' inclusive pedagogical skills in order for them to be knowledgeable and meet the diverse needs of learners.
- Teachers may, on the basis of their observations and intervention, believe that a child warrants assessment. In such cases the teacher is required to discuss this with the DoW who will determine the next steps to be taken.
- Teachers will abide by the referral process system when there are concerns regarding a student. The DoW determines whether observations or an evaluative process needs to be carried out before such concerns are communicated to the parents. Teachers should not contact outside agencies or parents regarding their observations and concerns before consulting with the DoW.

Inclusion Practitioner

The Inclusion Practitioner (IP) is a member of the Student Support Services role whose key role is to support the Inclusion Policy and to support inclusivity at VIS and our neurodiverse students.

- The IP will participate in student support meetings organised by the DoW and school section .
- Assist in the implementation and review of an IEP or ISP
- The IP will work with individual students or small groups on intervention practices
- Support a child with learning needs and provide a ISP, as requested by the DoW
- Collaborate closely with teaching staff and LSEs and raise awareness of the strengths and difficulties of individual students on the CRM files .
- Maintain and compile student records and CRM files
- Ensuring that physical spaces, resources, and support are accessible to individuals with diverse needs is another responsibility.
- Continually aim to better understand and address the unique needs and challenges of diverse individuals and groups

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 support the education of all pupils, however giving priority to pupils with diverse needs in order to make sure that their needs are being addressed.
- Participating fully in Making Action Plans sessions (MAPs), which happen during the start of the scholastic year.
- The LSE will participate in and attend IEP conferences. Together with the DoW, class teacher and any other professionals, the LSE will develop and implement an IEP.
- Under the guidance of the DoW, 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 in collaboration with the teacher.
- 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 DoW 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 DoW, 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, 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.

List of Abbreviations

VIS	Verdala International School
IEPs	Individual Educational Plans
ISPs	Individual Support Plans
SMP	Statementing Moderating Panel



DOW	Director of Wellbeing
LSEs	Learning Support Educators
LT	Leadership Team
IP	Inclusion Practitioner
CRM	Collaborative Response Meetings
MAPs	Mapping Action Planning
TAs	Teaching Assistants

Approved Nov 2023

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 importance of attendance, requiring that students maintain at least a 90% attendance rate, and recognises that any student with more than 10 absences (either excused, unexcused or health) in any semester and/or more than 18 absences in total may not be promoted to the next grade at the end of the school year. Students with excessive absences may have limited their access to the curriculum, and therefore may have significant gaps in their learning. For students in Grades 9-12, they may be denied VIS High School Graduation Diploma credits for that semester.

The school reserves the right to request appropriate documentation supporting any excused absence.

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.
- Health (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 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. Section PAs will contact parents if no Managebac excusal has been received by 9:00am on the day that a student is absent.

Lateness and Early Departure

Students are expected to be punctual for all obligations. Repeated or persistent lack of punctuality can lead to growth and progress and/or social emotional concerns in Elementary. In this case, the administration will be in contact with the family to help resolve the issue.

In Secondary, it is treated as a disciplinary issue. Any students who arrive on campus late, must sign in with the Section PA so their attendance is recorded. If the lateness is outside the control of a student this will be recorded as excused, whereas a lateness inside their control will result in disciplinary action being taken if it persists.

Any student who is required to leave campus early on any school day, is also expected to sign out with the Section PA before departure. Parents must notify the Section PA of any early departure in advance

Missed Work

It is the student's responsibility to catch up on missed work, including all assessments. Teachers will extend deadlines for students to complete assignments/tasks if a student's absence has been health related. Deadlines will remain the same for any unexcused absences.

In Secondary, students are expected to liaise with their teachers ahead of any pre-planned absences to make appropriate arrangements to have access to learning materials, complete expected work and make up assessments (if applicable).

Consequence of excessive absences

All absences, whether Excused, Absent or Health related, 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 IB DP students, attendance per subject may also influence this decision. This decision will be taken by the Principal in conjunction with the Head of School.

The School is obliged to inform the Social Services of student absences (PK1-G10) when:

- A student is absent from school for 3 consecutive weeks without this absence being backed by a medical certificate
- Social Services also intervene if there are many absences taking place on a regular basis without justification
-

It is up to the school's discretion to accept frequent school absences if the parents provide a justification that the school is willing to accept.

Persistent absences of any kind that have a significant impact on a student's growth and progress may result in the Principal, in consultation with the Head of School, recommending conditional re-enrollment or possible disenrollment for a student.

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 180 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

Context

Verdala International School (VIS) is a PK-12 international school located on the island of Malta. The official languages of Malta are Maltese and English. Our community is international and comprises families of over fifty different nationalities. We are committed to providing an inclusive and equitable language learning environment.

VIS offers the International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC) and International Primary Curriculum (IPC) in the Elementary School (ES). The Secondary section comprises Middle School (MS, grades 6-8) and High School (HS, grades 9-12). VIS Secondary is a candidate for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) and also offers the IB Diploma (IBDP) and Career-Related Programmes (CP).

Language Philosophy

At Verdala International School (VIS), we believe that it is important to foster multilingualism and intercultural understanding within our increasingly diverse international community. To this end, we aim to develop English as the primary language of instruction but also ensure that all students are able to communicate in more than one language. At the same time, we promote the host country language and actively encourage the development of students' home languages.

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 believe it is important to learn both about language and through language, and we explicitly strive to incorporate our student's multicultural and multilingual backgrounds into learning. 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. Our students have varying linguistic backgrounds with some having studied English and/or other languages in previous schools, while for others this is the first school where English is the primary language of instruction.



In order for students to achieve success within the programmes on offer at VIS, students are expected to have certain minimum levels of English proficiency. Details of these expectations can be found later in this document.

Language Practices

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

English is the most widely spoken international language globally and therefore its use as the school's primary language of instruction contributes to students' future 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 support the development of their home language with their children. A strong foundation in a student's home language facilitates the acquisition of additional languages and is key to cognitive and academic success. Upon application to Verdala, every student will complete a [Student Language Profile](#).

Assessment of English skills during Admissions

Students applying for PreK-1 up to Grade 2 are not assessed for English skills.

Students applying for Grades 3 and above are assessed for English proficiency using a range of tools and data points including formal assessment (can take place online or in person), parental intake information, the student's Language Profile, and interview. For each grade level, students are expected to have certain levels of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These are:

- For Grades 3-5: A2 English
- For Grades 6-9: B1 English
- For Grades 10-12: B2 English

Grade 9 students enrolling with B1 are required to attend an English Language Support (ELS) after school activity (ASA). Grade 10 students enrolling with B2 are strongly encouraged to attend an ELS ASA.

In some cases, the school can decide to accept a student, dependent upon the student completing intensive English classes at the family's expense prior to the start of school. In this case, the family would be required to present proof of enrollment and completion. Please find VIS' EAL Admissions Protocol below.

[EAL Admissions Protocol](#)

Language Classes

Students are required to study a minimum of two languages at VIS from Kindergarten upwards: English and another language. In the ES Spanish is offered as the second language and in Secondary students have a choice of Spanish, French and Italian. All MS students study Maltese Language and Cultural Studies; exceptions to this rule are only permitted for MS students who receive specific additional English language or learning support, and only where their needs identify the learning of an additional language as unduly challenging.

Elementary

- From Pre-K1 to Grade 5: All students study English Language Arts. Those students who need additional support with English as the language of instruction receive additional English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes instead of Spanish.
- From Kindergarten to Grade 5, students are introduced to the learning of Spanish as a foreign language focused on facilitating communication in basic everyday scenarios and exposure to the target language cultures.

Middle Years Programme (MYP)

- All students study English Language & Literature (English A)
 - Students in MYP 1-3 who require English Language Support receive this during Maltese Language & Cultural Studies sessions. These students are also encouraged to attend the additional language support after school activity (ASA) sessions to help support their English academic language development.
 - Students in MYP 4-5 who need English Language Support will receive this as part of our ASA programme.
- All students study a Language Acquisition course.
- Students in Grades 6-8 study Maltese Cultural Studies and Language Acquisition.

Diploma Programme (DP)

- All full DP students are required to take a Language A course. They have a choice between English Language and Literature (LAL) HL/SL or the School Supported Self-Taught (SSST) SL Literature course.
- All full DP students are also required to take a Language B course. They have a choice between Spanish, French and Italian at Ab Initio, SL or HL.
- Newly enrolled Grade 11 students with B2 level English are strongly encouraged to take English B HL and SSST in their home language or a language in which they have previously used as the primary language of instruction at school.
- Students who complete English LAL HL/SL and the SSST course will fulfil the requirements for a bilingual IB Diploma.

- Enrollment in the SSST Language A course is dependent on a placement test and consultation with the IBDP Coordinator.
 - The SSST course will be taught by tutors provided by the school.
- Career-related Programme (CP)
- All students take the Language Development course as part of their CP.
 - Scheduling permitting, students may take additional language courses from the selection available to DP students as outlined above.
 - Students who have an English proficiency score of less than C1 must take English B as one of their subject choices.

English Language Arts/Language and Literature

Elementary

In elementary school, English Language Arts, also referred to as literacy, incorporates speaking, listening, reading, and writing standards.. Literacy is taught through explicit mini-lessons, conferring, and independent work time for students to progress toward their personal goals. Students are each given the opportunity to develop on a timeline that is appropriate for them while knowing what the next step(s) are on the learning progression. There is opportunity for student choice in their writing and reading within genres necessary for grade level expectations and to allow for student interests. The ELA Programme in the Elementary section is inclusive with all students participating, regardless of home language.

Secondary

English teaching in Secondary strives to develop a love for and understanding of English language and literature. Both in the MYP and the DP, the LAL course aims to develop both receptive and productive 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 a range of factors, including culture, perspective, and context.

Further information about the LAL courses available in secondary, please consult the handbook available on the website.

English Language Acquisition (ELA)

The ELA programme is intended to support students who are still learning English through age-appropriate and situation-appropriate instruction. Placement in and transition out of the programme is determined by the School.

Elementary

Students are provided with extended time for working on the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) through a push-in/pull-out model. The emphasis is on enhancing students' communication skills and their confidence with academic language.

All English Language Learners (ELLs) are monitored formatively in close conjunction and cooperation with their classroom teachers. The decision for exit from English Language Support 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 using English.

Secondary

English Language Support uses a unit-based approach to address key skill, content and vocabulary development, which is based on age-appropriate skills, vocabulary and content, as well as emergent needs from the students' academic classes. The programme also uses an individual approach of goal setting and independent work time so that students can develop their own Approaches to Learning within the context of English language learning.

Language Acquisition: Other than English (Language B)

Elementary

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 a foreign language.

Secondary

VIS currently offers French, Italian and Spanish as choices in the Language Acquisition Programme with students progressing from MYP Phases 1-2 in Middle School and Phases 3-4 in grades 9-10 in High School. All MS students study Maltese Cultural Studies and Language Acquisition at Phase 1-2 in grades 6-8.

Language Acquisition is a core feature of the MYP and IBDP/CP 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 also develop an understanding of their own culture and language in a global context.

In order to achieve the MYP Diploma Certificate, students are expected to continue with the same language for the duration of the programme.

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 VIS, 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 certain 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 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

Students are expected to select and continue to study their chosen Language Acquisition course throughout the MYP and DP. Exceptions are rarely made and in such cases the following procedure should 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.

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 language development course is a self-guided course supervised by a teacher mentor where students can choose the language they wish to learn. CP students are required to maintain and complete a Language Development Portfolio to document their learning activities and provide evidence of language engagement and development.

Home language support

The term home language 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 home language.

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 home 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. Home language 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 primary language of instruction at VIS, research shows that bilingualism and multilingualism are highly desirable qualities. Families are strongly encouraged to preserve their children's home language by actively developing their speaking, reading, and writing skills at home.

Children are encouraged to use their home language within the classroom to facilitate understanding and to help newcomers with integration.

Support for Home Language(s)/Native Language(s)

- The Language Curricula 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.
- Parents are strongly encouraged to maintain fluency in and appreciation of the home language in the home context or through tutoring.
- The school finds opportunities within the curriculum to value and share the different languages and cultures of the world and also celebrates these throughout the year.
- Extra curricular home language conversation classes will be facilitated through the ASAs as the need arises.

Host Country Language and Culture

For Maltese Nationals, the Maltese Language is offered as an ASA (as required by the school's Memorandum of Understanding with the Maltese Government). In addition, all students in grades 6-8 study Maltese Cultural Studies and Language Acquisition in order to develop a foundational level of the Maltese language and a deeper understanding of the culture of the country in which they are living.

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

- Host country events
- Teaching units throughout the school
- Links to the local community made through the curriculum
- Field Trips to sites of local importance
- MYP Community Projects
- VIS Service Learning Projects
- Sports, drama and music activities

In Grades 9-11, students may continue their study with an ASA to complete the local foreign language SEC course in il-Malti bħala Lingwa Barranija (accredited by the University of Malta), which permits entry for non-Maltese students who have resided in Malta for 4 or more years of compulsory schooling access to the University of Malta.

Language Development across the Curriculum

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 and may therefore require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching to support their ongoing work.

Teachers can request support from the EAL department to help on an as-needed basis with curriculum implementation, classroom practice strategies, modifying curriculum, and meeting student needs. Alternatively, and subject to discussion with their supervisor, a request may be made for funds to attend external professional development in this area.

Workshops are offered to the whole faculty, based on the needs of the school at the time.

References

Ball, Jessica. "Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds: home language(s)/native language(s)-Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education in Early Years." UNESCO Education Sector, 2011.

Cambridge. "Cambridge IGCSE Subjects." Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017,



www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-secondary-2/cambridge-igcse/subjects/.

Council of Europe. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), 2017, www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/.

Cummins, Jim. (1979). Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency, Linguistic Interdependence, the Optimum Age Question and Some Other Matters. Working Papers on Bilingualism, No. 19. Working Papers on Bilingualism. 19.

Guvercin, Hurisa. "Mother Tongue: The Language of Heart and Mind." The Fountain Magazine, 2010, www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/Mother-Tongue-The-Language-of-Heart-and-Mind.

Iborganization. "Assessment & Exams | Diploma." International Baccalaureate®, 2005, www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/assessment-and-exams/.

Jenie, Gabriel. "Three Reason You Should Love Your Native Language." 22 Feb. 2016.

Oxford University Press. Oxford Online Placement Test | Young Learners Placement Test | Exam Practice Tests for Cambridge English Key, Preliminary, First, Advanced; IELTS; TOEIC; TOEFL; ECCE, 2016, www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/DefaultMR.aspx?id=3034&menuId=1.

WIDA, 2014, www.wida.us/.

IBCP Language Development Guide
<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/career-related-programme/>
Approved Nov 2023

4/10. Assessment Policy

Assessment Philosophy

Assessment is crucial in supporting teaching and learning at Verdala International School (VIS). It is the primary means by which we evaluate student academic development and progress.

We recognise the diverse learning needs and educational backgrounds of our students. By gathering and analysing data from a range of assessments in various forms, students are supported in reaching their learning goals.

Assessment and constructive feedback are integral components in nurturing a growth mindset among our students. This approach empowers them to take ownership of their learning.

Principles of Assessment

Throughout all our programmes assessment at VIS should:

- be relevant, meaningful, and authentic;
- support diverse learners and a variety of learning needs;
- be criteria-related using published, agreed, learning objectives from curricular programmes which are made clear to students by teachers before tasks begin;
- be both formative and summative
- occur regularly and provide students and teachers with opportunities for reflection
- be internally standardised (where needed) to ensure consistency and reliability
- be followed by constructive feedback to allow students to evaluate their progress and set targets for improvement
- enable the school to measure student success in meeting specific learning objectives.

Assessment Practices

Elementary School (ES)

Classroom-Based Assessment

Classroom-based assessment in the ES can be formative or summative in nature. Formative assessment is any evidence of learning that is collected or observed by teachers that is related to the learning target and helps to inform future instruction. This type of assessment is collected throughout the learning process thereby providing multiple opportunities for students to display their understanding.

On the other hand, summative assessment usually takes the form of a task that is positioned towards the end of a unit and asks students to combine multiple skills and understandings. This assessment helps teachers evaluate the learning that has occurred over the course of the unit and is used, in combination with the formative assessments, to come to a final determination of progress.



Standardised Assessments

In addition to classroom-based assessments, students in grades 3-5 sit Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. MAP is an adaptive, computer-based test that benchmarks growth and progress against millions of students around the world. The results of this assessment are used to help VIS ES evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and determine the next steps for individual students. It is one piece of the puzzle that helps teachers support student growth and progress. MAP results are not used as a data point with regard to the written reporting system mentioned below and results will be shared with families when testing is completed.

Communicating Student Progress

Partnership with the parent community is an important and defining quality of VIS and we are committed to engaging with parents throughout the year in order to support learning. The following sections describe some of the ways in which we provide information to parents about their child's progress.

Celebrations of Learning (CoL)

Reflection and goal setting are important components of the learning process. CoLs are opportunities for students to share with their parents their learning journey, progress and future goals. The classroom teacher will invite the parents in for at least two CoLs per year.

Written Reports

VIS reporting is based on a trimester system and therefore written reports are shared with parents three times a year. At the end of trimesters one and three report cards are issued while at the end of trimester two, a progress report is issued. These reports detail a student's progress relative to a series of learning targets that are drawn from a variety of curricular areas. The school uses a three-level system to indicate a child's progress towards any given learning target. These levels are listed below.

Level	Descriptor (the student...)
Beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrates ability to apply knowledge, skills, and understandings being explored, with frequent support. ● has difficulty performing at the expected grade level standard
Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrates ability to apply knowledge, skills, and understandings, with occasional support. ● Is approaching the expected grade level standard

Mastering/ Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and understandings, consistently and/or independently. • performs at the expected grade level standard
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This topic has not been taught and/or there is insufficient evidence of learning to report on this curriculum area.

Table 1: ES Reporting Descriptors

Secondary

Summative and Formative Assessment

Summative assessment takes place at the end of a teaching and learning process or experience, is planned for in advance and reflects student achievement at that moment in time. Authentic assessments can take a variety of forms and are designed so that learners can demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and apply them to new questions and concepts.

Regular formative assessment takes place throughout units to provide feedback that is responsive to learner needs and informs teaching practice. Formative assessments can take a variety of forms and are designed to support students in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Grades and feedback from summative assessments are shared with students after internal standardisation has taken place. Teachers follow a standard procedure for the moderation of student work.

Feedback from formative assessments should be timely and shared with students to give them the opportunity to reflect and take action to improve.

Each unit must consist of both formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments must precede summative assessments.

Externally Assessed Summative Assessments

Students sit formal summative assessments at the end of each of the three IB programmes offered in secondary.

Middle Years Programme

Students and their families have the opportunity to take externally assessed eAssessments in May of MYP 5. They can opt to do this on a subject-by-subject basis or take the full MYP certificate. To obtain the MYP certificate, students take eAssessments in English Language and Literature, Language Acquisition in French or Spanish (Italian

and Maltese are not currently offered), Individuals & Societies, Sciences, Mathematics and Interdisciplinary Learning. They also submit ePortfolios in the form of Language Acquisition French, Italian, Spanish or Maltese Speaking Exams, coursework for either Design, Arts, or Physical & Health Education and complete the Personal Project. Additionally, students must have met the requirements for participation in Service as Action.

Regardless of whether or not the student is registered with the IB for the MYP eAssessments, the school submits the Personal Project for external moderation.

Diploma Programme

In May of Grade 12 DP students sit externally assessed written examinations in each of their subjects. Students also submit internal assessments (coursework) for each of their subjects which are graded in school by teachers and moderated externally by the IB. For some subjects, students submit coursework components which are externally assessed by the IB. Students taking the full Diploma Programme must have also have met the requirements for the DP Core. The Extended and Theory of Knowledge (TOK) Essays are marked externally. The TOK Exhibition is graded in school and moderated by the IB. The school is responsible for confirming with the IB that students have met the requirements for Creativity, Activity and Service.

Career-Related Programme

In order to receive the CP certificate students must also sit external exams for between 2-4 DP subjects in May of Grade 12. They also complete a specified career-related study. At VIS, students undertake a BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship to fulfil this requirement. Students must also have met the requirements for the four elements of the CP Core: Personal and Professional Skills (PPS), Service Learning and Language Development. The reflective project is assessed by the school and moderated and graded by the IB. The school is responsible for confirming with the IB that students have completed the requirements aspects of the CP Core.

VIS Diploma

All students at VIS also earn a VIS Diploma which is equivalent to an American High School Diploma. All courses studied from Grade 9 onwards count towards the HS Diploma. The VIS High School Diploma is a minimum requirement for entry into university education and applies to students enrolled in any of our curriculum programmes. The VIS HS Diploma is awarded to students at the end of Grade 12, subject to them meeting minimum credit and attendance requirements.

Please see the *HS Student-Parent Handbook* for more information on formal exams for each of the programmes listed above.



Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

All Middle School students sit for MAP tests twice a year in September and January. The results of this assessment are used to help VIS evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and determine the next steps for individual students. MAP results are not used as a single data point, but are utilised by teachers alongside a range of other data gathered.

Evaluating and Recording Ongoing Student Performance

Ongoing assessment tasks are evaluated according to the respective Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP) or Career-Related Programme (CP) assessment criteria. Criteria must be accessible to students and parents, and teachers must ensure that there is a clear student understanding of the criteria.

Assessment grades awarded at VIS represent the most accurate demonstration of student performance over a reporting period. Grades are recorded in ManageBac.

Middle Years Programme

The work and progress of each MYP student is measured on a 1-8 scale against published descriptors which represent the communication, knowledge, understanding and skills standards for each of the eight subject groups. These are shown in the table below.

Subject	Criterion A	Criterion B	Criterion C	Criterion D
Language & Literature (English)	Analysing	Organizing	Producing text	Using language
Language Acquisition: French, Italian, Spanish, Maltese.	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Individuals & Societies (Humanities)	Knowing and understanding	Investigating	Communicating	Thinking critically
Sciences	Knowing and understanding	Inquiring and designing	Processing and evaluating	Reflecting on the impacts of science
Mathematics	Knowing and understanding	Investigating patterns	Communicating	Applying mathematics in real-world contexts
The Arts: Drama, Music, Visual Arts	Investigating	Developing	Creating /Performing	Evaluating
Physical & Health Education	Knowing and understanding	Planning for performance	Applying and performing	Reflecting and improving performance
Design	Inquiring and analysing	Developing ideas	Creating the solution	Evaluating
Personal Project		Planning	Applying Skills	Reflecting
Interdisciplinary Learning		Evaluating	Synthesising	Reflecting

Table 2: MYP Assessment Criteria by Subject Group, MYP: From Principles into Practice (2014)

Subject groups must address all strands of all four assessment criteria at least twice in each year of the MYP. The Personal Project and Interdisciplinary Learning have three criteria. Students complete the Personal Project in the final year of the programme and they are required to complete an interdisciplinary unit in every year of the programme.

In the MYP, students are assessed on their progress at meeting these descriptors. As a consequence, grades assigned at the end of a reporting period are not based on an average across assessment tasks but on the level of consistent demonstration of the criteria. Recent performance and sustained progress are taken into consideration when awarding the report grades. At the end of each year, MYP students receive a criterion-level total score for each subject. To calculate this score, teachers add together the student's final achievement levels in all criteria of the subject group. Please see the table below to see how criteria grades are converted to provide a general MYP grade from 1-7.

Grade	Boundary Guideline	Descriptor
1	1-5	Produces work of very limited quality. Conveys many significant misunderstandings or lacks understanding of most concepts and contexts. Very rarely demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Very inflexible, rarely using knowledge or skills.
2	6-9	Produces work of limited quality. Expresses misunderstandings or significant gaps in understanding for many concepts and contexts. Infrequently demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Generally inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, infrequently applying knowledge and skills.
3	10-14	Produces work of an acceptable quality. Communicates basic understanding of many concepts and contexts, with occasionally significant misunderstandings or gaps. Begins to demonstrate some basic critical and creative thinking. Is often inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, requiring support even in familiar classroom situations.
4	15-18	Produces good-quality work. Communicates basic understanding of most concepts and contexts with few misunderstandings and minor gaps. Often demonstrates basic critical and creative thinking. Uses knowledge and skills with some flexibility in familiar classroom situations, but requires support in unfamiliar situations.
5	19-23	Produces generally high-quality work. Communicates secure understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, sometimes with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar classroom and real-world situations and, with support, some unfamiliar real-world situations.
6	24-27	Produces high-quality, occasionally innovative work. Communicates extensive understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, frequently with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar classroom and real-world situations, often with independence.
7	28-32	Produces high-quality, frequently innovative work. Communicates comprehensive, nuanced understanding of concepts and contexts. Consistently demonstrates sophisticated critical and creative thinking. Frequently transfers knowledge and skills with independence and expertise in a variety of complex classroom and real-world situations.

Table 3: MYP General Grade Descriptors, MYP: From Principles into Practice (2014)

Diploma Programme

Ongoing assessment tasks completed at school are assessed by teachers using the DP's 1-7 grading scale. Teachers have access to the IB's Grade Descriptors document which provides detailed information on the characteristics of performance at each grade for each subject area. VIS has developed the general DP grade descriptors shown

below from the subject-specific ones provided by the IB. These are shared with parents on reports.

Grade	Descriptor
7	Consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them almost faultlessly in a wide variety of situations. The student consistently demonstrates originality, insight and analytical thinking. The student produces work of high quality.
6	Consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations. The student consistently demonstrates originality, insight and analytical thinking.
5	Thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations. The student occasionally demonstrates originality, insight and analytical thinking.
4	General understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them effectively in normal situations. There is occasional evidence of analytical thinking.
3	Limited achievement against most of the objectives, or clear difficulties in some areas. The student demonstrates a limited understanding of the required knowledge and skills and is only able to apply them fully to normal situations with support.
2	Very limited achievement in terms of the objectives. The student has difficulty in understanding the required knowledge and skills and is unable to apply them fully to normal situations, even with support.
1	Minimal achievement in terms of objectives.
n/a	Not Yet Assessed.

Table 4: VIS DP 1-7 General DP Grade Descriptors (from ManageBac)

Ongoing progress with the DP Core is recorded on ManageBac using a three-tier scale consisting of concern, on-track and excellent.

The expectation is that for DP by the end of Grade 11, all components/skills would have been assessed for the level at which the student is taking the subject.

Career-Related Programme

Ongoing assessment for DP courses that students study as part of the CP follows the guidelines above. Attainment in the BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship course is recorded using the pass, merit and



distinction grading scale set by Pearson. Progress in other aspects of the CP Core is recorded using a three-tier scale consisting of emerging, developing and mastering.

Reporting

Teachers record assessment results in ManageBac which can be accessed on a regular basis by both students and parents. ManageBac is also used to generate formal reports issued to families three times a year at the end of each term. These reports provide a picture of how the student is doing in each subject area as well as which IB learner attributes they are strong in. The report also provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their own progress and to create targets moving forward. There are also two Parent Teacher Conferences (PTCs) throughout the year, which provide additional opportunities to share updates on student progress.

MAP results are also shared with students and parents via Managebac.

Homework

Middle School (MS)

MS students will receive homework from most of their classes, which can take a variety of formats from completion of exercises to work on a long-term project. Although teachers do try to spread this out to avoid overloading students, the demands of each programme mean this can be very difficult to achieve. Students, therefore, need to allocate sufficient time on a daily basis to ensure they can keep up to date with their obligations.

Homework will be set along the following guidelines and communicated via ManageBac:

- Grade 6 - 1 x 20-minute task per subject area per week.
- Grade 7 - 1 x 30-minute task per subject area per week.
- Grade 8 - 1 x 45-minute task per subject area per week.

High School (HS)

Students are expected to complete the tasks assigned to them whether they are formative or summative tasks. Tasks are uploaded to Managebac at the start of the week and this should enable students to plan their time accordingly. Meeting the demands of each programme requires High School students to allocate sufficient time outside of school, on a daily basis, to effectively meet academic obligations.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers are ultimately responsible for implementing this policy. However, new staff are supported by their respective Heads of Department (HOD) and Milepost Leaders who ensure that they understand this policy document. Additional information on assessment practices at VIS is also available to teachers in the staff handbooks. Programme Coordinators, Assistant Principals, the Director of Teaching and Learning and Principals support HODs and teachers as needed to ensure that VIS assessment practices are followed.

Students are responsible for ensuring that all assessments submitted are products of their own honest endeavour. The school's expectations regarding academic integrity and consequences for academically dishonest behaviour are clearly set out in VIS' Academic Integrity Policy and in the divisional parent-student handbooks.

Inclusive access arrangements for completing assessments are made where needed as described in the VIS Inclusion Policy.

References

International Baccalaureate Organization MYP: From Principles into Practice (2014)

Reviewed Nov 2023

4/11. Academic Integrity 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. We promote academic integrity to enable students to participate in the intellectual community around them. 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;
- understanding generative artificial intelligence.

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.

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 correctly cite 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 assessments.
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:
 1. Misconduct during an exam, such as distracting others or taking unauthorised material into an examination or other assessment;
 2. having unauthorised prior knowledge of an examination or other assessment;
 3. fabrication and falsification of data - making up data/information for an examination or other assessment;

4. offering bribery to an examiner/teacher for preferential treatment;
 5. obtaining or giving aid during an examination or other assessment;
 6. 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 and the Learner Profile

The promotion of academic integrity encourages the students to live the school mission of becoming knowledgeable, inquisitive and ethical contributors to our world whilst modelling the attributes of the learner profile. Demonstrating academically honest behaviour allows the individual to participate in the wider intellectual community, is respectful to others and enhances trust. As a community we believe in the virtue of nurturing academic integrity as both a skill set to be practised and strengthened over time and an attitude which enables the individual to communicate and demonstrate principled, caring, thoughtful and reflective behaviour embodied in the International Baccalaureate's Learner Profile.

Note on Collaborative Work

The inquiry based nature of the International Baccalaureate programme encourages teachers to craft authentic assessments, some of which involve students working in collaborative contexts. In these situations and for external assessments such as the e-portfolios we help students to understand the difference between collaboration and collusion through a variety of practices which may vary depending upon the nature and requirements of the task. Students are always required to present work in their own words and acknowledge the work of others. Research, source evaluation and note-taking templates, acknowledgement of roles and responsibilities, peer review and self-assessment and the use of collaborative rubrics are some of the ways students are encouraged to demonstrate academic honesty and integrity.

If a student submits work that isn't authentic the school will follow the steps outlined in the Consequences of Academic Malpractice sections of the School Academic Integrity policy outlined on page 5 (Middle School) and page 7 (High School) of this policy.

The School will not submit any student work that includes any known, suspected or confirmed instances of academic misconduct.

Elementary Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures

The Elementary School teaches academic integrity through learning outcomes related to its information and technology curriculum as well as its digital citizenship standards.



Any violations of academic integrity are treated as learning experiences for students and they are provided with the opportunity to correct any mistake that might have occurred within the context of a reassessment of their understanding of the content.

Elementary School 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 integrity (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 disintegrity is identified.
- Elementary School Parent-Guardians 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 integrity;
- support the expectation that students submit acceptable quality work when a case of academic disintegrity is identified.

Elementary School Staff are expected to:

- support and comply with this policy;
- be positive role models for academic integrity practices;
- incorporate instruction and clear expectations for the production of academically integral 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 student 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 disintegrity in accordance with the guidance in the relevant Handbooks;
- support students with the acquisition of age-appropriate referencing and citation skills;



- help students understand the connection between self-management, research, and thinking skills to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding of academic integrity.

Elementary School leadership is expected to:

- ensure all students are appropriately oriented to the schools Academic Integrity expectations and consequences from the start of the academic year
- 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;
- apply appropriate disciplinary consequences for students who breach the Academic Integrity Policy;
- document (record) incidents wherein students commit academic dishonest behaviour in the school Managebac Behavior system.

Consequences of Academic Malpractice

In Elementary School, academic integrity issues with students are dealt with the Elementary Division Behavior Regulations document and Elementary Technology Responsible Use Agreement.

Middle School Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures

Citation Style

APA (American Psychological Association, 7th. edition) is the citation and referencing style used throughout the school. Middle School uses an appropriately modified form of APA.

Guidance for referencing is available in the [Middle School Referencing Guide](#) (access available for internal use only).

Roles and Responsibilities

Middle School 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 integrity (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 disintegrity is identified.

Middle School Parent-Guardians 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 integrity;
- support the expectation that students submit acceptable quality work when a case of academic disintegrity is identified.

Middle School Staff are expected to:

- support and comply with this policy;
- be positive role models for academic integrity practices;
- incorporate instruction and clear expectations for the production of academically integral 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 student 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 disintegrity in accordance with the guidance in the relevant Handbooks;
- support students with the acquisition of referencing and citation skills;
- help students understand the connection between self-management, research, and thinking skills to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding of academic integrity.

Middle School leadership is expected to:

- ensure all students are appropriately oriented to the schools Academic Integrity expectations and consequences from the start of the academic year
- 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;
- apply appropriate disciplinary consequences for students who breach the Academic Integrity Policy;
- document (record) incidents wherein students commit academic dishonest behaviour in the school Managebac Behavior system.

Consequences of Academic Malpractice

VIS treats academic integrity issues very seriously, and requires that all students learn academically honest behaviours. Although there is a learning process involved, this is also a serious matter that can have an impact on external examination results and students' futures. The practices and consequences outlined here are therefore intended to help students learn to value and model academically honest practice. Academic disintegrity 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:

Within a school year, regardless of subject area, the consequences for academic disintegrity are:

First instance

- The class teacher will review the standards and expectations for academic integrity and will support the student in re-submitting the work to an acceptable standard. Feedback will be given and the work assessed as normal.
- A note will be recorded on the student's MB Behaviour record and the MS Principal informed.

Second instance

- The student will be required to re-submit the work to an acceptable standard. Feedback will be given and the work assessed as normal.
- The student will write a reflective essay reviewing their actions and how to avoid this issue in the future. The essay will be written with supervision and support from the



school counsellor; signed by the student, parents/guardians, and the programme coordinator; and then added to the student's file.

- The student will be placed on a Behavior Note Card (blue) for at least one week.
- The student will be required to attend regular sessions with the school counsellor focused on ensuring quality Attitudes to Learning.
- A record will be made in ManageBac highlighting the issue.

Third & subsequent instances

- A Disciplinary Review Committee will be convened to discuss the appropriate consequence which may include:
 - Re-submission of the work to an acceptable standard, including feedback and assessment as normal
 - Suspension (in or out of school)
 - Expulsion
 - The issue being recorded on school transcripts
 - Other consequences as deemed appropriate by the committee

The committee will take into consideration the student's history at the school, especially regarding previous incidents of academic disintegrity, when determining the appropriate sanction.

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.

High School Academic Integrity Processes & Procedures

Citation Style

APA (American Psychological Association, 7th edition) is the citation and referencing style used throughout the school.

Guidance for referencing is available in the [High School Referencing Guide](#) (access available for internal use only).

Roles and Responsibilities

High School 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 integrity (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 disintegrity is identified;

High School Parent-Guardians 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 integrity;
- support the expectation that students submit acceptable quality work when a case of academic disintegrity is identified.

High School Staff are expected to:

- support and comply with this policy;
- be positive role models for academic integrity practices;
- incorporate instruction and clear expectations for the production of academically integral 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 student 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 disintegrity in accordance with the guidance in the relevant Handbooks;
- support students with the acquisition of referencing and citation skills;
- help students understand the connection between self-management, research, and thinking skills to gain a deeper and more holistic understanding of academic integrity.

School leadership is expected to:

- ensure all students are appropriately oriented to the schools Academic Integrity expectations and consequences from the start of the academic year
- 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;
- apply appropriate disciplinary consequences for students who breach the Academic Integrity Policy;
- document (record) incidents wherein students commit academic dishonest behaviour in the school Managebac Behavior system.

Consequences of Academic Malpractice

VIS treats academic integrity issues very seriously, and requires that all students learn academically honest behaviours. Although there is a learning process involved, this is also a serious matter that can have an impact on external examination results and students' futures. The practices and consequences outlined here are therefore intended to help students learn to value and model academically honest practice.

Academic disintegrity 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:

Within a school year, regardless of subject area, the consequences for academic disintegrity are:

First instance

- Parent-Guardian(s) are informed of the incident.
- The student will be required to re-submit the work to an acceptable standard. Feedback will be given and the work assessed as normal.
- The student will write a reflective essay reviewing their actions and how to avoid this issue in the future. The student will share the typed essay with parents/guardians, the HS Principal, and the respective programme coordinator; and then added to the student's file.
- A record will be made in ManageBac highlighting the issue.
- (If applicable) The student will be placed on an Attitudes to Learning report card (blue) for at least one week.

Second & Subsequent Instances

- Parent-Guardian(s) are informed of the incident as well as the convening of a Disciplinary Review Committee with the student.
- A Disciplinary Review Committee will be convened to discuss the appropriate consequence which may include (Refer to [‘Disciplinary Review Committee’](#) section below for further explanation of this action):
 - Re-submission of the work to an acceptable standard, including feedback and assessment as normal
 - Suspension (in or out of school)
 - Expulsion
 - The issue being recorded on school transcripts
 - Withdrawal from the examination subject/Diploma programme
 - Non-submission of examination component(s)
 - Withdrawal or modification of university references
 - Other consequences as deemed appropriate by the committee

The committee will take into consideration the student’s history at the school, especially regarding previous incidents of academic disintegrity, when determining the appropriate sanction. Responsible Use for Artificial Intelligence

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

In the context of this Policy, GenAI and related technologies refers to software platforms and services that mimic human language capabilities. It also refers to mechanised processes that can adapt to input to achieve specific goals. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ChatGPT
- Google Bard/Duet
- Claude

Commitment to Ethical Use

VIS is committed to affirming the ethical use of GenAI and handling of data in all aspects of our educational environment. We believe that with the following considerations, these technologies can greatly enhance teaching and learning and support our community in its shared values, while affirming core ethical considerations that are central to a healthy and safe environment.

Key Considerations for the Ethical Use of GenAI

At VIS, GenAI is best used as a consultant, or used only as a derivative or background source, to assist and support our teaching, learning and communications. If GenAI output is used directly without editing and/or paraphrased on formative or summative tasks, it will require a citation, subject to the ‘Citation’ section in the Academic Integrity Policy. Students are expected to corroborate information obtained from GenAI on any



submitted formative and/or summative task. We believe that GenAI should be used to support, not replace, human decision-making.

We use GenAI systems that are reliable, secure, and safe to use, which the school can affirm is acceptable for use in an educational environment.

Ethical and Responsible Use of GenAI

All users of GenAI and data technologies in our school, including students, staff, administrators, are expected to use these technologies in a responsible and ethical manner. This includes respecting others, including their intellectual property rights, and avoiding any actions that could lead to negative outcomes. Further, users must adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and school policies. Users must be aware of any potential biases in these technologies and take steps to mitigate them.

Users are responsible for monitoring the results produced by GenAI systems. This includes confirming the information provided by GenAI is accurate and reliable, and reporting any concerns or issues of any GenAI output to the appropriate person or department.

As per the VIS Technology Responsible Use Agreement, students will use Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Machine Learning (ML) tools only as guided by my teachers and will always cite such use within their referencing.

How Can GenAI Be Used Ethically?

1. Ethically Responsible Use of Gen AI

A student is tasked with completing further research on a topic covered in class. The teacher allows the student to use reliable primary and secondary sources, with the expectation for students to provide a Reference Page of the resources used throughout the research. Students start their research by asking a GenAI tool (i.e. ChatGPT) about the topic. The student fact checks the GenAI provided information with at least two reputable websites. The student only uses the accurately fact checked information in their research, and adds the GenAI tool to the Reference Page.

2. Unethical and Irresponsible Use of Gen AI

A student is tasked with completing an independent research essay. The student conducted the research on their own and wrote the body of the essay on their own. The student uploads the entire essay to a GenAI tool and instructs it to adjust the body of the essay so that it “sounds like a professional wrote it”. The GenAI tool alters the terminology, tone, and phrases of the student’s original essay. And, the student does not reference the GenAI tool in the Reference Page.

Review and Updates

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually or as often as necessary to address changes in laws or practices related to Academic Integrity, GenAI, and related technologies.

References

International Baccalaureate [IB]. (2019). Academic Integrity Retrieved January 5, 2021 from <https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/76d2b6d4731f44ff800d0d06d371a892/academic-integrity-policy-english.pdf>

International Baccalaureate [IB]. (n.d.). Academic integrity in the IB Diploma. Retrieved March 11, 2017 from https://resources.ibo.org//data/g_0_malpr_sup_1601_1_e.pdf

International Baccalaureate [IB]. (2014, August). Academic integrity in the IB educational context. Retrieved December 11, 2017 from <http://www.ibo.org/globalassets/digital-toolkit/brochures/academic-integrity-ib-en.pdf>

Responsible Use Policy for Artificial Intelligence in Schools by Adam Morris, Schools Technology <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NqgYfeUzqlAZ4wBVdwn0pfzmdbAozn7OKsjvud2Kfyo/edit?usp=sharing>

Other references and resources:

Verdala International School High School Student-Parent Handbook

Verdala International School Middle School Student-Parent Handbook

Reviewed November 2023

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.

Social-Emotional Advisors



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



Verdala
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

4/7	Increase of student contact days from 175 to 180 - to be grandfathered in over 2 years (23-25)	BOD/ HOS	June 16 2023
4/6	Attendance Policy reviewed and rewritten	BOD/ HOS	Sep 11 2023
4/11 4/9 4 /5 4/4 4/10	Academic Integrity Languages Policy Inclusion Policy Admissions Policy Assessment Policy	BOD/ HOS	Nov 2023