



2.18 Grading Guidelines

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Effective Assessment of Learning Guidelines

1. Teachers will use the most effective assessment methods meeting the standards of quality assessment:

- Determine clear outcomes
- State the purpose for learning
- Match assessment strategy to the outcome
- Select appropriate samples
- Control distortion and avoid bias
- Provide timely feedback
- Keep accurate records

Rationale:

Using quality assessment methods will ensure that students are assessed in ways that are equitable, and increases the probability that the grades will be an accurate reflection of their learning.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

- Teachers will understand the outcomes they are expected to teach and, with their colleagues, determine those curricular outcomes that produce *essential learning*.
- Teachers will be clear about the purpose of the assessment. Is this assessment “for” or “of” learning?
- Teachers must establish and clearly communicate expectations regarding assignments.
- Teachers must set and communicate reasonable timelines for assignments and support students in meeting these timelines. The timelines teachers set should provide adequate time for students to complete the work, while being mindful of other demands and of student strengths and challenges
- Teachers will have a repertoire of assessment strategies and understand how to use the method best suited to the outcome(s). Is there a balance of observation, product and conversation?
- Teacher will determine when to sample for student performance and recognize that grades should not be assigned to all of the students’ work, nor should all grades be used to determine the student’s final mark.
- Teachers will build their awareness of variables that can cause distortion. *“A number of variables can cause assessment results to be distorted. There may be concerns about student-specific issues (e.g. low reading skill, physical health, emotional setback), disturbances in the assessment setting (e.g. noise, lighting, temperature),*



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and concerns with the assessment itself (e.g. clarity of wording of directions and questions, time available to complete). Teachers must be conscious of all the factors that can interfere with quality assessment, and attempt to avoid or mitigate them. If that is not possible, an alternative assessment opportunity should be provided.”
Communicating Student Learning – Manitoba Education and Training.

- Teachers will make a commitment to grade assessments and return them to students in a timely fashion. For example, a turnaround time of one week would be viewed as appropriate.
- Teachers will keep records of student performance, using a system that supports effective grading practices.

2. Teachers will provide students with a written overview of their assessment plan for a given unit of study.

Rationale:

By providing an overview of the assessment plan, students will have an understanding of the outcomes and the assessment strategies to be used.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will consider how they will assess their students and why they will use the approach they are using.

Teachers will use a variety of assessment methodologies as they relate to a varied instructional approach.

Teachers will think about the role students play in assessing their own achievement and build it into their assessment plan.

3. Summative assessment (assessment of learning) is a critical component of a balanced assessment process. Final examinations are a summative tool. Therefore, the practice of “exemptions” will be discontinued.

Rationale:

All students should be provided with an opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Students who are most likely to be exempt from an exam are often the students who would most likely benefit from the exam writing process. These students often continue their studies at a post-secondary institution where exams are frequently used to assess learning.



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Assessment research suggests that exemptions only motivate those students whose marks are just beneath the exemption criteria.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers may experience an increase in exam marking.

The increase in students writing exams may have an impact on exam scheduling.

Teachers may need to revisit the use of written exams as the only summative tool at the end of the semester or term and consider the use of other summative assessment tools to effectively assess higher levels of thinking such as analysis, application, synthesis and evaluation?

Students who were previously exempt from exams may believe the new guideline is unfair and therefore the school will need to clearly articulate the rationale.

- 4. Summative assessment is one component of quality assessment. When an end of semester summative assessment (examination, project, etc.) is appropriate, the value will not exceed the following: Grade 9 – 15%, Grade 10 – 20%, Grade 11 – 25%, Grade 12 –30%.**

Rationale:

By using a graduated value system, students can develop exam-writing and risk-taking skills, for example, as they progress through their high school years, thus becoming more proficient as the value increases.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers may need to reconsider the value they place on final summative assessments. Teachers may need to consider which outcomes they are assessing using the end of the year summative process and the time required to complete the assessment.



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Focus on Outcomes

- 5. All grading procedures will be linked to curricular outcomes, goals/standards as determined by the Manitoba Education and Training.**

Rationale:

In order to understand what a mark or grade truly represents, we need to know they are based on common curricular outcomes, with some degree of consistency across the province. That is, the same result could be achieved should a student move from one classroom to another or from one school or another. When grades are “accurate, meaningful and consistent”, teachers, students and parents can make good decisions for their students.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will be required to understand the curricular goals/outcomes and performance standards expected from their students.

By focusing on outcomes/goals and standards, teachers will be able to determine what the student has or has not learned, thus allowing them to adjust their classroom teaching methods.

Teachers will be required to come to a shared understanding of *essential learning* to ensure a certain level of consistency between classrooms and schools.

Focusing on outcomes/goals and performance standards allows parents and students to know what is expected of them.

- 6. The individual student’s achievement of a stated learning goal or outcome is the only consideration when determining a grade.**

Rationale:

The Manitoba curriculum is outcome-based and students are expected to be assessed against those outcomes. By including factors outside of the stated goals or outcomes such as specific learning behaviours into the grading process, the meaning of the grade is distorted and in turn the clarity of communication with students and parents is also distorted.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will need to be clear about the goals and outcomes they are assessing.

Teachers will need to use a variety of strategies to help students develop effective learning behaviours.



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Teachers will be required to track learning behaviours separately from learning goals and outcomes.

Students will need to understand that effective learning behaviours continue to be critically important to learning.

7. When tracking students' results, teachers' grade books will indicate student achievement by goal or outcome and not by the method of assessment.

Rationale:

Tracking students' achievement by goal or outcome allows teachers to clearly understand the areas the student has successfully learned and those areas that require additional teaching and learning. Concrete evidence of learning as it relates to the goal or outcome is then available, and outcome-based tracking will ensure the teacher has covered the curricular expectations.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will need to have a strong working knowledge of curricular outcomes for a given course.

Teachers will need to collaborate with colleagues who teach the same course in order to determine the *essential learning* they will cover.

Teachers will need to change their approach to tracking student learning. This may require exploring alternatives to accommodate an outcome-based approach.

Teachers will be required to determine the level of specificity they will use in tracking evidence.

Teachers will need to recognize that a single assessment may cover more than one curricular outcome.

If teachers use a variety of assessment strategies such as observations, conversations and performance assessments, each using a different grading scale, a common conversion scale will need to be created to generate a percentage grade.

Students will need to have a clear understanding of what they know and don't know relative to the learning outcomes and will need to set appropriate learning goals to address the gaps in their learning.



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Creating the Grade

- 8. A grade of zero (0) would be used to indicate that a student has not learned ANY aspects of the curricular outcomes. Zeros will NOT be given for non-attendance or behaviour-related performance. Missing or incomplete assignments will be indicated using INC for incomplete in the teacher's "gradebook".**

Rationale:

Students must be held accountable for inappropriate learning behaviour and assigning a zero may be a way of "letting them off the hook."

Marks should only be used to indicate student achievement.

Marks should never be used as a form of punishment.

There is no evidence to show that assigning a zero grade has a positive effect on student learning.

Assigning zeros for things other than achievement confuses the meaning of the grade.

Zero grades skew results.

Students cannot recover from zero grades, especially when the mean is used to calculate final grades. Note: teachers must consider the "weighting" of grades and also consider methods other than use of the mean (e.g. the mode) as a measure of central tendency in a set of grades.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will be required to give an "INC" designation for incomplete work

Teachers will give marks only as they relate to student achievement

Schools will need to explore alternative solutions to dealing with students who chronically do not complete or hand in assignments, behave poorly in class and/or do not attend classes regularly.

When students do not attend class, teachers must consider the level of student engagement within their classes.

Teachers must consider the quality and relevance of the assignment they are asking students to complete.

The role of homework in supporting student learning will need to be re-examined.

Students will be required to provide evidence of their learning.

Students must accept responsibility for their poor learning behaviours beyond simply receiving a zero.

Teachers may be required to teach appropriate learning behaviours.



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9. Teachers will establish, communicate, and apply consequences for late and missing work.

Rationale:

Handing in assignments late is an inappropriate learning behaviour and must be addressed as such. Students must understand that there will be consequences for not completing assignments that provide evidence of learning or for submitting those assignments late.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers should establish and clearly communicate expectations regarding assignments, set and communicate timelines for assignments, and support student learning using the strategies provided above.

If student work is still late or missing, teachers will apply the following strategies based on their professional judgment:

- Confer with the student and, where appropriate, with the student's parents about the reasons for not completing the assignment, and consider the legitimacy of reasons.
- Develop an agreement with the student to complete the work.
- Require the student to complete missing work during school time or at lunch or after school within a supervised setting in accordance with school division policy.
- Provide appropriate support to students in the form of counseling or peer tutoring to address issues and barriers that may be preventing the student from completing assigned work.
- Provide additional supports for students who are learning English or French as an additional language.
- Provide alternative assessment tasks that accommodate diverse learning needs.

If these strategies are unsuccessful in supporting students to complete their work, teachers may deduct marks for late or missing assignments. Teachers should ensure that mark deduction would not result in a mark that, in the professional judgment of the teacher, misrepresents the student's actual achievement.

In applying consequences to late or missing work, teachers will consider the nature of the assignment, the individual circumstances of the student (especially struggling learners), and the potential impact of the consequence on subsequent learning and motivation. Whatever the consequence, students are ultimately responsible for the timely completion of their assignments and for knowing that there are consequences for failure to adhere to those parameters.



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10. Grades will be calculated on summative (assessment of learning) information only. Formative (assessment for learning) assessment (practice work, homework, pre-tests, unrelated bonus marks, etc.) are not graded; they are considered as practice as a guide for teachers to adjust their classroom instruction.

Rationale:

Students should be given ample opportunities and time to practice the specific learning outcomes before summative assessment takes place.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will be required to give careful consideration to the summative assessment strategies they will use for a given learning unit. Strategies may include observations, conversations and products.

Teachers will provide varied opportunities for students to practice their learning.

Teachers will be required to shift their focus from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning.

Assessment for learning (formative) requires teachers to provide descriptive feedback on student learning and engage students in self- and peer-assessment. It requires teachers to correct misunderstandings before the more formal summative assessment takes place.

Teachers will emphasize the value of practice.

Students will need to learn to reflect on themselves as learners through the use of strategies such as peer and self-assessment, portfolios, and the development of criteria for learning.

11. Students will be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning over the duration of a course. In determining a grade, special emphasis should be placed on more recent achievement.

Rationale:

Students may need several opportunities to demonstrate their learning which may mean assessment of a given outcome more than once or reassessing an outcome if it allows a student to more accurately demonstrate their understanding.

The purpose of summative assessment is to determine students' achievement against a specific learning outcome. If a student has opportunity to engage in further learning between one assessment opportunity and the next, the new learning must be acknowledged and noted. More practice time and opportunities should generate better results.



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Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Within reason, teachers will need to be prepared to reassess student's learning. See implications for students.

Teachers will need to recognize that students' marks may need to be changed as new learning is demonstrated.

Teachers must recognize there may be times that students' results on a given summative assessment may require re-teaching and therefore re-testing.

Students must understand that reassessment can be earned by demonstrating a willingness to engage in additional practice or learning activities before the reassessment takes place.

12. The act of collaborating and learning with others is highly desirable. However, grades will be based on individual achievement and not on group achievement.

Rationale:

Students must be assessed on their individual achievement. Students should not be penalized for the inadequate contributions of some nor rewarded for the exemplary efforts of others.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers need to have clear guidelines and expectations for individual achievement, particularly if the assessment is completed in the context of a group.

Students will need to collaborate with teachers on setting clear criteria for individual achievement as it pertains to group work.

13. It is critical that all students participate in self- and peer-assessment. A student's grade however, will be determined by the teacher and not on a student's self and/or peer assessment.

Rationale:

Peer and self-assessment promotes reflection and pro-social skills that are critical factors in future success. These practices promote social responsibility because they focus the students on evaluating their own performance against personal goals and curricular outcomes.



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The teacher is responsible for making final judgments of a student's learning in relation to the curricular outcomes.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers must consider developing strategies to teach self and peer assessment and provide multiple opportunities for students to practice.

Students will need to develop their self and peer assessment skills.

14. When determining final grades, teachers will decide whether they have sufficient evidence of achievement. If not, the grade recorded will be "INC" (incomplete) and no credit will be given until the outcome can be assessed. The teacher must consult with their school-based administrator prior to determining that a student's final academic status is incomplete. Evidence will be accepted by the teacher until the date established by school policy. Deadlines established by school policy can be no earlier than 3 weeks prior to the last day of the semester and no later than the last day of the semester.

Rationale:

This approach allows students every opportunity to demonstrate their learning while accurately indicating when students have not generated enough evidence to earn a grade and/or credit.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Students will be encouraged to meet classroom deadlines for assignment completion. Should this become problematic, the school's process or procedures for assignment completion will be implemented.

Teachers will need to determine what and how much evidence is necessary to clearly determine a final grade for each student.

Teachers will need to be prepared to accept assignments until the date set as per school policy.

Teachers will substitute and "INC" in place of the final grade.

School teams will need to determine how to address incomplete credit acquisition on an individual basis.

Students will need to provide evidence of their learning.

Students will need to understand the ramifications of handing in assignments.



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15. A student's specific learning behaviours will be reported separately. Effort, participation, assignment completion, homework and attendance are important and require teacher feedback. They will not be part of a student's overall grade in a given subject area.

Rationale:

A student's learning behaviours has a significant impact on academic success. Therefore, the reporting of these behaviours as a separate entity is critically important. When learning achievement and learning behaviours are reported separately, teachers, students and parents are able to determine whether student improvement is contingent on learning, or behaviours or both.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will need to determine the criteria and performance standards they expect for learning behaviours in their classrooms.

Teachers will be required to consistently reinforce the learning behaviours they want their students to acquire.

Students will understand that learning behaviours contribute to learning success and that their engagement impacts performance.

16. Grades will be communicated to students and parents in clear and concise ways. Multiple opportunities to share student achievement beyond the report card will be made available to students and parents when and where relevant.

Rationale:

Report cards need to provide detailed and helpful information about both student achievement and student learning behaviours. Students and parents need to be informed so they understand what the student is doing well and what needs improvement.

Report cards cannot be the only information students and parents receive. Because of the relative infrequency of report cards, students and parents will need other forms of communication (phone calls, progress reports, emails, First Class, etc.) at more regular intervals.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will need to collect information on both student achievement and learning behaviours.

Teachers will incorporate other forms of communicating achievement including parent/teacher/student conferencing, portfolios, phone calls, interim reports, and emails. Teachers may consider reporting both the strengths and challenges as they relate to a student's achievement.



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Teachers will be required to provide on-going, open communication between parents and school when and where relevant.

17. Students and/or parents will have an opportunity to appeal a grade.

Rationale:

By providing students with an opportunity to appeal a grade, they experience ownership for their own learning and learn the value of due process in evaluation.

Possible Implication for Teachers and Students:

Students will be required to present a sound rationale as to why a grade should be reviewed through an appeal process.

Teachers will need to utilize an effective, fair and reasonable evaluation process.

Teachers will need to be able to describe their assessment process and how a given grade was determined.

Professional Judgment

18. Grading and reporting will always involve some degree of subjectivity. Based on the best evidence available and through the use of the most effective assessment methods and by meeting the highest standards of quality assessment, a teacher will use their professional judgment to determine the grade. Above all, the grade should be an accurate reflection of what the student has learned.

Rationale:

Marks and corresponding grades should indicate all the learning the student has successfully accomplished against the curricular goals and outcomes. If in the process of calculating a grade, the teacher believes the grade is not an accurate reflection of the student's learning, the grade should be adjusted accordingly or excluded from the process of calculating a final grade. Teachers know their learners.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will need to review each student's grade and be assured that it is an accurate reflection of their learning. If it is not, they will need to decide how best to determine the grade.



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Academic Honesty

19. Students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work.

Rationale:

Students must understand that the tests/exams they complete and the assignments they submit as evidence of learning must be their own work and that cheating and plagiarism cannot and will not be tolerated.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Students:

Teachers will communicate and reinforce expectations of academic honesty with students.

Teachers will respond appropriately to academic dishonesty. Aspects of academic dishonesty include copying others' work, using cheat notes, misrepresenting circumstances to obtain extensions, and submitting or representing someone else's work as one's own (*plagiarizing*).

Teachers may employ the following strategies to deal with academic dishonesty may include the following:

- Have the student redo the work honestly.
- Contact parents / guardians.
- Document the incident in the student's file.
- Report this behaviour on the report card.
- Other disciplinary measures as determined by the teacher and principal
- Deduct marks.
- Teachers need to consider the nature of the assignment, the age and maturity of the student, the individual circumstances of the student, and the potential impact of the consequence on subsequent learning and motivation. Whatever the consequence, students should complete the work in an honest way.

Communication about student learning shall include the following

- a) Timely opportunities in each school year to inform students and parents of curricular outcomes and assessment procedures.
- b) Adherence to divisional timelines for student progress conferences and distribution of progress reports.
- c) Student progress conferences that may include the student, the parent and the teacher, with opportunities for parents and teachers to view and discuss student work samples and evidence of student learning.
- d) Timely communication by teachers to students and parents/guardians, which may



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include:

- Oral information, which may include a phone call, informal visits and/or student progress conference.
- Written information, which may include notes, email, progress reports, and assessments sent for parents/guardians to sign.
- e) Use of electronically formatted divisional templates to report students' progress and achievement, which adheres to Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth reporting requirements.
- f) Adherence to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Public Schools Act as guides to access and transfer of assessment information.

Communication of student learning respects the following:

1. Adherence to Manitoba Education and Training policy and guidelines, including:

- *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments: Support Document for Teachers, Administrators, and Consultants*
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/docs/csl/index.html>
- *Communicating Student Learning: Guidelines for Schools (2008)*
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html>
- *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind: Assessment for learning, assessment as learning, assessment of learning. 2006*
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/wncp>

2. Academic student progress shall be communicated based on the evidence gathered from multiple learning activities, including but not limited to:

- Individual projects, essays, research papers, oral presentations, lab reports.
- Group projects e.g. Seminars, science / art displays, plays
- Samples of student work that reflect student growth in key competencies.
- Inquiry activities, including debates, experiments, investigations, survey projects.
- Tests, including: provincial standards tests and assessments, school examinations, classroom tests and identified standardized assessment tools.

c) Social/emotional performance shall be communicated in written comments and /or indicators.