

# Research summary

*A review of current thinking and practices in assessment in relation to the Primary Years Programme*

**Extracted from a research report prepared for the IB by:**

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## Executive summary

The principal purpose of the research project described in this report was to contribute to a substantial review of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) by critically reflecting on the PYP curriculum framework in light of the approaches, strategies and tools of assessment of 21st century primary education. The PYP curriculum offers an inquiry-based transdisciplinary learning experience to students aged 3 to 12 years with a focus on the development of concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and action. The programme culminates with the “PYP exhibition”, a collaborative venture in which students work together on a topic chosen in consultation with their teacher, and eventually present the results of their efforts to fellow classmates, teachers and the wider school community.

The assessment review focused on both ongoing formative assessment within the PYP (assessment for learning) and summative assessment of individual and group performances in the exhibition (assessment of learning). It was supported by findings from an extensive review of the literature, which covered writings on assessment published during the past five years, including theoretical pieces on the nature of assessment. The review included two major components:

1. A two-strand review of the academic literature reporting practice in assessment for learning in cognitive, affective and behavioural domains in different education systems with a particular emphasis on 21st century primary education:
  - *Strand 1:* The nature of assessment, the roles it can have in teaching and learning and how these are best practised to support learning of concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and action supporting the cognitive, affective and behavioural goals of primary education in the 21st century. The review set out the relative merits of major assessment procedures, such as tests and examinations, teacher-based assessment and special tasks, and addressed the relationship between views of learning underpinning the pedagogy and the various assessment procedures.
  - *Strand 2:* A review of practices in assessment in primary and lower secondary education (pupils aged 3 to 12) in various educational systems. This included practice in using assessment to help learning (formative assessment, or assessment for learning), to report on learning (summative assessment, or assessment of learning) and to identify assessment as an integral part of learning (assessment as learning). On the basis of this review, those practices considered to provide the most valid and reliable evidence for various purposes were identified.
2. An evaluation of current assessment policy and practice within the PYP based on salient findings from the literature review about best practice in different contexts.

## Format of the report

Section 1 provides an overview of the purpose and design of the study. The authors clarify key terminology in section 2, as there is evidence that confusion persists, both within IB documentation and the academic literature, about the meaning of critical assessment terminology.

In section 3 the authors review principles of and approaches to assessment, moving on in sections 4 and 5 to consider the essentials of formative assessment (assessment for learning) and summative assessment (assessment of learning), along with examples of practice as described in the literature and any well-founded evidence of impact on learning or learning motivation. Sections 3, 4 and 5 identify implications for PYP assessment practice. In section 6 the authors reflect further on formative and summative assessment practice within the PYP, and offer a list of the key implications based on the review.

## Key findings and implications for PYP assessment

The key findings and implications for assessment in the PYP that emerged from the review are as follows:

- There is solid and substantial support in the academic literature for the emphasis given to formative assessment in the PYP approach to student assessment.
- Formative assessment is integral to effective teaching.
- The PYP should consider providing teachers with a template that constitutes a set of general criteria to be used by teachers to identify assessment areas appropriate to particular thematic units and the Exhibition.
- Collaborative moderation of teachers' judgements should be promoted, where teachers discuss their judgements of students' achievements in relation to the assessment criteria.
- Teachers should extend the range of formative assessment strategies that they use beyond just providing feedback to students.
- Teachers should help students recognise the goals of their work and engage them in making decisions about what they need to do to achieve them.

This summary was extracted by the IB Research department. A copy of the full report is available at <http://www.ibo.org/research>. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email [research@ibo.org](mailto:research@ibo.org).

To cite the full report, please use the following:

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