

Assessment Philosophy Statement GAAQ:

GEMS American Academy's assessment philosophy is rooted in our identity, vision, values and our definitions of learning.

Identity:

GEMS American Academy Qatar (GAAQ) offers our multicultural student body a rigorous American curriculum from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. In addition to U.S. common core standards-based academics that culminate with the Advanced Placement program, we also provide a robust extra-curricular program to support the development of the whole child.

Our school, which is located in Al Wakra, Qatar, is a state-of-the-art center of inspirational learning that enables students to make decisions independently, solve problems effectively and interact positively with tolerance.

We firmly believe that education is about overall student development and, as a GEMS international school community, we promote growth through learning, global citizenship, the pursuit of excellence, and leadership through innovation.

Vision and values:

At GAAQ, we have developed our core values and learning principles to empower students to attain their goals and to become successful citizens of our global community.

Our Core Values are:

Respect - Innovation - Leadership - Purpose - Tenacity

Our Learning Principles are:

1. Developing healthy connections
2. Goals first
3. Authentic assessment and constructive feedback
4. Effective use of time
5. Nurturing independence and inquiry

Definition Learning:

Learning is acquiring new knowledge, skills and behaviors.

How learning happens:

Learning occurs by reflecting, adapting, internalizing and making global connections through successes and failures.

Why?

At GAAQ, we hope these learning opportunities provide our students with the tenacity and innovation to find their purpose and become respectful and empathetic leaders who apply their learning and become successful lifelong learners in this ever-changing world.

GEMS American Academy Qatar sees assessment as an integral part of guiding and understanding student learning. Authentic assessment and feedback are one of our five learning principles. We believe that authentic assessments are used to support student's progress and provide valuable feedback to the community. At GAAQ, authentic assessments are thoughtfully delivered to ensure differentiation, communication, collaboration and reflection in order to gauge student progress and achievement throughout their educational pursuits.

These authentic assessments:

- Keep a balanced developmental record of progress for each student
- Develop the learner's acquisition of concepts and knowledge, skills, attitudes (values) and the ability to take action
- Are a mix of formative and summative learning opportunities

1. Purpose for Assessment

Why do we assess at GAAQ?

Learners:

- To be informed of their own progress and, thereby, promote student reflection
- To adapt learning to meet individual needs
- To become aware of strengths and areas that need strengthening
- To assess prior understanding
- To receive valuable and constructive feedback on their progress
- To achieve external recognition for their learning that expands opportunity for graduates

Teachers:

- To inform instruction and modify teaching
- To monitor and track student progress
- To measure mastery of knowledge and skills
- To establish assessment criteria based on common core standards as well as AP, NGSS and C3 standards and comply with Qatar MOE regulations
- To provide continuous feedback on progress
- To inform teachers about the learning environment in their classrooms
- To evaluate the suitability of courses to meet students' need

Parents:

- To provide parents with the opportunity to support and celebrate students' work
- To be informed of grade-level expectations
- To create accurate communication of students' ability levels in comparison to grade-level standards

What do we assess at GAAQ?

- Prior knowledge
- Progress (formative assessments)
- Mastery (summative assessments) of common core, NGSS, C3 and AP standards

2. Principles of Assessment - the characteristics of effective assessments at GAAQ:

- Authentic – it is meaningful and applicable to the real world
- Diverse - using accommodations to meet the needs of our students
- Reflective - engaging students in the process of reflection through self-assessment of their own learning and peer assessment
- Open-ended - allows students to exercise critical thinking skills
- Standards-based - assessment planned at the start of a unit with criteria to be made clear to students which are based upon common core, NGSS, C3, and AP standards
- Assess prior knowledge
- Uses culture and real-life experiences to make learning and assessments relevant
- Collaborative – use grade levels and subject areas to develop assessments

3. Assessment Practice:

We:

- Use a series of formative assessments leading to summative assessments
- Utilize summative assessments for all grade 9-12 students (or any student taking a HS credit course), twice per year, as semester exams. All semester exams are averaged at 20% of a student's final semester grade
- Use authentic and/or project-based assessments for grade 6-9 students as a cumulative assessment at the end of the semester, averaging no more than 20% of their final semester grade
- All students' 1st and 2nd semester grades are averaged together to determine their overall grade in the course, using the following scale:
 - 90-100% =A
 - 80-89% =B
 - 70-79% =C
 - 60-69% =D
 - Below 50% =F
- Allow all grade 12 students in Semester 2, who have an "A" average in their respective course, to be exempt from the exam in that respective course
- Differentiate
- Take advantage of interdisciplinary opportunities
- Offer students choice in how they are assessed, as often as possible
- Use a variety of assessment tools:
 - Rubrics
 - Anecdotal records
 - Checklists
 - Continuums (running records)
 - Portfolios
 - Standardized tests
 - Criteria based performance assessments
 - Exhibition
 - End of term exams
 - External examinations and Internal Assessments such as MAP, SAT, and AP exams
 - Unit tests
 - Oral reports
 - Quizzes
 - Peer-assessments
 - Self-assessments

Abbreviations:

- **MAP** - Measurement of Academic Progress; Standardized test by the NWEA
- **AP** - Advanced Placement; U.S. Advanced Placement curriculum through the U.S. College Board
- **NGSS** - Next Generation Science Standards; Framework to support common core developed by National Research Council
- **C3** - Social Studies Standards aligned to common core developed in Washington and utilized in multiple states

Glossary:

- **Differentiation** - differentiated instruction applies an approach to teaching and learning that gives students multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas
- **Accommodations** are basically physical or environmental changes, generally referred to as good teaching strategies
- **Modifications** involve deliberate intellectual lowering in the level of materials presented
- **Authentic assessment** refers to assessment tasks that resemble reading and writing in the real world and in school

References:

<http://www.sps.springfield.ma.us/deptsites/pac/contents/Accomodations.pdf>

<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/litass/auth.html>

http://aim.cast.org/learn/historyarchive/backgroundpapers/differentiated_instruction_udl

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