

Schola Europaea  
Office of the Secretary-General

European Bacallaureate Unit

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## **HARMONISATION IN THE EUROPEAN BACCALAUREATE CYCLE**

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**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Meeting on 15, 16 and 17 April 2015 – Prague

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# Harmonisation in the European Baccalaureate cycle

## 1. Introduction

The term “**harmonisation**” appears in different official European Schools documents. It is often linked to the terms *assessment*, *evaluation* and *examinations*.

The aim of this document is to provide an accurate and comprehensive description of what must be understood by harmonisation in the European Baccalaureate cycle, i.e., in years s6 and s7.

## 2. Teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation

Assessment and evaluation must be coherent with the learning objectives and the teaching practices as expressed in the approved syllabuses of the European Schools and with other reference documents guiding the way a subject is taught, learnt and assessed.

***Harmonised assessment, evaluation and examinations imply harmonised planning.***

## 3. Syllabuses in the European Baccalaureate cycle as a basic element of harmonisation

The European Schools syllabuses guide and organise teaching and learning over a certain period of time. They are very important and basic elements of harmonisation because they serve to make the learning and teaching experience equivalent for all pupils across the system.

As expressed in document 2011-09-D-47-en-3 “Structure for all syllabuses in the system of the European schools”, they contain the didactic principles, learning objectives, contents and assessment criteria for each subject.

European School syllabuses are therefore the main source for the planning and implementation of teaching and learning.

## 4. Forward planning in the European Baccalaureate cycle

Article 26 of the General Rules of the European Schools establishes that secondary teachers shall have a clear transferable record of forward planning.

As such, forward planning implies a more concrete and precise organisation of teaching and learning derived from the syllabus. ***In order to achieve a higher level of harmonisation in the European Baccalaureate cycle, teachers teaching the same***

**subject in a particular school shall agree on a common forward planning document for year s7 and ideally also for year s6.**

Harmonised planning will therefore facilitate the harmonisation of assessment, evaluation and examinations within each School in the European Baccalaureate cycle.

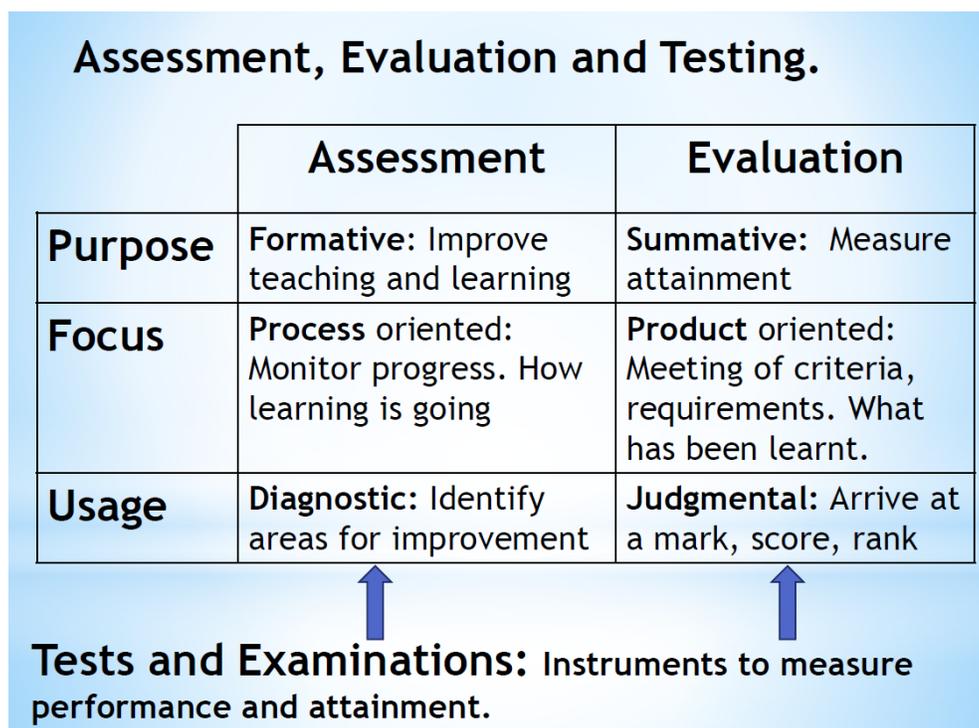
However, harmonisation should not be regarded as a constraint for the teachers and the learners. Teaching and learning styles will still be varied, teaching and learning activities will also be adjusted to the individual needs of learners and differentiation will be a central practice in delivering the syllabus.

## **5. Assessment and evaluation in the European Baccalaureate cycle**

Document 2011-01-D-61-en-3 “Assessment policy in the European Schools” provides a broad framework to guide assessment and evaluation practices in the European Schools. It distinguishes between formative and summative assessment. It establishes a competence-based approach in line with EU strategic documents.

Articles 59 – 61 of the General Rules of the European School system also deal with assessment and evaluation. They describe formative and summative assessment and evaluation in years s4-s7

Article 6 of the Arrangements for implementing the Regulations for the European Baccalaureate describe summative assessment and evaluation in year s7, especially European Baccalaureate examinations and Pre-Baccalaureate examinations.



## **6. Harmonisation of Bacca-laureate and Pre-Bacca-laureate written examinations**

Bacca-laureate and Pre-Bacca-laureate written examinations must be reliable and valid instruments to measure the attainment of pupils within a school and across the system. They yield the most important part of the marks obtained by pupils in year s7. They lead to the European Bacca-laureate Diploma and, as such, must assure uniformity in the quality and value of the academic recognition awarded.

As instruments of summative evaluation, Bacca-laureate and Pre-Bacca-laureate written examinations must measure attainment in a way that provides an accurate description of the level at which all the requested subject and overall competences have been attained. They must also serve to classify pupils according to their performance and to establish rankings according to their results. This information is often relevant in order to access further education studies in different establishments in many countries.

***The European Bacca-laureate written examinations are identical for all pupils regardless the school and the language section they are taught in. They are here defined as the harmonised examinations in the European Schools system per excellence.***

***The Pre-Bacca-laureate examinations must be harmonized within each school. This means that they are identical for all pupils in the same school regardless the language section they are taught in. They are prepared in agreement among all the teachers teaching the same subject in a school.***

Moreover, the Pre-Bacca-laureate examinations will necessarily have a certain degree of harmonisation across the schools since they are based on common documents and guidelines such as: the assessment and evaluation specifications contained in the different syllabuses, the particular instructions issued by the inspectorate and the general document 2013-01-D-41-en "Quality assurance of the European Bacca-laureate written examination papers".

## **7. Harmonisation and languages**

It is obvious that language examinations cannot be identical from one language to another. However, they must all share a common structure and assess all required competences avoiding that pupils may neglect or leave out parts of the different language syllabuses.

Document 2013-08-D-11-en-1 "Basic proficiency level" relates the levels of attainment for L2, L3, L4 and ONL in the European School system to the Common European Framework for Languages: "Learning, Teaching, Assessment"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf)

Document 2014-06-D-5 “Proposal for harmonisation of the L1 written examination in the European Baccalaureate” also proposes different examples of examination models for L1.

Document 2015-01-D-33-en/fr/de-1 “Syllabus for all Languages 2 - Basic course” establishes a common syllabus for all languages 2 containing assessment criteria and examination models.

Document 2010-D-49-en-6 “Syllabus for all L3 languages” gives very clear assessment indications and include examination models.

## **8. Harmonisation of written examinations in year s6**

It is strongly recommended that written examinations in the first and second semesters are harmonised within each school. This means that they are identical for all pupils in the same school regardless the language section they are taught in. They are prepared in agreement among all the teachers teaching the same subject in a school.

## **9. Quality assurance of Pre-Baccalaureate and s6 examinations**

The assurance of the quality of Pre-Baccalaureate examinations and s6 examinations falls primarily within each school. The directorate of each school through the subject coordinators should ensure that all Pre-Baccalaureate examinations are original, harmonised and adjusted to the syllabuses. Pre-Baccalaureate examinations will also be available to the inspectorate for their consideration. They will be uploaded to the Learning Gateway preferably before the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December and in any case before the end of January.

## **10. Format and presentation of harmonised exams**

In order to ensure standardisation and harmonisation of the external appearance of the written examination papers in the European Baccalaureate cycle the following format and presentation shall be applied:

**A) A uniform cover page**, with the *Schola Europaea* logo, stating clearly the year. For s6 papers indication of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. For s7 indication of Pre-Baccalaureate or Baccalaureate examination with the year of the Baccalaureate session. There will also be a clear indication of the subject and the date of the examination. The cover page will also include information about the time allowed for the examination, expressed in hours and minutes (E.g.: 3 hours = 180 minutes).

In the cover page it must also be found the **authorized material** for the examination, stating whether a calculator or a dictionary, for example, may be taken into the examination room.

Any special general **instructions** or **special remarks** will also be found in the cover page. E.g.: 'Candidates must answer all questions'.

**B)** The same page layout and the same graphical presentation, i.e. the same identical page order and page arrangement in all subjects translated into different languages (Namely for all examinations except for language examinations). For example, what appears at the top of page 5 in the French version should also appear at the top of page 5 in the Swedish version.

The total page numbers for each question should appear on the right-hand side of the page, the marks per question will appear in a column to the right beside each item in the question.

The page number of the paper will appear at the bottom of the page in the middle.

The exact bibliographical source and references for all quoted texts will be provided as footnotes.

The last page will be always blank.

Templates can be found in the Learning Gateway.

## **11. Characteristics of Baccalaureate, Pre-Baccalaureate and s6 examinations**

### **Originality**

It is very important that questions used in examinations are original and not copied from previous ones. Previous examinations are generally available to pupils and could have been used by teachers to train their pupils.

### **Confidentiality**

Teachers must not disclose any information about the contents of the examinations that might jeopardize their fairness, validity and/or reliability.

### **Comprehensiveness**

They must cover all the main areas taught of a certain syllabus.

### **Fairness**

They must cover all the range of expected requirements / competences / learning objectives as described in the syllabus.

**Validity**

They must be adjusted to what they intend to measure. In this sense, they must be consistent with the teaching and learning objectives and activities and with the regular progress testing. To a certain extent, they should be predictable.

**Reliability**

They must yield results that can be trusted. Reliability is important because decisions that have to be taken following assessment must be based on data that do not depend on different coincidences or chance.

**Absence of choice**

Absence of choice means that examinations must not offer pupils the possibility of neglecting certain key parts of a syllabus. All required competences must be tested.

**Clarity and simplicity of the rubrics (wording of the questions / tasks)**

The tasks and expected outcomes that the pupils are required to perform should be expressed in very clear and unambiguous terms. Complex questions should be broken down in sub-questions so as to facilitate pupils' performance. Pupils must be able to answer all sub-questions independently, i.e., one task cannot depend on the results reach at another task.

**Balanced**

The level of difficulty and cognitive operations that the pupils need to perform when answering the different questions in the examination should be varied. The examination should contain a balance between questions that require low-order thinking and high-order thinking according to Bloom's taxanomy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example:

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives: Complete edition, New York : Longman.

Educator Technology web site:

<http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2014/03/new-blooms-taxonomy-planning-kit-for.html>

## **I. PROPOSAL**

The Board of Inspectors (secondary cycle) is invited to approve the present document for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session, which implies the modification of article 26 of the General Rules as stated in Annex I.

The Board of Inspectors' opinion will be communicated orally to the Joint Teaching Committee which is invited to approve the document as well for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session.

## **II. OPINION**

The Board of Inspectors (secondary cycle) and the Joint Teaching Committee took note of the present document for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session, which implies the modification of article 26 of the General Rules as stated in Annex I.

## **III. PROPOSAL**

The Budgetary Committee is invited to take note of the present document for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session, which implies the modification of article 26 of the General Rules as stated in Annex I.

## **IV. OPINION**

The Budgetary Committee took note of the present document for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session, which implies the modification of article 26 of the General Rules as stated in Annex I.

## **V. PROPOSAL**

The Board of Governors is invited to approve the present document for implementation on the 2016 Baccalaureate session, which implies the modification of article 26 of the General Rules as stated in Annex I.

# ANNEX I - PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF ARTICLE 26 OF THE GENERAL RULES OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

## 1. BACKGROUND

This document 2015-01-D-18-en-1 “Harmonisation in the European Baccalaureate cycle” proposes the elaboration of common forward planning documents in a same school for all year s7 subjects and strongly recommends to extend this practice to year s6.

Some schools in the European School system have adopted this practice with very good results. The elaboration of common planning documents triggers a very interesting and fruitful debate on pedagogical issues in the schools and contributes to a very interesting exchange of ideas and teaching practices among colleagues. This dialogue contributes to professional development and growth.

The adoption of document 2015-01-D-18-en-1 “Harmonisation in the European Baccalaureate cycle” therefore implies a modification in article 26 of the General Rules of the European Schools.

## 2. PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF ARTICLE 26

*Amendment of the General Rules of the European Schools (2014-03-D-14-en-1) in particular of the Chapter III, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS OF STAFF OF THE SCHOOLS, Article 26.*

Below is the quoted article, with proposed changes inserted in red.

### Article 26

#### Class work

1. Every nursery and primary cycle teacher must be able to account for the written planning of the work done in his/her class. Annual and periodic plans must be given to the Deputy Director.
2. **Every school year** secondary teachers shall **prepare have** a clear and transferable record of forward planning **for each subject they are teaching. ~~term or semester (depending on the school's organisation).~~**

**For harmonisation's sake, s7 forward planning documents will be agreed upon and prepared jointly by all teachers teaching the same subject in a same school. This task will be coordinated by the subject coordinators. It is strongly recommended to extend this practice to years s6 and s5 and, when considered convenient by the school management, to other year levels.**

**Secondary teachers** shall also keep a regularly updated **individual** record of material covered. In this record, the connection between the planning and ~~material actually covered~~ **its implementation** must be made clear.

**The forward planning and** the record of material covered shall be placed in the school archives at the end of the school year and kept for three years. **The school management will see to the adoption of a uniform structure for these documents on a standard electronic format (.doc; .pdf, .xls...)**

3. These documents shall be available at all times to the **School management Director** and the Inspectors.