



National Student-Learning Assessment Framework

Assessment and Reporting

Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment
Ministry of Education and Skills Development
Royal Government of Bhutan
Edition 1

National Student-Learning Assessment Framework Assessment and Reporting



“We must revisit our curriculum, pedagogy, learning process, and assessments to either transform or rewrite them in view of the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.” Royal Kasho on Education Reform, His Majesty the King of Bhutan, December 17, 2020

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Foreword

Education is the foundation of Bhutan’s national development and the key to nurturing citizens who are both deeply rooted in our values and prepared to engage with the world. As His Majesty the King stated in the Royal Kasho on Education Reform (2020): *“The future of our nation depends on the strength of our education system. We must be bold in reimagining it.”*

This Assessment Framework is a response to that call. It reflects our collective effort to build an education system that is coherent, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of our learners. It is grounded in Bhutanese priorities and informed by global standards, offering a balanced approach to measuring learning that values both academic achievement and personal growth.

The framework provides clear guidance for educators, assessment experts, curriculum developers, school leaders, and policymakers. It outlines principles and practices that support fair, transparent, and meaningful assessment across all levels of education. It also reinforces our commitment to quality assurance and data-informed decision-making, ensuring that assessment serves as a tool for continuous improvement.

As Bhutan moves towards greater international recognition of its education system, through benchmarking and accreditation processes, this framework will help ensure that our assessment practices remain credible, contextually relevant, and future ready.

The BCSEA is proud to present this framework as a foundation for ongoing collaboration and innovation. We invite all stakeholders to engage with it, apply it thoughtfully, and contribute to its evolution. Together, we can build an assessment system that empowers every learner and strengthens our national vision for education.



Controller of Examinations
BCSEA

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Foreword

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Purpose of the assessment framework
- 1.2 Vision and impact of educational assessment in Bhutan

2 Principles of Assessment

- 2.1 Validity
- 2.2 Curriculum alignment
- 2.3 Competency-based
- 2.4 Reliability
- 2.5 Authenticity and relevance
- 2.6 Fairness and inclusivity
- 2.7 Transparency
- 2.8 Practicality and manageability
- 2.9 Meet international standards for accreditation

3 Assessment Scope and Format

- 3.1 Coursework
- 3.2 School-Based Examinations
- 3.3 Board Examinations
- 3.4 SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work)

4 Scheme of Assessment

- 4.1 Key Stage 5
- 4.2 Key Stage 4
- 4.3 Key Stage 3 (Classes VII and VIII)
- 4.4 Key Stage 2 (Classes IV to VI)
- 4.5 Key Stage 1 (Classes PP to III)

5 Assessment design and conduct

- 5.1 Board Examinations
- 5.2 School-Based Examinations

6 Marking

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Purpose
- 6.3 Principles
- 6.4 Structure of the mark scheme
- 6.5 Guidance/instruction on marking
- 6.6 Marking process

7 Grading

- 7.1 Norm-referenced grading
- 7.2 Fixed-threshold grading
- 7.3 Criterion-referenced grading
- 7.4 General methodology
- 7.5 Alignment and standard setting
- 7.6 Methodological principles
- 7.7 Process and governance

8 Assessment Data Management

- 8.1 Purposes
- 8.2 Data uses
- 8.3 Data uses by stakeholder
- 8.4 Guidelines and protocols
- 8.5 Processes
- 8.6 Roles and responsibilities
- 8.7 Succession planning

9 Reporting and Certification

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Reporting format (school-based assessment)
- 9.3 Reporting format (board assessment)

10 Special Considerations in Assessment Practices

- 10.1 National policy & inclusive standards
- 10.2 Screen and diagnostic processes
- 10.3 Alternative pathways & assessment adjustments

11 Monitoring and Support Assessment Practices in Schools

- 11.1 Overview
- 11.2 Objectives of assessment monitoring
- 11.3 Assessment monitoring protocol
- 11.4 Clear assessment policies and standards
- 11.5 Teacher support and professional development
- 11.6 Internal standardisation and school-level monitoring
- 11.7 Dzongkhag/regional monitoring
- 11.8 External verification
- 11.9 Marker training and standard setting (Board Examinations)
- 11.10 Monitoring exam administration (Board Examinations)
- 11.11 Feedback and reporting
- 11.12 Addressing non-compliance

12 Role of Stakeholders in Assessment

- 12.1 Policy and governance
- 12.2 BCSEA
- 12.3 Centre for School Curriculum Development (CSCD)
- 12.4 School leaders
- 12.5 Teachers
- 12.6 Learners
- 12.7 Parents
- 12.8 Community
- 12.9 Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)
- 12.10 Item writers
- 12.11 Item reviewers
- 12.12 Markers
- 12.13 Monitoring officers

13 Communication Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Purpose of the communication strategy
- 13.3 Objectives
- 13.4 Key developments requiring communication

13.5 Stakeholder-specific communication strategies

13.6 Channels of communication

13.7 Phased implementation

13.8 Monitoring and evaluation

13.9 Conclusion

14. Annexures

14.1 Glossary (Cambridge)

14.2 Acronyms

15 Bibliography

1 Introduction

Bhutan's education system is evolving to prepare learners for a future that demands stronger skills, deeper understanding, and greater adaptability. While significant progress has been made, assessment practices must continue to evolve to fully support these goals.

This Assessment Framework responds to key system-level challenges, including variations in assessment practices across schools, limited coherence between curriculum intent and summative assessment, inconsistent use of School-Based Examinations and coursework, and the need to strengthen the comparability and credibility of board examination outcomes. It also addresses the growing demand for assessments that more effectively capture higher-order thinking, applied skills, and learner competencies across different stages of schooling.

Accordingly, the Framework introduces a set of system-wide assessment reforms, including a revised grading system with clear performance descriptors, the structured integration of coursework for Classes VI-XII, a strengthened competency-based assessment approach aligned with the core competencies, redesigned board examinations with improved test specifications and mark scheme, and alignment with internationally recognised assessment principles underpinning Cambridge accreditation. These elements are introduced here to provide system-level context and are elaborated in detail in the relevant sections of the Framework.

The Framework clarifies how summative assessment reflects the core competencies, ensuring that assessment captures the knowledge, skills, and attributes learners are expected to demonstrate at key stages of schooling. It sets out clear expectations for assessment design, administration, reporting, grading, and quality assurance.

In order to support consistent understanding and implementation, the Assessment Framework introduces the key stages of schooling, certification pathways, and assessment modalities. It provides an overview of School-Based Assessments, coursework, practical, and Board Examinations, and clarifies their application across key stages.

The assessment structures, components, and subject-specific requirements are presented in the relevant key-stage sections of this Framework and in the corresponding Assessment Syllabuses, while assessment approaches for Key Stage 1 (Classes PP-III) are addressed under the Curriculum Framework. This structure ensures clarity, coherence, and ease of reference for all stakeholders.

This document is intended for educators, assessment specialists, curriculum developers, school leaders, and policymakers involved in the design, implementation, or oversight of summative assessments. It also provides guidance on the responsible use of assessment data to support informed decision-making and uphold consistent national standards.

1.1 Purpose of the assessment framework

The Framework provides the basis and the parameters on which assessment policies are framed at the national and school levels. It suggests appropriate assessment strategies and protocols that are consistent with the prescribed learning competencies outlined in the curriculum.

The Framework aims to:

1.1.1 Document and rationalise the current assessment system, clarifying its structures, roles, and linkages between curriculum, assessment, and accreditation to provide a shared national reference.

1.1.2 Align assessment practices with Bhutanese values and the Gross National Happiness (GNH) principles, while referencing international standards and benchmarks for quality and recognition. These values and principles are embedded within the subject-specific assessment syllabuses rather than outlined in the Framework itself.

1.1.3 Strengthen implementation and capacity building, providing guidance on assessment delivery, coordination, and the development of school-level assessment policies consistent with national expectations.

1.1.4 Promote competency-based assessment ensuring that assessment captures learners' knowledge, skills, and values across the Seven Key Competencies, while integrating transversal skills, such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity.

1.1.5 Support evidence-based improvement by promoting the systematic use of assessment information to enhance teaching, learning, and policy decision-making, and to assure the validity, reliability, inclusiveness, and fairness of assessment outcomes.

This Framework guides, but does not supersede, the assessment rules, regulations, and protocols established by mandated agencies. It ensures flexibility while aligning assessment with Bhutan's educational vision and Cambridge accreditation standards.

1.2 Vision and impact of educational assessment in Bhutan

The vision of educational assessment in Bhutan is to establish a robust, equitable, and meaningful system that supports holistic student development and continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Assessment is not limited to measuring academic achievement; it is a dynamic tool to inform instruction, guide curriculum decisions, and ensure learners acquire the knowledge, skills, and values defined as core competencies. The system is learner-focused, evidence-based, and aligned with national educational goals while adhering to international standards of quality, fairness, and credibility.

The anticipated impact of this vision is multifaceted. At the classroom and school levels, well-designed summative assessments will strengthen teaching strategies, enhance learner engagement, and provide actionable insights to improve learning outcomes. Nationally, reliable assessment data will offer key evidence on the quality and equity of education, helping policymakers identify priorities and interventions.

Ultimately, educational assessment in Bhutan is envisioned as a transformative tool that contributes to a future-ready education system, producing competent, ethical, and empowered citizens capable of meeting national and global challenges.

2 Principles of Assessment

Assessment is central to improving learning, informing teaching, and ensuring the quality and credibility of Bhutan's education system. The following principles guide assessment for, of, and as learning. They ensure consistency, and relevance across all disciplines and levels, supporting a shared understanding of quality among educators and stakeholders.

Grounded in the educational goals and aligned with international standards, these principles provide the foundation for effective assessment practices:

- 2.1 Validity
- 2.2 Curriculum alignment
- 2.3 Competency-based
- 2.4 Reliability
- 2.5 Authenticity and relevance
- 2.6 Fairness and inclusivity
- 2.7 Transparency
- 2.8 Practicality and manageability
- 2.9 Meet international standards for accreditation

2.1 Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Valid assessments ensure that learners' progress, attainment of learning outcomes, and development of competencies are accurately captured and can inform teaching and learning.

All assessments should be designed, reviewed, and interpreted in ways that maintain alignment with the curriculum, intended learning outcomes, and competency expectations. Validity requires careful consideration of content, construct, and alignment to ensure results accurately reflect learners' knowledge, skills, and values.

2.2 Curriculum alignment

Curriculum alignment ensures that what is taught, what learners are expected to learn, and what is assessed are coherent and connected. Summative assessments are based directly on the learning objectives and competencies outlined in the national curriculum, providing a valid and fair measure of learners' progress and achievement. Strong alignment ensures that assessment results accurately reflect student learning and support meaningful decision-making at classroom, school, and national levels.

Key practices for curriculum alignment:

- i. Build assessments around clear learning objectives: Assessment tasks are designed to directly measure the intended learning outcomes, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and values in line with the curriculum.

- ii. Use assessment syllabuses to guide planning: Teachers and schools follow the assessment syllabuses provided by BCSEA to ensure consistency in what is assessed across classrooms and levels.
- iii. Maintain coherence across subjects and levels: Assessment design considers progression between levels and connections across subjects, helping avoid gaps or unnecessary repetition in student learning.
- iv. Update assessments with curriculum changes: As learning objectives and competencies evolve, assessment tasks are reviewed and revised to remain relevant, valid, and aligned with current curriculum priorities.

2.3 Competency-based

Competency-based assessment (CBA) is a key principle of Bhutan's education system, aligned with Educating for GNH and the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024. It focuses on what learners can do with what they know, emphasising application, reasoning, performance, and real-world tasks rather than simple recall. CBA connects Bhutan's curriculum frameworks by assessing the Seven Core Competencies, which guide learning processes, and supporting the development of the Nine Student Attributes, which describe the holistic outcomes of education. In this way, CBA ensures learners become not only academically competent but also creative, responsible, reflective, and grounded in Bhutanese values.

2.3.1 Relationship between core competencies and student attributes

The seven core competencies describe the essential abilities that students develop. These include spirituality and values, language, transversal competencies, enterprising and industrious skills, sustainable living, health and wellbeing, and digital competence.

The nine student attributes describe the outcomes of learning. These include being knowledgeable, skilled, creative, enterprising, mindful, reflective, confident, able to respond to global challenges, and respectful of traditional values.

CBA connects the two frameworks by measuring progress in core competencies that gradually shape the development of the nine student attributes. This is achieved through design of assessment syllabus ensuring that each competency is appropriately assessed within the relevant subject or paper.

2.3.2 How competencies are addressed in assessment

Competency-based assessment is operationalised through both school-based assessment and Board Examinations, each addressing competencies at different levels of learning.

School-Based Assessment

Teachers gather evidence of learning through projects, investigations, experiments, group work, presentations, portfolios, creative tasks, written examination and peer or self-evaluation. These continuous and authentic classroom activities allow learners to demonstrate key expressions of the seven core competencies and indicators of the nine student attributes, including the transversal competencies of collaboration, communication, creativity, personal

responsibility, and reflective thinking. They also help teachers provide timely feedback and support the development of competencies throughout the learning process.

Board Examination

The BCSEA system assesses competencies through written examinations and coursework. Coursework provides opportunities for extended performance and practical application, while written examinations assess learners' subject knowledge together with their ability to apply, analyse and make informed decisions, which reflects the language and transversal competencies and contributes strongly to the 'knowledgeable' and 'skilled' student attributes, as well as learners' capacity to respond to real-world and global challenges.

Principles guiding competency-based assessment:

- i. Use of assessment objectives: BCSEA assessment syllabuses define clear assessment objectives (AOs) that represent the competencies to be assessed, such as Knowledge and Understanding (AO1), Application (AO2), Analysis (AO3), and subject-specific practical or communication skill. These objectives address knowledge and understanding, application in meaningful contexts, higher-order thinking (such as analysis, problem-solving, evaluation, and creativity), and relevant practical or communication skills as appropriate.
- ii. Integration of the nine student attributes: The design and interpretation of assessment outcomes are guided by the nine student attributes. While classroom assessments more directly address attributes such as creativity, mindfulness, and reflection, BCSEA examinations emphasise cognitive and problem-solving competencies. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of a learner's holistic growth.
- iii. Use of performance-based tasks: Competency based assessment requires learners to apply their knowledge to real world contexts. In classroom settings, this may include community-based projects, business simulations, environmental studies, or reflective journals that connect learning to lived experiences.
- iv. Criterion-referenced judgement: Learners are assessed against defined performance standards (grade descriptors), not compared with other candidates. Competency is demonstrated when the learner meets or exceeds the stated criteria.

2.4 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which an assessment produces consistent, stable, and repeatable results across different administrations, versions, and assessors. A reliable assessment yields similar scores when administered to the same learners under comparable conditions or when evaluated by different assessors. High reliability is essential to ensure that assessment outcomes accurately reflect learners' competencies.

Strategies to maintain reliability:

- i. Clear scoring and mark scheme: Standardised rubrics, marking guides, and Specimen Assessment Material (SAM) are used at school and national levels to ensure consistent evaluation of student work.

- ii. Standard setting and test specifications: Assessments are developed using clear test specifications and item writing guidelines, ensuring that all tasks are aligned with the curriculum and measure the intended learning outcomes consistently.
- iii. Professional development for assessors: Regular training and workshops strengthen teachers' and assessors' ability to apply scoring criteria consistently and accurately, supporting inter-assessor reliability.
- iv. Verification and quality assurance processes: Internal and external verification, verification checks, and quality assurance mechanisms are implemented at school and national levels to maintain consistency and fairness in marking.
- v. Data monitoring and analysis: Assessment results are routinely analysed to detect inconsistencies or anomalies. BCSEA provides feedback to schools and policymakers, ensuring that reliability is maintained across the system.

2.5 Authenticity and relevance

Authenticity and relevance in assessment refer to the extent to which tasks reflect real-world situations and meaningful contexts, enabling learners to demonstrate competencies in practical, purposeful ways. Assessments are designed to ensure that learners can apply knowledge and skills to situations relevant to their personal, academic, and future professional lives. Summative assessments, coursework, and practical tasks together contribute to learners' final marks, providing multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their learning in authentic contexts.

Key practices to ensure authenticity and relevance:

- i. Realistic and meaningful tasks: Assessment tasks, including coursework and practical activities, mirror real-life challenges and scenarios aligned with the competencies being assessed, giving learners opportunities to engage in practical problem-solving.
- ii. Connection to learners' experiences: Assessment objectives and assessment tasks are linked to students' daily lives and societal contexts, reinforcing the relevance and purpose of what is being assessed.
- iii. Purposeful selection of resources: Assessment materials are chosen to support inquiry, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge, encouraging learners to demonstrate understanding in ways that reflect real-world contexts.

2.6 Fairness and inclusivity

Fairness and inclusivity ensure that all learners have equal and unbiased opportunities to demonstrate their competencies, while inclusivity emphasises recognising and accommodating diverse needs, abilities, and backgrounds without compromising the integrity and rigor of assessment. Together, these principles support an assessment system that is equitable, transparent, and culturally responsive.

Key considerations for fairness and inclusivity:

- i. Inclusive design: Assessment tasks should be culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and accessible to all learners, avoiding bias in language, content, or context.

- ii. Equitable access: Assessment conditions, resources, and support should address the diverse needs of learners, including those with special or temporary educational needs, ensuring all students have a fair opportunity to succeed.
- iii. Transparency and clear expectations: Learners should be informed in advance about assessment purposes, criteria, and procedures to reduce anxiety and support effective preparation.
- iv. Consistency in judgment: Clear and uniform marking rubrics, verification practices, and inter-rater reliability checks help ensure objective and comparable scoring across summative assessments, coursework, and practical tasks.
- v. Uniform administration procedures: Procedures for invigilation, seating, timing, and contingency planning are applied consistently across schools and assessment types to maintain fairness.

In line with Bhutan's inclusive education policy, specialised institutions such as the *Wangsel Institute for the Deaf* and the *Muenselling Institute, Khaling* for the visually impaired are included within the national assessment ecosystem to support equitable learning and assessment opportunities for students with disabilities.

The framework also recognises multiple educational pathways, including academic programmes and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), ensuring that learners pursuing different pathways are appropriately represented within the national assessment system.

2.7 Transparency

Transparency in assessment refers to making the purpose, processes, criteria, and outcomes of assessment clear and accessible to all stakeholders. It ensures that learners, teachers, parents, and relevant agencies understand how assessment decisions are made and how they support learning progress. Transparent practices foster trust, accountability, and informed participation in the education process.

Assessment systems should be designed and implemented so that expectations, procedures, and results are clearly communicated, while maintaining ethical standards and learner confidentiality. Transparent practices strengthen the credibility of the assessment system and enable all stakeholders to engage meaningfully in learning and evaluation.

Key considerations for transparency include:

- i. Clear communication of expectations: Learners and other stakeholders are informed in advance about what is being assessed, how it will be assessed, and when assessments will take place. Assessment criteria, rubrics, and performance indicators are made available to guide preparation and participation.
- ii. Systematic and timely feedback: Feedback is provided consistently to help learners improve, highlighting strengths, areas for growth, and actionable next steps.
- iii. Accessible and secure data sharing: Digital platforms may be used to share assessment results and feedback promptly, while ensuring privacy and data protection in line with national regulations.

- iv. Guidelines and monitoring: BCSEA provides operational guidelines, oversees standardisation, and monitors school-based assessment practices to ensure consistent communication of assessment outcomes and adherence to quality standards.

2.8 Practicality and manageability

Practicality and manageability in assessment refer to the design and implementation of assessments that are feasible, efficient, and sustainable within the context of Bhutanese schools. This principle ensures that assessments can be conducted effectively with available resources, time, infrastructure, and human capacity, without compromising the validity, reliability, and fairness of the assessment.

Assessment systems should balance ambition with feasibility, ensuring that tasks, tools, and processes are realistic for teachers, learners, and schools to implement consistently. Practical and manageable assessments help maintain quality, reduce administrative burden, and support regular, meaningful feedback that benefits learning.

Key considerations for practicality and manageability include:

- i. Resource alignment: Assessment design should consider available materials, facilities, and technological capacity, ensuring equitable implementation across urban and rural schools.
- ii. Teacher capacity: Tasks and marking procedures should be within teachers' professional expertise and workload, supported by training and guidance.
- iii. Time and scheduling: Assessments should be designed to fit within the school calendar, teaching time, and curriculum progression, avoiding unnecessary disruption to learning.
- iv. Sustainability: Assessment practices should be repeatable and maintainable over time, supporting continuous improvement and consistency across cohorts and key stages.
- v. Integration with other principles: Practicality should be considered alongside validity, reliability, inclusivity, and competency-based assessment to ensure assessments are meaningful and implementable in real school settings.

2.9 Meet international standards for accreditation

Accreditation with certification

Accreditation is a package of comprehensive quality assurance activities leading to a co-branded certificate per candidate. It comprises a set of requirements that a given qualification needs to achieve for accreditation to be provided for a given series.

For accreditation, syllabuses, assessment materials, marking, grading and examinations administration must align with Cambridge's accreditation requirements. This entails:

- a. Development and review of test specifications on a regular schedule - working with partners to design, develop and refine both new and established qualifications.
- b. Review and support for specimen and live assessment materials development
- c. Grading and standard setting (observation of grading for all the syllabuses involved)

- d. Ongoing quality assurance activities:
 - i. marking checks
 - ii. final printed copy checks
 - iii. comparability research studies
- e. Monitoring of compliance and exams administration activities (centre security inspections and review of examination administration processes)

Based on successful completion of the above review activities, Cambridge will provide jointly-branded results certificates with BCSEA to distribute to candidates. This certificate will show the candidate's name, syllabuses taken and grades achieved, and that the qualifications listed have met the Cambridge Accreditation Requirements.

Cambridge works with partners to obtain recognition as required for accredited qualifications, enhancing their value and credibility regionally and more widely.

3 Assessment Scope & Format

This assessment framework captures information on the following assessments used in Bhutan's educational system, including the TVET pathway in Classes XI and XII.

School-based assessment

- a. Coursework
- b. Practical examinations
- c. School-Based Examinations
 - i. Mid-term
 - ii. Annual
 - iii. Trial
- d. SUPW

Board assessment

- a. Coursework
- b. Practical examinations
- c. Board Examinations

The illustration and table below show a summary of the assessments, outlining their purposes and the stages of the education program where they are applied.

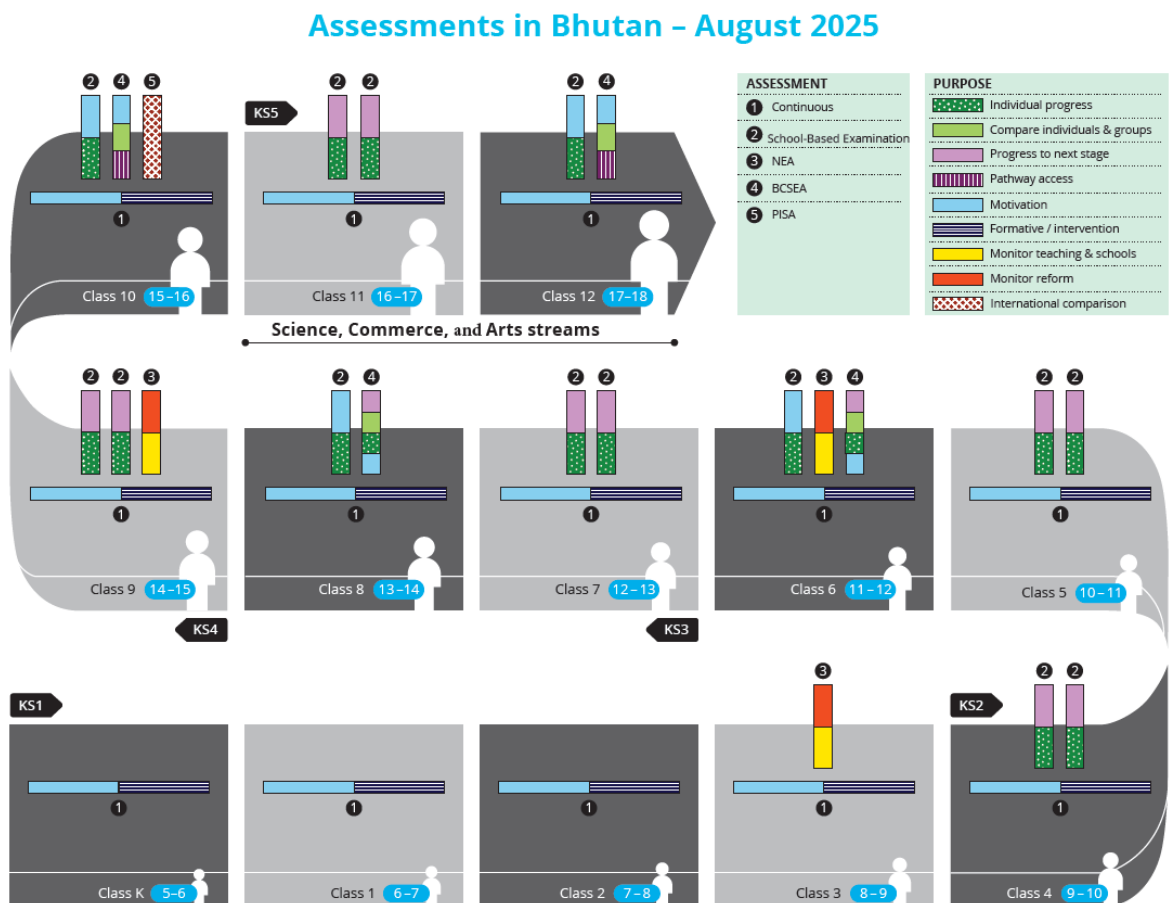


Figure: 1

Table: 1 Summary of assessment scope.

	Assessment	Classes	Tentative time	Purpose
	CFA	PP-III	Throughout year (weekly/monthly/quarterly)	To continuously assess student learning, promote regular practice, reinforce concepts, and build subject-specific skills and for promotion.
School-Based Examinations	Coursework	IV, V, VII, IX, XI ¹	Throughout year (weekly/monthly/quarterly)	To continuously assess student learning, promote regular practice, reinforce concepts, and build subject-specific skills. To conduct an evaluation of students' learning outcomes over the entire academic year for promotion.
	Midterm exam	IV-XII	Mid-year (e.g., June)	To evaluate students' academic progress at the midpoint of the year and identify areas needing improvement. In Classes IV, V, VII and IX: to conduct an evaluation of students' learning outcomes over the entire academic year for promotion.
	Annual exam	IV, V, VII, IX, XI	End of year (e.g., November)	To conduct a comprehensive summative evaluation of students' learning outcomes over the entire academic year for promotion.
	Trial exam	VI, VIII, X, XII	1–2 months before annual exam (e.g., October)	To simulate Board exam conditions, assess readiness, and guide final revision through feedback.
Board Examinations	Coursework	VI, VIII, X, XII	Throughout year ¹	To continuously assess student learning, promote regular practice, reinforce concepts, and build subject-specific skills. To conduct a verified evaluation of students' learning outcomes across phases of learning for promotion (Classes VI, VIII, X, XII) and certification (Classes X and XII).
	Board Exam	VI, VIII, X, XII	End of year (e.g., December)	To conduct an external summative evaluation of students' learning outcomes across phases of learning for promotion (Classes VI, VIII, X, XII) and certification (Classes X and XII).

Note:

1. The key stage 5 coursework will be carried out in Classes XI & XII, with the marks being used to calculate the end of Class XII result. Whereas other key stages may differ in terms of modality of carrying out coursework.

2. For key stage 5, written examinations in Board Examinations will comprise of Classes XI and XII syllabus. For detailed information, refer to the respective subject assessment syllabus.
3. While School-Based Examinations (Classes IV, V, VII, IX & XI) are conducted by schools, they are implemented in accordance with nationally approved standards, procedures, and assessment framework prescribed by BCSEA to ensure uniformity and comparability.

Board Examinations (Classes VI, VIII, X & XII) are externally administered and nationally standardised. Both School-Based and Board Examinations collectively form the assessment components for each key stage, ensuring a coherent, standardised, and reliable assessment system across all schools.

3.1 Coursework

The BCSEA is introducing coursework as a component of Board Examinations and School-Based Assessments. Coursework complements written and practical examinations by assessing learners' competencies and skills that require sustained engagement, application, and higher-order thinking. It provides a more holistic measure of achievement by capturing performance that is difficult to assess through written or practical examinations alone.

The coursework will be implemented across all key stages 2–5. For candidates appearing Board Examinations (Classes VI, VIII, X, and XII), coursework components are centrally assigned, standardised, and verified (both internally and externally). For key stage 5, the coursework is designed to extend over the two years, however, for other key stages coursework is carried out annually. These components are designed to ensure uniformity in assessment, comparability across schools or institutions, and alignment with national curriculum standards.

3.1.1 Guiding principles

Coursework assessment follows the principles of fairness, validity, reliability, and competence-based assessment. For Board Examinations, tasks are centrally assigned with standardised rubrics, ensuring consistency across all schools and equal opportunities for learners. The detailed guidelines for the conduct of coursework will be made available on BCSEA portal (www.bcsea.gov.bt).

3.1.2 Purpose of coursework assessment

- Measure learners' abilities, skills, and subject-specific competencies beyond written and practical examinations.
- Capture learning that requires sustained engagement and practical application.
- Support learners' academic development and provide insights into strengths and areas for improvement.

Coursework is designed to assess competencies that are challenging to measure in timed written or practical examinations, including:

- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Creativity and innovation
- Communication and collaboration
- Reflection and self-evaluation
- Application of learning in real-world contexts

3.1.3 Components and assessment process

- Coursework tasks are centrally guided by BCSEA for both School-based and Board assessments.
- School-based coursework is assessed and verified internally by schools using standardised rubrics.
- Board Assessment coursework is conducted internally by schools, following standardised rubrics, and is verified both internally by schools and externally by BCSEA, initially at Class XII.
- Coursework is completed within the period of two years for key stage 5 and for the other key stages, coursework will be completed within the specific academic year at each class level and contributes a defined percentage to final results in both Board and School-Based Examinations, complementing written and practical assessments.

Details on the marking, scoring, verification, quality assurance, and reporting of coursework are provided in a separate document.

3.1.4 Practical examination

Practical examinations are conducted for science subjects, TVET subjects, and LCSC subjects by BCSEA. The purpose of a practical examination is to assess learners' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations. It evaluates the development of essential skills, techniques, and competencies specific to the subject. Practical examinations also measure problem-solving abilities, accuracy, and adherence to procedures, thereby ensuring that candidates demonstrate hands-on proficiency and readiness for real-world applications.

For Classes X and XII, the practical examinations are conducted by BCSEA, whereas for Classes IX and XI, they are conducted by the respective schools and institutes in accordance with the assessment syllabus of the concerned subjects.

BCSEA provides the timetable for the conduct of practical examinations and issues necessary instructions to the examination centres. Visiting Examiners are appointed by BCSEA to oversee the conduct of practical examinations to ensure fairness and uniformity across all centres.

A series of moderation processes is carried out to ensure that the examination papers are free from errors, and marking is conducted at designated marking centres.

Practical examination scores contribute to the final grade in all classes where summative assessment is prescribed, in accordance with the approved assessment scheme. The weightage of the practical examination towards the final grade is clearly specified in the assessment syllabus for each class level.

3.2 School-Based Examinations

To uphold the integrity of School-Based Examinations, the BCSEA implements a comprehensive and well-structured approach. This ensures a consistent and manageable system for evaluating student learning at the school level. It applies to the following:

- 3.2.1 Midterm examination
- 3.2.2 Trial examination
- 3.2.3 Annual examination

3.2.1 Midterm examination

The midterm examination is a written assessment conducted midway through the academic year. The examination period is fixed by the Department of School Education (DSE) according to the appropriate class level. The allocation of time and weightages of subjects are specified in the respective assessment syllabus. It serves as a formal evaluation of students' learning progress and mastery of the prescribed content at the mid-year point.

Students are provided with a clear and structured revision outlining the syllabus scope, topic coverage, and the weightage of each section. This enables learners to prepare effectively and focus on key learning areas.

The teacher writes test items as per the specification given in the assessment syllabus. Additionally, marking is also carried out by teachers in alignment with the guidelines in this Framework to ensure fairness, consistency, and reliability across subjects and class levels. Teachers provide constructive and timely feedback to students, identifying strengths and areas for improvement to support further learning.

Midterm examination scores contribute to the final grade in Classes IV, V, VII, IX and XI, in accordance with the approved assessment scheme. The weightage of the midterm examination towards the final grade is clearly specified in this Framework for each class level.

3.2.2 Trial examination

The trial examination is a mock examination conducted before the commencement of the Board examination. The teacher prepares test items as per the specification given in the assessment syllabus and marking is also carried out by teachers in alignment with the guidelines in this Framework. The trial examination for Classes VI, VIII, X and XII will be conducted internally by respective schools.

This exam provides practical experience for both students and teachers, helping teachers set standards and prepare high-quality test items, while giving students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the format, time management, and types of questions they will encounter in the Board exams. It also helps to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement, enabling targeted revision and better preparation for the Board Examination.

Trial examination scores do not contribute to the final grade in any Board Examinations.

3.2.3 Annual examination

The annual examination is a written, cumulative test conducted at the end of the academic year to evaluate students' overall understanding and mastery of the prescribed curriculum. It is prepared and marked and administered by respective schools in alignment with the curriculum, assessment syllabus, and following the specimen papers uploaded. This process is carried out to meet the assessment standards set by BCSEA. BCSEA monitors and provides support to ensure the examinations are fair, reliable, and consistent across schools. The process also includes verification of question quality, adherence to mark scheme, and overall compliance with assessment policies, thereby maintaining the credibility and validity of the examination results.

The processes for midterm and year-end examinations involve systematic planning, coordination, and quality assurance measures to ensure effective administration, consistency, and the credibility of results.

3.2.4 Guiding principles

School-based assessment should be guided by the principles of fairness, validity, and reliability to ensure that students are assessed against clear and consistent standards. Evidence of learning must accurately reflect the intended competencies, and professional judgments should be applied consistently across classes and schools through shared criteria and moderation practices.

Simultaneously, school-based assessment should support meaningful learning. It must be competence-based and authentic, focusing on students' ability to apply knowledge, skills, and values in relevant contexts. The process should also provide timely, constructive feedback while maintaining strong standards of confidentiality and security.

3.2.5 Purpose

School-Based Assessments are conducted to support student learning, inform instruction, and provide reliable evidence of student achievement at different stages of the academic year.

Improve students' learning by:

- clarifying instructional objectives for them,
- identifying and communicating learners' strengths and weaknesses, providing constructive feedback to guide improvement.
- providing information on personal-social development, enhancing learners' motivation.

In Classes IV, V, VII, IX and XI, the cumulative scores of both the mid-term and annual examinations are combined to evaluate a student's overall academic performance for the year. These combined scores provide a comprehensive picture of the student's understanding, knowledge, and mastery of the curriculum content. Based on these results, schools can make informed decisions regarding promotion to the next grade or retention in the same grade, ensuring that students advance only when they have achieved the required learning outcomes.

3.3 Board Examinations

Board Examinations are designed to provide a fair, reliable, and valid assessment of student learning, competence, and skills in alignment with the national curriculum. They serve as a cornerstone for academic progression, certification, and educational policy planning.

Following are the examinations conducted by BCSEA:

- i. Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE X)
- ii. Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC XII)
- iii. Language and Culture Studies Certificate (LCSC X)
- iv. Language and Culture Studies Certificate (LCSC XII)
- v. Board Examination (BE VIII)
- vi. Board Examination (BE VI)

3.3.1 Guiding principles

Board Examinations are designed to be fair and equitable, providing equal opportunities for all candidates across the country. They uphold strong validity by ensuring that each assessment accurately measures the intended learning outcomes. Reliability is a key priority, with systems established to deliver consistent and defensible results across schools, regions, and cohorts.

In addition, the examinations are guided by the principle of competence-based assessment, emphasising the evaluation of learners' skills, abilities, and knowledge in alignment with national educational goals. This approach ensures that assessment practices not only reflect academic achievement but also support the broader vision of holistic student development.

3.3.2 Purpose of Board Examinations

- Establish a coherent, credible, and reliable system for assessing learner achievement that serves learners, teachers, parents, and the education system as a whole.
- Measure students' knowledge, skills, and competencies in a valid and consistent manner, while communicating national learning expectations and standards.
- Identify individual strengths, learning gaps, and areas requiring improvement, thereby motivating learners to strive for academic excellence.
- Document learners' achievement and enable progression to further study.
- Generate data to improve teaching, learning, and the overall quality of the education system.

3.3.3 Components of assessment

Board Examinations consist of several key components designed to provide a valid, reliable, and holistic measure of learner achievement:

Two written examination papers and one coursework or, for science, LCSC, and TVET subjects, practical component. These components assess learners' theoretical knowledge, analytical and application skills, practical competencies, and sustained engagement with subject-related tasks, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of student achievement.

The written examinations assess learners' knowledge, understanding, analytical ability, and application of concepts across subjects. These written examinations include a combination of structured and unstructured questions, to evaluate a broad range of skills and competencies.

Another key component of the Board examination is coursework, which is internally assessed by schools but verified and monitored by BCSEA to ensure consistency and fairness. Coursework reflects learners' sustained engagement with subject-related tasks over a period of time. It provides opportunities for students to demonstrate skills and competencies that cannot be fully captured through a single written examination. This approach incorporates teacher input while benefiting from the rigour, oversight, and reliability provided by external verification.

Board Examinations also include a practical examination for science subjects (Class XII) and TVET subjects (Classes X and XII), and LCSC subjects. This assesses learners' hands-on competencies, procedural skills, accuracy, and ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real or simulated tasks.

The above components ensure a comprehensive and balanced assessment of learner achievement. They reflect both theoretical understanding and practical competencies, capturing students' overall knowledge, skills, and abilities in alignment with the national curriculum and educational standards.

3.4 SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work)

The purpose of SUPW is to promote holistic development by integrating work experience with education. It aims to inculcate a sense of dignity of labour, social responsibility, cooperation, and self-reliance among learners. SUPW helps students develop practical skills, work ethics, creativity, and leadership qualities while encouraging community service and productive engagement. It also enables learners to apply knowledge and values in real-life situations, fostering civic consciousness and respect for social and environmental responsibilities.

The SUPW process involves planned and supervised activities that are socially useful and productive in nature. Schools identify appropriate SUPW activities aligned with the curriculum and local needs, such as community service, environmental conservation, craftwork, or school-based projects. Students participate in these activities under the guidance of teachers over a specified period. Performance is assessed continuously based on participation, skill development, attitude, teamwork, and commitment. Records of activities are maintained, and assessment is carried out as per the prescribed evaluation criteria.

Teachers assess students based on clearly defined criteria such as regularity and punctuality, level of involvement, quality of work, cooperation and teamwork, initiative, creativity, and adherence to safety and ethical practices. Observation during activities forms the primary basis of assessment.

The final SUPW grade is determined based on continuous performance throughout the assessment period and is recorded as part of the school-based assessment, where applicable. For Classes VI, VIII, X, and XII, the SUPW grades are submitted to BCSEA. Students must attain a minimum grade of D to be eligible for promotion to the next level.

4 Scheme of Assessment

This section outlines the Scheme of Assessment for key stages 2 to 5, defining the overall assessment structure, assessment components, modes of assessment, weightage, and duration. It ensures alignment with the national curriculum and the National Student-Learning Assessment Framework and reflects progression in learning expectations across key stages.

The Scheme of Assessment promotes consistency, fairness, reliability, and transparency in assessment practices, and provides a common reference for the implementation of assessments across the education system.

Detailed assessment components, subject-specific requirements, and implementation arrangements are explained in the respective key-stage sections of this Framework and in the corresponding Assessment Syllabuses.

The Schemes of Assessment across the key stages are presented as follows:

4.1 Key Stage 5

4.1.1 Key Stage 5 (Classes XI and XII)

Key Stage 5 covers Classes XI & XII and leads to the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC). This stage offers multiple academic and vocational pathways, including Science, Commerce, and Arts streams. The assessment structure is designed as a two-year programme, combining coursework or practical examinations, School-Based Examinations (Classes XI and XII), and Board Examinations (Class XII) to ensure a balanced evaluation of learner achievement.

NB School-Based Examinations do not count towards the final Class XII mark

Stream ->	Science	Commerce	Arts	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, Physics, Chemistry and any ONE / TWO Optional subjects.	English, Dzongkha, Business Mathematics, Accountancy, B&E and any ONE Optional subject.	English, Dzongkha, and any THREE/ FOUR Optional subjects.	
Optional subjects	Biology, Mathematics, TVET, <i>Rigzhung</i> , Digital Technology and Innovation (DTI)	Economics, TVET, <i>Rigzhung</i> , DTI	Geography, History, Economics, Business Mathematics, <i>Rigzhung</i> , TVET, DTI	Candidates must select their optional subjects in Class XI and continue with the same subjects in Class XII. Subjects may be

				discontinued, but substitution with another optional subject is not permitted.
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	English, Dzongkha and any TWO subjects registered	English, Dzongkha and any TWO subjects registered	English, Dzongkha and any TWO subjects registered	Grade E in subject plus SUPW Grade D
National Topper	Aggregate marks of English and best THREE subjects	Aggregate marks of English and best THREE subjects	Aggregate marks of English and best THREE subjects	For ranking students and awarding certificate to toppers
Components of assessment	<p>THREE (Written Examination: Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework/practical) 80% WE 20% Coursework/practical</p> <p>For TVET subjects: 20% WE 80% practical examinations Note: practical examinations are only for science subjects - Physics, Chemistry and Biology & TVET subjects.</p>	<p>THREE (Written examination: Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework) 80% WE 20% coursework</p> <p>For TVET subjects: 20% WE 80% practical examination Note: practical examination is only for TVET subjects</p>	<p>THREE (Written examination: Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework) 80% WE 20% Coursework</p> <p>For TVET subjects: 20% WE 80% practical examination Note: practical examinations are only for TVET subjects</p>	Overall grades are calculated based on a combination of all the components. (WE + coursework/practical)

1. No students will be held back in Class XI because the BHSEC certification is structured as a two-year course.
2. TVET subjects can be availed only in identified schools offering TVET subjects.

4.1.2 Key Stage 5 (Classes XI and XII): Language and Culture Studies Certificate (LCSC)

The Language and Culture Studies Certificate (LCSC) is a certification pathway at Key Stage 5 covering Classes XI & XII offered in LCSC schools (selected schools identified by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development), focusing on advanced Bhutanese language and culture studies based on nationally prescribed subjects. Students following the LCSE pathway also study English; they are also offered DTI, Business Mathematics and other subjects as per the curriculum framework as optional. The assessment is structured as a two-year programme, combining coursework or practical examinations, School-Based Examinations (Class XI), and Board Examinations (Class XII) in accordance with national assessment standards.

	Subjects	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, <i>Chenjug</i> , <i>Nyenga</i> , <i>Sumtag</i> , and ONE Optional subject	
Optional subjects	<i>Rigmo</i> , <i>Luyang</i> , <i>Riglam</i> , <i>Sotse</i> , <i>Drukgi Jungrab</i> , DTI, Business Mathematics and other subjects as per curriculum framework	
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	Dzongkha, English and any TWO subjects registered	Grade E in subject plus SUPW Grade D
National topper	Aggregate marks of Dzongkha and best THREE subjects	For ranking students and awarding certificate to toppers
Components of assessment	THREE (Written Examination: Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework) 80% WE 20% coursework/practical examinations	Overall grades are calculated based on a combination of all the components. (WE + coursework/practical examinations)

Note:

1. No students will be held back in Class XI because the LCSC XII certification is structured as a two-year course.

4.2 Key Stage 4

4.2.1 Key Stage 4 (Classes IX and X)

Key Stage 4 covers Classes IX and X and leads to the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE). Assessment at this stage combines Coursework or practical examinations, School-Based Examinations (Class IX), and Board Examinations (Class X), implemented in accordance with national assessment standards to ensure consistency, reliability, and comparability across schools.

	Subjects	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics, Science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology), HCG (History & Geography), Economics, and DTI or TVET	In TVET schools, economics subject is an optional subject
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics and any TWO subjects registered	Grade G in subject plus SUPW Grade D
National topper	Aggregate marks of English and best FOUR subjects	For ranking students and awarding certificate to toppers
Components of assessment	TWO (Written examination Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework) 80% WE 20% coursework For TVET subjects TWO (Written examination and practical examinations) 20% WE 80% practical examinations	Overall passing criteria are calculated based on a combination of all the components. (WE + Coursework/practical for TVET subjects only)

Note:

1. Base line mark/grade for choice of stream for grade XI will be decided by the Department of School Education (DSE) in consultation with BCSEA.
2. No students will be held back in Class IX because the BCSE certification is structured as a two-year course.
3. TVET subjects can be availed only in identified schools offering TVET subjects.
4. 2026 Class X students will follow the usual practice; however, CA will be assessed out of 20.

4.2.2 Key Stage 4 (Classes IX and X): LCSC

The LCSC at Key Stage 4 covers Classes IX & X, offered in LCSC schools and focuses on Bhutanese language and culture studies based on nationally prescribed subjects. Students also study English and DTI as additional subjects, with assessment combining Coursework or practical examinations, School-Based Examinations (Class IX), and Board Examinations (Class X) components in line with national standards.

	Subjects	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, <i>Riglam</i> , <i>Sumtag</i> , <i>Drukgi Jungrab</i> , DTI, and ONE optional subject	
Optional subjects	<i>Luyang</i> , <i>So tse</i> , <i>Rigmo</i>	
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	English, Dzongkha and any THREE subjects registered.	Grade G in subject plus SUPW Grade D
National topper	Aggregate marks of Dzongkha and best FOUR subjects	
Components of assessment	THREE (Written examination: Paper 1 and Paper 2, Coursework) 80% WE 20% coursework	Overall grades are calculated based on a combination of components.

Note:

1. Base line mark/grade for choice of stream for grade XI will be decided by DSE in consultation with BCSEA
2. No students will be held back in Class IX because the LCSC X certification is structured as a two-year course.
3. 2026 Class X students will follow the usual practice; however, CA will be assessed out of 20.

4.3 Key Stage 3 (Classes VII and VIII)

Key Stage 3 covers Classes VII and VIII and focuses on consolidating foundational knowledge and skills in preparation for secondary education. Assessment at this stage combines coursework or practical examinations, School-Based Examinations (Class VII), and Board Examinations (Class VIII) components, implemented in accordance with national assessment standards to ensure consistency and readiness for subsequent key stages.

	Subjects	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, and DTI	
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics and any TWO subjects	Grade G in subjects plus SUPW grade D
National topper	Aggregate marks of English, Dzongkha, Mathematics, and best TWO subjects	
Components of assessment	TWO (Written examinations and coursework) 80% WE 20% Coursework	Overall grade is calculated based on a combination of components.

4.4 Key Stage 2 (Classes IV to VI)

Key Stage 2 covers Classes IV to VI and focuses on strengthening foundational learning and core competencies. Assessment at this stage combines coursework, School-Based Examinations (Classes IV & V), and Board Examinations (Class VI), implemented in accordance with national assessment standards to ensure consistency and progression to the next key stage.

	Subjects	Remarks
Subject registration	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics, Science, and DTI	
Compulsory subjects to attain the minimum passing grade	English, Dzongkha, Mathematics and any ONE subject	Grade G in subjects plus SUPW grade D
National topper	Aggregate marks of English, Dzongkha, Mathematics, and best ONE subject	
Components of assessment	TWO (Written Examinations and coursework) 80% WE 20% coursework	Overall grades are calculated based on a combination of components.

4.5 Key Stage 1 (Classes PP to III)

Refer to the Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA) document published by CSCD under DSE, MoESD.

5 Assessment design and conduct

Assessment design and conduct refer to the systematic planning, development, administration, and management of assessments to ensure that they generate valid, reliable, and fair evidence of learner achievement. The assessments are carefully aligned with curriculum intentions, learning outcomes, and the purposes of assessment, including supporting learning, guiding progression, and certifying achievement. Recognising that learner competence is multi-dimensional, BCSEA employs a balanced approach that combines coursework, practical examinations, and written examinations to capture a comprehensive range of knowledge, skills, and the application of learning in varied contexts. The conduct of assessments follows standardised procedures and regulations to ensure consistency, security, and fairness across all centres. Through the integration of thoughtful design and rigorous conduct, BCSEA upholds the integrity, credibility, and comparability of assessment outcomes while ensuring that assessments remain meaningful and supportive of student learning.

5.1 Board Examinations

5.1.1 Assessment design for Board Examinations

Examination papers are carefully designed to align with the national curriculum and intended learning outcomes and assessment objectives.

Assessment syllabuses specify the content coverage, cognitive levels, and weightage to ensure balanced assessment of knowledge, skills, and application. A comprehensive evaluation of both theoretical and practical competencies is provided through a variety of question formats, including structured and unstructured questions.

5.1.2.1 Item writing

Item Writers who are experienced teachers selected by the council, develop clear, unbiased, and curriculum-aligned questions referring to three key documents to ensure consistency in format, content and demand and quality:

- subject- and grade-specific Assessment Syllabus
- subject- and grade-specific Setter Guidelines
- Specimen Assessment Materials (a publicly available sample paper, which sets the standard)

Items are reviewed for clarity, relevance, and their ability to measure the intended learning outcomes. Standards are maintained through rigorous moderation of question papers to ensure appropriate difficulty, and alignment with assessment objectives. Questions are compiled into coherent papers according to the test specification. Reviewers review the papers for clarity, difficulty, fairness, and adherence to standards.

5.1.2.2 Moderation phases I & II and approval

Test items are reviewed by an item reviewer, for curriculum alignment, adherence to the assessment syllabus, clarity of language, fairness, and accuracy of content. The item writer and reviewer discuss the test items following the setter guidelines and incorporate changes to

produce a finalised set of test items. The EAOs review the test items from an assessment perspective and formally approve them for use in the question bank.

Question papers and mark scheme undergo formal approval through a two-phase moderation process, conducted by BCSEA involving external moderators and EAOs. Phase I checks alignment with the curriculum and quality of items, while Phase II finalises the paper after scrutiny, ensuring all standards are met before administration. Detailed modality and Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) of the moderation process are given in the procedural document.

5.1.3 Conduct of Board Examinations

This section covers the procedures and protocols required to ensure assessments are administered securely, fairly, and consistently. It includes all stages from candidate registration and examination preparation to administration, marking, grading, reporting, and data management, supported by monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms. The following sub-sections provide detailed guidance on each aspect of this process.

5.1.3.1 Candidate registration

BCSEA ensures accurate and comprehensive registration of all eligible candidates for Board Examinations. Schools register candidates using a secure online portal, following an annually published schedule that details deadlines and requirements. Schools are responsible for verifying candidate details, including names, subject choices, and accommodations for students with special needs, before submission. Verified entries are confirmed and communicated back to schools for final review, and late entries are accepted within a stipulated window to minimize disruption to examination preparation and planning.

5.1.3.2 Printing of examination materials

Printing is outsourced to a qualified firm selected through a transparent government tendering process, and examination papers include security features such as barcodes and watermarks for authenticity and traceability. Alternative formats, such as large print or Braille, are produced for students with disabilities as per submitted requests.

5.1.3.3 Security of assessment materials

All personnel involved in question paper setting, printing, and logistics are carefully vetted and bound by strict confidentiality agreements. Only authorised BCSEA officials and printing personnel have access to the printing and packing facilities.

Examination papers are delivered to designated centres in sealed packages through Bhutan Post following secure protocols. At the examination centres, examination materials are taken over by the centre convener from Bhutan Post and handed over to the supervising examiner, and they are stored in designated secured rooms. After the exam, examination materials are sent to the marking centre through Bhutan Post under proper transportation protocols.

5.1.3.4 Examination administration

The BCSEA ensures that board examinations are conducted fairly, consistently, and inclusively across all centres. Examination centres are selected based on affiliation requirements. A standardised examination timetable is issued, and centres follow strict procedures for distribution of question-answer booklets, seating arrangement, attendance verification, and invigilation rosters.

Reasonable adjustments, such as additional time or a reader, are provided for candidates with special needs. Examinations are administered by trained Supervising Examiners appointed by BCSEA. BCSEA officials monitor compliance with procedures, identify any issues, and provide support as required.

5.1.3.5 Marking and standardisation

The BCSEA conducts marking workshops at central locations, bringing all subject markers together. Markers are trained and briefed on detailed mark scheme and exemplar answers. During the workshop, they first mark sample scripts collectively and discuss scoring differences to align understanding of the marking criteria. EAOs along with chief markers monitor the process to ensure consistency, accuracy, and fairness. Standardisation procedures ensure consistent interpretation of mark scheme across all markers ensuring standard marking. Detailed processes involved in marking are covered in the marking chapter.

5.1.3.6 Grading

After marking, raw scores are converted to grades. The BCSEA uses examination data and standard-setting exercises to maintain comparability and fairness across subjects and years.

5.1.3.7 Results & reporting

Once grading is complete, results are compiled, verified, and cross-checked for accuracy. Individual and school-level results are securely communicated to candidates and schools. Reports also include summaries and trend analyses to inform teaching, learning, and policy decisions.

For the purpose of declaring National Toppers, the BCSEA shall use the aggregate Percentage Uniform Marks (PUMs) obtained by candidates across the relevant subjects or examination components, as prescribed for the examination. Candidates with the highest aggregate PUM shall be recognised as National Toppers.

5.1.3.8 Data management, analysis & use

The BCSEA maintains all examination data in secure digital systems. Item-level and paper-level analyses are carried out to monitor reliability, fairness, and difficulty. The findings are used to improve future assessments, guide curriculum planning, and support evidence-based decisions.

5.1.3.9 Monitoring & support

The BCSEA actively monitors examination centres, invigilators, conduct of Board Examinations and marking process to ensure compliance with procedures and regulations. All personnel involved in the various phases of the examinations receive training and guidance before and throughout their assignments.

Refer: OGEA (bcsea.bt/uploads/publications/BCSEA_OGEA_UPDATED.pdf)

5.2 School-Based Examinations

5.2.1 Assessment design for School-Based Examinations

School-Based Examinations are carefully designed to align with the national curriculum and the intended learning outcomes. Test blueprints and Assessment Syllabuses produced by BCSEA clearly specify content coverage, cognitive levels, and weightage to ensure a balanced assessment of knowledge, skills, and application. Both theoretical and practical competencies are assessed to provide a comprehensive evaluation in accordance with the respective assessment syllabus.

A variety of question formats, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended responses, are included.

5.2.2.1 Item writing

Subject teachers develop clear, unbiased, and curriculum-aligned questions referring to three key documents to ensure consistency in format, content, demand and quality:

- Curriculum
- Subject- and grade-specific Assessment Syllabus
- Specimen Assessment Materials (a publicly available sample paper, which sets the standard)

School-based assessment standards are maintained through rigorous moderation of question papers to ensure appropriate difficulty levels and alignment with assessment objectives, in compliance with the standards set by the BCSEA. Items are reviewed for clarity, relevance, and their ability to measure the intended learning outcomes. The subject teachers guided by the Head of Department assure the writing process and the items align with the standards set by BCSEA.

5.2.2.2 Moderation

After the preparation of the question paper, it is submitted to the school-level moderation committee. The suggested members for the committee are Principal, Academic Head, Head of Departments, and respective subject teachers. During this process, the committee members carefully review the paper to ensure that the questions are clear, appropriate to the students' level, balanced in terms of content coverage, and consistent with the assessment syllabus and marking principles.

The conduct of moderation is mandatory. However, schools may adopt different approaches, and the procedures outlined above are provided as suggestive guidance.

5.2.2.3 Approval

After the sign-off, the finalised question paper is submitted to the Academic Head or Principal for final approval. The approving authority ensures that all moderation procedures have been followed and that the paper complies with the school's assessment policy and examination guidelines. Upon approval, the question paper is authorised for secure printing and administration in the school-based examination.

5.2.3 Conduct of School-Based Examinations

The conduct of School-Based Examinations encompasses the key processes and protocols that ensure assessments are carried out securely, fairly, and consistently. The sub-sections below provide guidance on critical aspects of examination management, including printing and security of materials, administration, marking, grading, reporting, data management, and monitoring and support.

5.2.3.1 Printing of examination materials

The final versions approved by the approving authority are sent to printing. Printing is carried out by the School Examination Secretary or other staff member formally assigned this responsibility, with support staff assistance as required. Examination papers are printed in a controlled and secure environment to prevent leakage or tampering. Each paper is checked for completeness and correct formatting before printing.

Confidentiality is strictly maintained throughout the printing process. Printed materials are securely packaged, stored, and distributed to examination rooms in accordance with examinations guidelines. Any errors detected after printing are immediately corrected under strict supervision to maintain the integrity of the examination process.

5.2.3.2 Security of assessment materials

The security of examination materials is of utmost importance for School-Based Examinations. It must be treated as confidential and handled under strict security protocols from preparation to administration. Access to examination materials is restricted to authorised personnel only. Materials are stored in secure rooms with CCTV cameras, until they are distributed.

Examination materials are securely packaged to prevent unauthorised access or tampering. Any handling, distribution, or disposal of materials follows strict procedures, and all breaches of security are reported immediately and addressed according to school and BCSEA regulations. School principal and academic head conduct regular checks and audits to ensure compliance with security protocols

5.2.3.3 Examination administration

School-Based Examinations are conducted in a fair, consistent, and inclusive manner, following procedures aligned with the standards of the BCSEA. Examination venues within the school are selected based on suitability, adequate seating and safety. A standardised examination timetable is prepared and communicated to all students and teachers in advance.

The school follows strict procedures for the secure handling and distribution of question papers and answer scripts. Proper seating arrangements are made to minimize malpractice, and attendance is verified before the examination begins. Teachers are assigned as invigilators according to a structured invigilation roster to maintain discipline and ensure adherence to examination rules.

Special consideration is also provided for students with special educational needs, such as extra time or additional support where necessary. The school examination committee monitor the conduct of examinations to ensure compliance with established procedures

5.2.3.4 Marking

Marking of examination papers is carried out using clear and consistent mark scheme. Subject teachers mark answer scripts in accordance with the approved mark scheme and marking principles.

Departmental marking is practised where subject teachers work collaboratively to maintain uniformity in marking standards. To support this process, a lead teacher or Head of Department is appointed to coordinate the marking process by holding standardisation meetings and guiding teachers in applying the mark scheme accurately. The schools are guided by the marking and standardisation guidelines outlined in the *Marking* chapter.

5.2.3.5 Grading

After marking, raw scores are converted into grades based on the approved grading scheme. Grades reflect the level of attainment of learning objectives and provide a fair comparison of student performance across subjects and classes. Schools are required to apply the fixed threshold as specified in the *Grading* chapter.

5.2.3.6 Results & reporting

Subject teachers submit grades, which are verified and approved by the Head of Department or academic head to ensure accuracy and consistency. Results are recorded systematically and securely in the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

The reporting of results includes both quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative reports present students' achievement in terms of grades, which help in measuring academic progress. Qualitative reports provide descriptive feedback on students' strengths, areas for improvement, learning progress, and attitudes towards learning.

These reports are shared with students and parents to support learning improvement and informed decision-making.

5.2.3.7 Data management, analysis & use

Effective use of examination data is essential for informed decision-making, monitoring student progress, and improving teaching and learning outcomes. The confidentiality of examination data is maintained through secure storage, controlled access, and responsible handling by authorised personnel only. Examination results are systematically recorded and organized to ensure accuracy, transparency, and easy retrieval when needed.

5.2.3.8 Monitoring & support

The Dzongkhag/Thromde Education Office, as a key stakeholder, monitors and provides necessary support in conducting examinations in a fair and standardised manner. Within the school, the administration, Heads of Departments, and designated staff oversee the entire examination process, including the preparation and secure printing of examination materials, distribution of question papers, marking, grading, and reporting of results.

6 Marking

6.1 Introduction

Marking is a critical component of the assessment process, ensuring that students' learning achievements are accurately evaluated and fairly represented. It involves the systematic application of criteria to assess student performance across various forms of assessment, including coursework, School-Based Examinations, and Board Examinations. Each of these assessment types contributes uniquely to the overall judgment of student learning, and the marking process must reflect consistency, objectivity, accuracy and alignment with intended learning outcomes.

6.2 Purpose

The purpose of marking is to ensure that student performance is evaluated accurately, fairly, and consistently across all forms of assessment. Specifically, marking aims to:

- provide valid, reliable, and meaningful judgments of student performance based on the prescribed learning outcomes.
- recognise student achievement and support their academic growth through constructive feedback.
- ensure fairness and consistency by applying standardised marking criteria across coursework, School-Based Examinations, and Board Examinations.
- contribute to certification and promotion based on verified student performance.
- promote transparency, accountability, and confidence in the national assessment system.

6.3 Principles

6.3.1 Principles of marking

Marking must be guided by principles that promote fairness, consistency, and quality in assessing student performance. These principles ensure that the marking process reflects the intended learning outcomes, maintains credibility, and supports the broader goals of education. The following guiding principles form the foundation of all marking practices:

- **Fairness:** All students must be marked against the same criteria, free from bias or discrimination, regardless of background, school, or location.
- **Reliability:** Marking should produce consistent results when applied by different markers or at different times. This requires clear rubrics, verification processes, and training for markers.
- **Transparency:** Marking criteria and processes should be clear, communicated to all stakeholders, and open to scrutiny where appropriate.

- **Validity:** Marks should accurately reflect the extent to which students have demonstrated the intended knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- **Confidentiality:** All marking processes must uphold the confidentiality of student information and ensure data is handled responsibly.
- **Timeliness:** Marking should be completed within a reasonable timeframe to allow for meaningful feedback and decision-making.
- **Professionalism:** Markers must exercise integrity, objectivity, and accountability, adhering to established guidelines and ethical standards.

6.3.2 Generic marking principles

All marking officials must adhere to a set of consistent and standardised principles when evaluating candidate responses. These Generic Marking Principles are to be applied in conjunction with the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors relevant to each question. Every question paper and its corresponding mark scheme must align with these principles to ensure fairness, reliability, accuracy, learning objectives alignment and comparability in marking across all assessment types. These Marking Principles are adapted from the generic principles used by Cambridge ([cambridgeinternational.org/Images/718800-2027-specimen-paper-1-mark-scheme.pdf](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/718800-2027-specimen-paper-1-mark-scheme.pdf)).

Generic marking principle 1

Marks must be awarded in accordance with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptions provided for the question,
- the specific skills identified in the mark scheme or descriptors, and
- the standard of performance expected from candidates, as exemplified through standardisation scripts.

Generic marking principle 2

Only whole marks are to be awarded. No half marks or fractional marks should be given under any circumstances.

Generic marking principle 3

Marks must be awarded positively:

- Credit must be given for correct and valid responses, as outlined in the mark scheme.
- Where a candidate's response exceeds the expected content or extends beyond the syllabus in a relevant way, appropriate credit may be awarded, in consultation with the Chief Marker.
- Marks are awarded when the candidate demonstrates clear evidence of knowledge, understanding, or skill.

- Marks must not be deducted for incorrect answers, omissions, or irrelevant material.
- Spelling, punctuation, and grammar should only be considered if explicitly stated in the question's assessment criteria. However, responses must be sufficiently clear in meaning.

Generic marking principle 4

- Rules must be applied consistently across all scripts, including cases where candidates do not follow specific instructions or where generic level descriptions are applied. For example, if a candidate writes more answers than required or responds in the wrong format, the marker should still assess the response based on the mark scheme. If the mark scheme includes a penalty for not following instructions, it should be applied. If no penalty is mentioned, valid responses should still be credited.
- In the case of generic level descriptions such as "basic understanding" or "detailed explanation", all markers must interpret and apply these levels in the same way across all scripts. To achieve this, a clear marking guide with annotated exemplars is developed and shared during coordination meetings or standardisation sessions. Markers discuss and agree on the interpretation of each descriptor by reviewing sample responses that illustrate different performance levels. This process ensures a common understanding of marking standards, promoting fairness and consistency across all scripts.

Generic marking principle 5

The full range of marks available in the mark scheme must be used where appropriate. However, the actual distribution of marks may depend on the quality of responses observed.

Generic marking principle 6

Marks must be awarded strictly based on the criteria and expectations defined in the mark scheme. Judgments should not be influenced by grade thresholds, grade descriptions, or assumptions about overall candidate performance.

6.4 Structure of the mark scheme

Each assessment component must be supported by a clear, consistent, and well-structured mark scheme. The mark scheme serves as a critical tool for ensuring fairness, accuracy, reliability and alignment with the intended learning outcomes and curriculum standards.

The mark scheme should:

- break down each task or question into specific components or assessment criteria, directly reflecting the targeted learning objectives and skills. Each task should assess the assessment objective.
- outline the key content points or skills candidates are expected to demonstrate to earn marks
- use point-based marking for questions that have clearly defined, discrete answers or steps where each correct element can earn a specific number of points.
- use level-based descriptors for questions requiring subjective judgment, such as essays or evaluative tasks, describing performance bands (e.g., Level 1 to Level 4) based on quality of argument, coherence, analysis depth, and relevance. Marks should be awarded according to how well candidates meet these criteria.
- include clear guidance on how to award marks, particularly for multi-step questions or extended responses. This is especially important in School-based and Board Examinations where analytical or application-based questions are used.
- include scored sample responses or key points expected for each answer for extended response tasks.
- clearly indicate the total mark value for each question, section, or task, in accordance with the assessment blueprint or table of specifications.
- use standard annotations (tick for correct points, cross for errors) during marking to indicate where marks are awarded, supporting transparency and standardisation.
- in consultation with Chief Marker, allow flexibility to recognise valid alternative responses that demonstrate appropriate understanding, even if not explicitly listed, with examiners applying professional judgment while maintaining consistency.

6.5 Guidance/Instruction on marking

6.5.1 Using point-based marking

- DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term)
- DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct
- DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.)
- DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities

- DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to ‘mirror statements’ (i.e. polluted/not polluted).
- DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However, spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. affect/effect)

6.5.2 Using descriptive marking

For certain assessment components, marking is guided by level descriptors. These descriptors describe the general characteristics and quality of work expected at different performance levels.

Level descriptors are intended to support markers in making professional judgements about the overall quality of a candidate’s response. They provide a broad description of the skills, understanding, and knowledge typically demonstrated within each level. However, they should not be interpreted as strict criteria that candidates must meet to move from one level to another.

6.6 Marking process

The marking process involves the careful and consistent application of standardised criteria to evaluate candidate responses fairly and reliably. Throughout the process, markers must strictly follow the approved mark scheme and apply the generic marking principles, ensuring that marks are awarded based on the established criteria without bias or subjectivity.

This process is applied across various assessment formats, including:

6.6.1 Coursework

6.6.1.1 Roles and responsibilities in marking

Role	Responsibilities
Internal school marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks coursework using BCSEA rubrics • Participates in school-level verification • Maintains records of marking and feedback • Ensures fair and unbiased assessment practices
Internal school verification team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews samples of internally assessed work from schools • Ensures internal marking is consistent with BCSEA standards • Adjusts marks if discrepancies are found

School Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees the entire marking process • Ensures timely submission of coursework marks
BCSEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audit to ensure the integrity of marks • Make adjustments where necessary

6.6.1.2 Materials required for marking

- Detailed marking rubrics or schemes aligned to each task.
- Samples of previously marked work or anchor scripts as reference.
- Record sheets or electronic systems for entering and tracking marks.
- Writing tools (pens, highlighters) for annotation and feedback.
- Secure storage for student work and records.
- Annotation guide

6.6.1.3 Coursework marking

- Teachers are the primary assessors of coursework. They must mark student work using the approved rubric and record the awarded marks with justifications.
- Feedback should be provided to students to support their learning.
- Teachers should avoid subjective judgments and ensure impartiality.
- Teachers must use plagiarism detection tools where possible to ensure the originality of students' work, identify potential instances of plagiarism, and uphold academic integrity throughout the assessment process.
- Teachers must ensure that all candidates' work is authenticated and accompanied by the appropriate documentation.

6.6.1.4 Phase I: Internal verification

The coursework verification process ensures fairness, reliability, and consistency in marking, aligning with BCSEA standards. Verification involves two phases: internal verification at the school level and external verification by independent verifiers.

Internal verification ensures that all teachers apply the same standards and rubric consistently before marks are finalised.

a. Sampling of student submissions

- A representative 30% sample of total coursework submissions should be selected.
- Sample to include:
 - 10% Top-performing students – to check for leniency or over-crediting.
 - 10% Average-performing students – to verify consistent rubric application.
 - 10% Struggling students – to ensure underperforming students are not disadvantaged.

b. Step 1 – check patterns

- Review the sample for consistency of marking and adherence to the rubric.
- Identify patterns of issues:
 - Isolated issue – affecting only 1–2 submissions.
 - Patterned issue (single range) – affecting multiple submissions within a performance band.
 - Systematic issue (all ranges) – affecting all levels of student performance.

c. Step 2 – decide action based on patterns

Situation	Description	Action
Isolated issue	Only a few submissions show inconsistency	Re-mark only those specific submissions
Patterned issue (single range)	Several submissions in a specific range show a consistent problem	Re-mark the entire affected range
Systematic issue (all ranges)	Rubric applied inconsistently across all performance levels	Re-mark all coursework to ensure fairness

d. Recording & documentation

Maintain a clear verification record for transparency:

Candidate name	Subject teacher mark	Verifier check	Final mark	Converted mark (10%)	Remarks
A	12	endorsed	12	6	Consistent with rubric
B	18	endorsed	16	8	Lenient marking detected
C	15	endorsed	17	9	Under-marked originally

e. Guidance for internal verification

- Use annotated exemplar coursework to guide verification.
- Ensure all markers and verifiers attend standardisation meetings to agree on rubric interpretation.
- Record rank order of internally verified marks for submission.
- Identify trends or recurring issues to inform teacher training.
- Verifiers can adjust marks if inconsistencies are detected, ensuring fairness.
- Schools must establish verification committees comprising subject heads or senior teachers.

- A sample of marked student work from each class, particularly those at grade boundaries (work judged just sufficient to attain a certain grade), should be reviewed to check for consistency and fairness.
- Discrepancies such as inflation and deflation of marks must be addressed before marks are finalised and submitted to BCSEA. This may involve scaling, remarking of specific scripts, or collaborative verification meetings to ensure alignment with agreed marking standards.
- A formal Verification Report should be generated followed by documentation.

6.6.1.5 Phase II - external verification

External verification provides independent verification and ensures comparability across schools.

- a. Sampling
 - Randomly select coursework from the internally verified pool.
 - Samples must represent all performance levels and all assessment tasks.
- b. Checking and action
 - BCSEA will select random samples of coursework from various schools for verification during the auditing period.
 - Compare internal marks with external verifier judgements
 - Discrepancies may result in systematic adjustments (scaling) to align a school's marks with national standards, or in rare cases, cancellation of marks if assessment practices are invalid. Scaling refers to the adjustment of all marks from a centre or marker where evidence shows consistent leniency or severity in marking.
- c. Reporting and feedback
 - External verifiers provide a feedback report highlighting:
 - Marking consistency and fairness
 - Correct application of rubrics
 - Recommendations for teacher training or improvements

6.6.1.6 Quality assurance mechanisms

To maintain the integrity of the marking process, the following quality assurance strategies should be followed:

- **Marker training:** Teachers should regularly engage in studying how to interpret and apply rubrics, as well as develop effective marking practices.
- **Standardisation meetings:** Teachers should participate in standardisation exercises where they mark sample scripts and discuss marking decisions.
- **Use of anchor scripts:** Sample scripts with agreed-upon marks will serve as benchmarks for marking consistency.

- **Audit trails:** Mark records should be maintained systematically, including annotations and comments, to justify the scores awarded.

6.6.1.7 Procedures for discrepancies and appeals

- **Student appeals:** Students may appeal coursework marks through their school if they believe the marks do not reflect their performance.
- **Re-marking:** A second independent marking should be carried out if the appeal is accepted.
- **Documentation:** All appeals and decisions must be documented and filed for reference and accountability.
- **Final decision:** The final decision on a coursework appeal will be made after a review by the school’s assessment committee, in consultation with the internal verification team. However, if the coursework has already been externally verified by BCSEA, the marks awarded by the external verifier will be considered final and binding. The student must be informed of the outcome in writing, with a clear explanation.

6.6.2 School-Based Examinations

6.6.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Marker (subject teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attends standardisation meetings ● Applies the mark scheme accurately and consistently ● Flags ambiguous or problematic responses to chief marker
Chief marker (Head of the department or subject teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oversees the entire marking process for a subject ● Leads standardisation meetings ● Ensures consistency and accuracy across all markers ● Reviews final mark distribution and makes recommendations for grade thresholds
Verification team (Principal, Academic Head and Head of Department)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review scripts, especially those near grade boundaries, to check for consistency and fairness

6.6.2.2 Materials required

- Comprehensive mark schemes including sample answers and level descriptors.
- Marking instructions.
- Documentation for audit trails and quality assurance.
- Stationery
- Standardisation scripts / anchor scripts

6.6.2.3 Standardisation meeting

Prior to marking any examination scripts, all teachers involved in the marking process are advised to participate in a standardisation meeting. This meeting helps ensure fairness and consistency in applying the marking criteria. The following suggestive steps may be followed during the meeting:

- **Detailed review of the mark scheme:** Markers thoroughly study the mark scheme developed by question setters, clarifying any uncertainties about the allocation of marks, expected answers, and how partial credit is awarded.
- **Collective marking of sample scripts:** A set of sample scripts representing a range of performance levels including high-quality work, average work, and borderline cases (work close to grade boundaries) are marked collectively by all teachers.
- **Discussion and resolution of differences:** Any differences in how teachers interpret or apply the marking criteria are openly discussed. The goal is to reach a consensus on the correct application of the mark scheme so that all markers have a shared understanding.
- **Use of anchor scripts:** The group identifies and agrees on anchor scripts, examples of student work with predetermined marks that serve as reference points to maintain consistent marking throughout the process.
- **Establishing acceptable thresholds for consistency:** To measure marking consistency, the team should calculate the level of agreement among markers on the sample scripts. An acceptable threshold, usually 90% agreement within a $\pm 3\%$ mark tolerance is set to measure consistency among examiners. If agreement is not reached, further training and discussion occur until consistency is achieved.

6.6.2.4 Review and verification

To maintain high standards throughout the marking process:

- After initial marking, scripts especially those near grade boundaries should be reviewed by the verification committee to check for consistency and fairness.

- Any discrepancies or unusual marking patterns are discussed and resolved through consensus or remarking.
- Scaling or adjustment of marks may be considered if systemic inflation or deflation of marks is identified.

6.6.2.5 Finalisation and record keeping

- Once all scripts are marked and verified, final marks should be recorded clearly and systematically.
- Teachers must maintain audit trails including the mark sheets, annotations, and any verification records.

6.6.2.6 External monitoring

- In schools where School-based examination results influence official student reporting, the Dzongkhag Education Office or BCSEA may request random samples for monitoring.
- External audits may focus on the fairness of mark distribution, adherence to schemes, and the integrity of the process.
- Feedback may be given to the school for improvement if irregularities are observed.

6.6.2.7 Quality assurance mechanisms (suggestive)

To uphold the quality and integrity of the marking process, schools must adopt the following strategies:

- **Teacher training:** Teachers should receive training on objective marking and interpreting mark schemes.
- **Standardisation meetings:** Teachers should participate in pre-marking discussions to establish marking consistency.
- **Anchor responses:** Use of agreed-upon sample scripts (high, medium, low performance) as references during marking.
- **Monitoring by Academic Head:** Heads of departments or academic coordinators should periodically review the marking process.

6.6.2.8 Procedures for discrepancies and appeals (suggestive)

- **Student appeals:** Students may submit written appeals if they believe their scripts were unfairly marked.
- **Re-marking:** If the appeal is accepted, a different teacher should re-mark the paper independently.

- **Final decision:** The school principal or examination committee shall make the final decision based on the re-mark and evidence provided.
- **Documentation:** All appeals, reviews, and decisions should be documented and retained for accountability.

6.6.3 Board Examinations

6.6.3.1 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attends standardisation meetings ● Applies the mark scheme accurately and consistently ● Marks assigned scripts within the marking tolerance ● Flags ambiguous or problematic responses to Chief marker
Cross checker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure marking accuracy ● Detect any missed responses, incorrect allocations of marks, or arithmetic errors in mark addition ● Provide constructive feedback to the marker when discrepancies are found
Chief marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leads standardisation meetings ● Oversees the entire marking process for a subject ● Ensures consistency and accuracy across all markers ● Reviews final mark distribution and makes recommendations for grade thresholds
Assistant Chief marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supports chief marker ● Conducts quality checks on scripts marked

6.6.3.2 Materials required

- Comprehensive mark schemes including sample answers and level descriptors.
- Marking instructions.
- Documentation for audit trails and quality assurance.
- Standardisation scripts / anchor scripts

- Approved list of marking centres selected based on suitability, security, accessibility, and availability of adequate facilities to ensure a conducive and controlled marking environment.

6.6.3.3 Preparation and training

Before marking begins, markers are carefully selected based on their subject expertise, prior marking experience, and familiarity with the syllabus and assessment standards. Once selected, markers receive comprehensive training on the syllabus, assessment objectives, and detailed mark schemes. This training ensures they understand how to apply the marking criteria consistently and fairly, including the interpretation of level descriptors and the use of anchor scripts.

6.6.3.4 Standardisation meeting

Prior to marking any examination scripts, all teachers involved in the marking process must participate in a standardisation meeting. This meeting is critical to ensure fairness and consistency in applying the marking criteria. The following steps should be followed during the meeting:

- **Detailed review of the mark scheme:** Teachers thoroughly study the approved mark scheme or rubric, clarifying any uncertainties about the allocation of marks, expected answers, and how partial credit is awarded.
- **Collective marking of sample scripts:** A set of sample scripts representing a range of performance levels including high-quality work, average work, and borderline cases (work close to grade boundaries) are marked collectively by all teachers.
- **Discussion and resolution of differences:** Any differences in how teachers interpret or apply the marking criteria are openly discussed. The goal is to reach a consensus on the correct application of the mark scheme so that all markers have a shared understanding.
- **Use of anchor scripts:** The group identifies and agrees on anchor scripts, examples of student work with predetermined marks that serve as reference points to maintain consistent marking throughout the process. They are used as reference only.
- **Establishing acceptable thresholds for consistency:** To measure marking consistency, the team should calculate the level of agreement among markers on the sample scripts. An acceptable threshold, usually 90% agreement within a $\pm 3\%$ mark tolerance is set to measure consistency among examiners. If agreement is not reached, further training and discussion occur until consistency is achieved.

6.6.3.5 Quality control and monitoring

To maintain high standards throughout the marking process:

- Chief markers regularly review a sample of marked scripts for consistency and fairness.
- Seed papers are embedded within the scripts assigned to markers, serving as benchmark examples to guide calibration and ensure consistent application of mark scheme.
- Any discrepancies or inconsistencies are flagged, and markers may be asked to re-mark or adjust their marking approach.
- Detailed audit trails are kept, including annotations and comments on scripts, to justify marks awarded.

6.6.3.6 Verification

- If systematic generosity or severity is detected in marking, adjustments are applied to correct marks.
- A grade review occurs before results release: scripts near grade boundaries are re-checked to avoid unfair outcomes

6.6.3.7 Finalisation and reporting

- Statistical and expert judgment set grade boundaries for each exam series to account for variation in paper.
- Raw marks are converted to grades based on these boundaries.

6.6.3.8 Quality assurance mechanisms

To uphold the quality and integrity of the marking process, BCSEA adopts the following strategies:

- **Marker training:** Markers are trained on objective marking and interpreting mark schemes.
- **Standardisation meetings:** Markers participate in pre-marking discussions to establish marking consistency.
- **Anchor responses:** Use of agreed-upon sample scripts (high, medium, low performance) as references during marking.

6.6.3.9 Procedures for discrepancies and appeals

- **Student appeals:** Students may submit written appeals if they believe their scripts were unfairly marked. There are two types of appeals available to candidates:
 1. Clerical recheck

2. Review of marking

- **Re-marking:** If the appeal is accepted, senior markers re-marks the paper independently for review of marking whereas BCSEA conducts clerical recheck.
- **Final decision:** BCSEA shall make the final decision based on the re-mark and evidence provided.
- **Documentation:** All appeals, reviews, and decisions are documented and retained for accountability.

7 Grading

There are three approaches used to determine grades:

- Norm-referenced grading
- Fixed-threshold grading
- Criterion-referenced grading

7.1 Norm-referenced grading

Grades are awarded based on a candidate's relative position within the cohort (the group of students taking the test). Students are ranked according to their performance, and grades are assigned according to predetermined proportions. For example, the top 10% may receive an A, while the next 15% receive a B.

7.2 Fixed-threshold grading

Grades are awarded when candidates achieve predetermined mark thresholds. In this approach, specific percentage scores correspond to particular grades. For instance, 50% may be set as the minimum for a C, and 65% for a B.

7.3 Criterion-referenced grading

Grades are awarded based on how well candidates meet defined learning outcomes and assessment objectives. Student performance is evaluated against clearly established criteria rather than being compared with the performance of other students.

Board examination uses criterion-referenced grading for Classes VI, VIII, X, and XII whereas school-based assessment uses fixed-threshold grading for Classes IV, V, VII, IX, and XI.

7.4 General methodology

The grading system will follow a criterion-referenced approach, ensuring that performance standards remain consistent across years and aligned to Cambridge International benchmarks. Grades will be awarded on a five-point scale (A–E), with A representing the strongest performance and E the minimum acceptable standard for Key Stage 5. Grades will be awarded on a six-point scale (A–G), with A representing the strongest performance and G the minimum acceptable standard for Key Stages 2 to 4. Candidates who do not meet the threshold grade will be awarded U (Ungraded).

In addition, a Uniform Mark Score (UMS) will be reported on a 1–100 scale. This represents candidates' performance converted to a common scale, rather than raw marks, thereby allowing comparability across years and assessments.

The grade–UMS alignment will be as follows:

Key Stage 5 (Classes XI and XII)

Grade	UMS threshold
A	80
B	70
C	60
D	50
E	40
U	< 40

Key Stage 2 to 4 (Classes IV to X)

Grade	UMS threshold
A	90
B	80
C	70
D	60
E	50
G	40
U	< 40

7.5 Alignment and standard setting

- In the first year, grade standards will be anchored to Cambridge exemplification materials, with candidate work from Bhutan compared against international benchmark samples to establish appropriate thresholds.
- In subsequent years, standards will be maintained to ensure year-on-year consistency. Grade thresholds may shift slightly depending on the relative difficulty of the paper, but the interpretation of each grade will remain stable.
- This ensures fairness and comparability of outcomes across cohorts, while preserving the integrity of the grading system.

7.6 Methodological principles

Grading will be guided by the following principles:

- **Range of evidence:** Use of both qualitative (script review, exemplars) and quantitative (statistical data, mark distribution) evidence.
- **Professional judgement:** Applied by EAOs and Chief markers in interpreting evidence.
- **Collegiate approach:** Initial grade boundary recommendations will be set through paired or group discussions.
- **Accountability:** The grading process will culminate in a formal report, reviewed and signed off through an established chain of quality assurance.

7.7 Process and governance

- Preliminary analysis** – Review of mark distributions, entry statistics, and candidate performance.
- Exemplification and benchmarking** – Comparison of candidate scripts against threshold exemplars.
- Boundary setting** – EAOs propose grade thresholds using combined evidence.
- Production of grading report** – Prepared by the responsible EAO.
- Grading committee review** – Independent committee validates, challenges, and ratifies recommendations.
- Final approval** – Certificate endorsed by the Controller of Examinations.

This structured approach ensures that grading is valid, reliable, fair, and internationally benchmarked, while remaining responsive to local context and policy priorities.

8 Assessment Data Management

This section provides a structured overview and capability development plan for assessment data management in line with international standards.

Assessment data management is essential for maintaining the integrity, security, and usefulness of educational data. It plays a key role in supporting policy-making, ensuring accountability, improving teaching practices, and enabling research and analysis. This document outlines the main components of an effective data management framework, including its purposes, guidelines, operational processes, and staffing capabilities. It highlights the importance of using secure, web-based systems, structured documentation, and regular staff training to ensure smooth operations and informed decision-making across all levels of the education system.

The scope of data covered includes internal assessment records reports from schools, candidates' subject registrations, SUPW records, and results from both School-based and Board Examinations, ensuring that all educational information is collected, secured, and effectively used for monitoring student progress, reporting, guiding interventions, and supporting policy decisions."

In line with government data governance protocols, assessment data is shared only with relevant agencies under mutual understanding and official undertaking to ensure confidentiality and lawful use. Data may also be shared with legal or investigative authorities when required for verification, compliance, or investigation purposes, in accordance with national data protection and education policies. This ensures transparency, accountability, and the responsible handling of sensitive educational information.

8.1 Purposes

The key purposes of assessment data management include:

- Supporting educational policy formulation (e.g., *informing policy*).
- Ensuring accountability in assessment outcomes.
- Improving instructional practices through data-driven insights.
- Facilitating educational research and analysis.
- Monitoring equity and fairness in student performance.
- Tracking the impact of educational policy.
- Monitoring item/test performance.
- Training and supporting item writers.
- Ensuring comparability of outcomes over time.

8.2 Data uses

Assessment data is used to support teaching, learning, policymaking, and system improvement. In line with international standards, data must be used responsibly, ethically, and only for clearly defined educational purposes. The following are the approved uses of assessment data:

i. Improving teaching and learning

- Identify learning gaps and areas where students need additional support.
- Provide teachers with evidence-based feedback to inform assessment practices.
- Track student progress and tailor instruction to individual needs.

ii. School-level monitoring and improvement

- Support school leaders in reviewing subject performance and implementing interventions.
- Compare cohort performance across years to monitor consistency and fairness.
- Evaluate assessment practices for reliability and alignment with curriculum standards.

iii. Policy development and system-level planning

- Provide policymakers with reliable data to design or revise education policies.
- Track national performance trends across subjects, classes, and regions.
- Monitor the impact of reforms, curriculum changes, and resource allocation.

iv. Research, evaluation, and quality assurance

- Support national and international educational research initiatives.
- Facilitate studies that examine assessment practices, student performance patterns, equity, and learning outcomes.
- Evaluate item-level performance to improve test design and ensure comparability and fairness.

v. Accountability and transparency

- Ensure schools, teachers, and assessment bodies maintain consistency and integrity in assessment practices.
- Provide transparent reporting to stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality and data protection standards.

vi. Support services and student guidance

- Inform counselling, academic guidance, and placement decisions.
- Enable early identification of at-risk students and guide interventions.
- Support tracking of students' progression from school to higher education or employment.

vii. Secure sharing with authorised institutions

- Provide anonymised or aggregated assessment data to relevant agencies for statistical reporting.
- Share data with legal or investigative authorities only when officially requested and within regulatory frameworks.
- Ensure all shared data follows strict confidentiality, data protection, and ethical guidelines.

viii. System development and innovation

- Support digital transformation of assessment systems through analytics and automated tools.

- Enable the development of predictive models, dashboards, and early-warning systems.
- Improve test quality, reliability, and comparability using item-level statistical analysis.

8.3 Data uses by stakeholder

Assessment data is used by different stakeholders at various levels of the education system. Each group is granted access based on their roles and responsibilities, following strict data privacy and confidentiality standards.

i. Ministry of Education and Skill Development

Uses:

- Formulate and revise education policies.
- Monitor national performance trends across subjects, regions, and cohorts.
- Allocate resources based on evidence and identified needs.
- Evaluate the impact of curriculum reforms, teacher training, and assessment policies.
- Prepare national-level reports and submissions to international bodies (UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.).

ii. Dzongkhag/Thromde Education Offices

Uses:

- Monitor school performance within the district and identify areas needing support.
- Guide schools based on performance patterns and data-driven insights.
- Plan teacher deployment, training needs, and resource allocation.
- Support interventions for low-performing schools or subjects.
- Ensure data quality by verifying school submissions and addressing anomalies.

(Note: Access is limited to respective dzongkhag data only.)

iii. School leadership

Uses:

- Review student and subject performance to plan school-level academic improvements.
- Identify students needing remedial support or enrichment.
- Strengthen internal assessment practices and ensure consistency across teachers.
- Communicate performance trends to teachers, staff, and school governing boards.
- Ensure timely and accurate assessment data submission to central systems.

(Note: Access is limited to respective school data only.)

iv. Teachers / subject teachers

Uses:

- Identify learning gaps and tailor instruction to students' needs.
- Provide targeted support to students based on assessment performance.
- Reflect on teaching effectiveness using student assessment results.
- Prepare lesson plans aligned with student strengths and weaknesses.
- Validate and update internal assessment records in line with guidelines.

(Note: Access is limited to respective school data only.)

v. Students and parents (limited and secure access)

Uses:

- Understand student progress and performance strengths or gaps.

- Support informed decision-making for subject selection.
- Guide academic improvement and home study support.
- Engage in dialogue with teachers based on performance insights.

(Note: Access is limited to individual student data only.)

vi. External agencies (authorised only)

- National Statistics Bureau
- Royal Civil Service Commission
- Higher educational institutes
- Accreditation agencies
- Legal or investigative bodies

Uses:

- Conduct large-scale statistical analysis using anonymized data.
- Verify educational qualifications when legally required.
- Support national research studies on education outcomes.
- Ensure compliance with national regulations and policies.

(Note: Only aggregated or anonymised data is shared unless detailed data is legally requested.)

vii. Research institutions, universities, and international partners (controlled access)

Uses:

- Conduct research on teaching, learning, and assessment quality.
- Compare national performance with international benchmarks.
- Support development of evidence-based educational innovations.
- Improve test and item quality through statistical analysis.

(All data shared for research must be anonymized and approved through formal agreements.)

8.4 Guidelines and protocols

Data in assessment systems must be securely managed to maintain confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility. Key protocols include:

- **Security:** Data is stored using computer systems, encryption protocols, and regular backups to prevent loss or unauthorised access.
- **Access control:** Role-based permissions ensure only authorised users can view or modify specific information. All activities are logged for accountability.
- **Reporting:** Governed by clear timelines and procedures, ensuring consistency and transparency for both internal and external stakeholders.
- **Technology use:** A web-based application supports secure, real-time access and streamlined reporting for authorised users.
- **Compliance:** Protocols must align with ethical standards, data privacy laws, and international best practices.
- **Review Cycle:** Guidelines and protocols should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changing needs and contexts.

8.5 Processes

Assessment data management, particularly through digital systems, involves the following processes for handling school-based assessment data, subject registrations, SUPW records, and School-based and Board Examination results:

- i. **Data collection:** Ensuring complete and accurate entry of student assessment data at the source, using web-based platforms such as the BCSEA Portal.
- ii. **Validation and cleaning:** Performing error checks, removing duplicates, and real-time validation within the system to maintain high data quality.
- iii. **Analysis:** Applying built-in statistical tools and dashboards in the digital system to generate actionable insights for teachers, schools, and policymakers.
- iv. **Automation:** Using web-based applications to automate cleaning, generate reports, and securely share assessment information across school and central levels.
- v. **Documentation:** Recording all processes and changes in the system to ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability.
- vi. **Continuous review:** Regularly evaluating data management processes and system performance to improve efficiency, accuracy, and reliability.

8.6 Roles and responsibilities

- **Data manager:** Ensures quality, security, and integrity of data.
- **ICT team:** Maintains secure systems and storage infrastructure.
- **EAOs:** Validate, clean, analyse, and interpret data.
- **Subject teachers:** Ensure timely and accurate data entry and submission.
- **BCSEA:** Maintains and manages all assessment data.

BCSEA maintains assessment data, including candidates' subject registrations, internal assessment, SUPW, School-based and Board Examination results. The system ensures data security, supports reporting, and enables analysis for policy and decision-making.

8.7 Succession planning

To reduce operational risk and ensure continuity:

- All tasks and procedures must be clearly documented with step-by-step instructions, timelines, and responsible personnel.
- Each critical role should have an identified understudy or backup staff member trained to assume responsibilities if required.
- Regular training and orientation programs should prepare backups and new staff.
- Web-based documentation and training platforms should centralise manuals, resources, and progress tracking.
- Capabilities should be periodically assessed and enhanced to meet evolving national and international needs.

9 Reporting and Certification

9.1 Introduction

Reporting student learning is an essential aspect of the educational process, serving as a bridge between teaching, assessment, and communication with students, parents, teachers, and school leaders. In Bhutan, where education is deeply rooted in the principles of holistic development and Gross National Happiness (GNH), effective reporting helps track students' academic progress, personal growth, and overall well-being.

Reporting provides a structured mechanism to communicate learning outcomes, recognise achievements, and identify areas for improvement. More than just grades, it reflects how learners are developing knowledge, skills, values, and competencies. In a dynamic educational landscape, where inclusivity and learner-centred practices are emphasised, it is important that reporting systems are transparent, accessible, and aligned with this Framework.

Qualitative report enables learners to recognise their strengths and identify areas that need improvement. It fosters deeper understanding, encourages self-reflection, and supports ongoing learning by offering clear and meaningful guidance to enhance their knowledge and skills.

BCSEA delivers accurate, credible, and timely results that reflect candidate performance.

9.2 Reporting format (School-Based Assessment)

School-based assessments shall be reported using a two-term format: Midterm (A) and Term-End (B). Each term includes written examinations and coursework. The final grade is based on the cumulative mark across both terms ($A + B = 100\%$). A grade will be awarded based on the cumulative mark as per the national grading scale. This report format is for Classes IV, V, VII and IX.

9.2.1 Quantitative report

Midterm (I)			Term-End (II)			Grand total	Grade
Written Examination (30%)	Coursework (10%)	Total (40%)	Written Examination (50%)	Coursework (10%)	Total (60%)	I + II (100%)	A or B

9.2.2 Result format

Subject	Grade
<i>English</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Dzongkha</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>C</i>

Note:

1. Academic performance is captured exclusively through the quantitative report.
2. The coursework designed for Key Stage 5 by BCSEA may be used to award marks for both Term I and Term II for school-based assessment reporting. If it is not feasible to use the same coursework for both terms, schools may administer separate smaller assignments in Term I and Term II to generate the required coursework marks. However, for the Board Examination, completion of the coursework assigned by BCSEA is mandatory.

9.2.3 Qualitative report

The qualitative report complements the quantitative academic report by capturing the learner's growth in non-academic domains. It is issued annually, along with the year-end academic report.

The report shall include observations under the following areas:

- Personal and social development
e.g., respect for others, cooperation, leadership, empathy
- Ethic and attitude towards learning
e.g., motivation, punctuality, task completion, organisational skills
- Emotional maturity and self-management
e.g., resilience, behaviour, emotional regulation, self-reflection
- Co-curricular involvement
e.g., participation in clubs, sports, events, leadership activities
- General conduct and character
e.g., honesty, responsibility, discipline, adherence to school values
- Recommendations for further growth
e.g., areas for continued development or support

9.3 Reporting format (Board Assessment)

Board examination results are compiled through standardised result processing protocols. Each subject is assessed through a combination of written examination and coursework, with the final grade based on the total score. Grades are awarded for each subject in accordance with the national grading scale. This report format is for Classes VI, VIII, X and XII.

9.3.1 Quantitative report (result processing)

Subject	Components		Total (100%)	Grade
	Written examination (80%)	Coursework (20%)		
English	70	18	88	E.g. A
Dzongkha	60	15	75	E.g. B
Mathematics	40	10	50	E.g. C

9.3.2 Result format (statement of marks)

Subject	Grade
<i>English</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Dzongkha</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>C</i>

9.3.3 Qualitative report

The qualitative report issued alongside the school leaving certificate provides a one-time summary of the candidate's overall non-academic development at the point of graduation.

The report shall include observations under the following areas:

- Personal and social development
e.g., respect for others, cooperation, leadership, empathy
- Ethic and attitude towards Learning
e.g., motivation, punctuality, task completion, organisational skills
- Emotional maturity and self-management
e.g., resilience, behaviour, emotional regulation, self-reflection
- Co-curricular involvement
e.g., participation in clubs, sports, events, leadership activities
- General conduct and character
e.g., honesty, responsibility, discipline, adherence to school values

This report provides a holistic picture of the learner's readiness for higher education, employment, or other future pathways, complementing the academic results.

9.3.4 The certification process

The BCSEA is responsible for issuing academic transcripts and certification to candidates who successfully complete Board Examinations. Certificates are issued only to candidates of Classes X and XII who meet the eligibility criteria, including passing the BCSEA-administered examinations and fulfilling the subject requirements under the approved assessment structure.

Before issuing certificates, BCSEA verifies candidates' examination records through its central database and official hard-copy records. Once the results are officially declared by the BCSEA, changes to marks will not be entertained.

The certification consists of two official documents:

- Statement of marks: which shows the candidate's grade performance in each subject registered for the examination (refer reporting format).
- Pass certificate: issued to candidates who achieve the required minimum threshold as prescribed in the assessment framework.

Certificates are printed with secure authentication features and include the candidate's name, examination details, the official BCSEA seal, and the signature of an authorised official. The mark statements and certificates are dispatched to schools, where candidates collect them on the date notified by BCSEA.

In cases where certificates are lost or damaged, candidates may apply for duplicate copies through the G2C online services by submitting the required documents and paying the prescribed fee. Similarly, if errors are identified in issued certificates, candidates may request amendments through the G2C portal with supporting proof of the correct information.

BCSEA also issues English Language Proficiency Certificate (ELPC) upon application through the G2C online portal, subject to payment of the prescribed fee. For detailed procedures and requirements, refer to the Operational Guidelines for Examinations and Assessment (OGEA) available on the BCSEA website: www.bcsea.gov.bt.

10. Special Considerations in Assessment Practices

Bhutan's SEN assessment framework is a well-structured, multi-tiered system that encompasses policy formation, early detection, differentiated instructional pathways, inclusive large-scale assessments, infrastructure development, teacher competence, data monitoring, support systems, and future directions. The clauses in this section are derived from the *Guidelines on Assessment, Examinations, Promotion and Transition for learners with Disabilities*.

10.1 National policy and inclusive standards

National Policy on Special Educational Needs (2012):

This foundational policy, developed with government, NGOs, and international partners, lays the groundwork for system-wide support for learners with disabilities across all educational levels.

Standards for Inclusive Education (endorsed 2017):

These standards guide schools on reflection, planning, and actions to implement inclusive environments. They emphasise accessible curriculum, extracurricular participation, support personnel, assistive technology, and inclusive practices. All SEN-program schools now follow them.

10.2 Screening and diagnostic processes

Early screening tools (since 2023):

The Bhutan Foundation, in collaboration with MoESD, distributed Brigance assessment kits, Pre-referral Intervention Manuals (PRIM), and record-keeping tools to schools implementing SEN programmes bhutanfound.org.

Educational vs clinical assessment:

- **Teacher-led functional assessments** (ongoing monitoring across months) help flag learning difficulties early.
- **Referral to clinical professionals** occurs if academic support isn't sufficient or a clinical diagnosis hasn't been made.

10.3 Alternative pathways and assessment adjustments

In November 2024, revised MoESD guidelines introduced:

Alternative pathways	Assessment adjustments
<p>Selective and functional learning programmes – allowing subject choices tailored to cognitive levels.</p>	<p>Reasonable adjustments during the examinations –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access Arrangement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate room • Extra time • Supervised rest break • Scribe • Use of assistive devices • Loud reader 2. Modified Question Papers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille • Font enlarged (12-18) • Paper enlarged (A4-A3)
<p>Functional assessments – focusing on individual achievements and IEPs in lieu of conventional Board Examinations.</p>	
<p>Vocational and TVET pathways – with functional skills assessments, enabling flexible progression up to Class XII.</p>	
<p>Certification –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. BCSEA shall provide a separate certificate for those taking alternative pathways. b. Endorsement of Functional Curriculums/IEP Assessments. 	

These changes support learners through customised assessments and equivalency certifications aligned with BCSEA standards.

11 Monitoring and Supporting Assessment Practices in Schools

11.1 Overview

Monitoring and auditing in assessment refer to the systematic process of observing, documenting, evaluating, and improving the quality and consistency of assessment practices across schools. The goal is to ensure that both internal and external assessments meet board standards, maintain integrity, and promote equitable learning outcomes.

As the awarding body, the BCSEA is responsible for conducting high-stakes Board Examinations and coursework. To uphold board standards and credibility, BCSEA's examination processes are monitored by the Education Monitoring Division (EMD).

11.2 Objectives of assessment monitoring

- Ensure that assessment practices in all schools follow consistent national standards and procedures.
- Strengthen the quality, validity, reliability, and fairness of both school-based and board assessments.
- Build teacher capacity by supporting them to design valid SBA tasks and apply mark scheme accurately.
- Promote accurate and standardised marking across schools and examination centres.
- Strengthen accountability by ensuring that schools and relevant authorities comply with assessment regulations.
- Provide evidence-based feedback to schools to support continuous improvement of assessment practices.
- Detect, address, and prevent assessment irregularities and non-compliance effectively.

11.3 Assessment monitoring protocol

Assessment monitoring is conducted at three interlinked levels: school, Dzongkhag/Thromde, and board (BCSEA). Each level plays a role in ensuring consistency, fairness, and quality.

The BCSEA Assessment Monitoring Protocol outlines how assessment quality, consistency, and integrity are ensured across schools in Bhutan. The protocol applies to both School-Based Assessments and Board Examinations, and it is implemented through a set of coordinated mechanisms.

11.4 Clear assessment policies and standards

BCSEA develops and communicates board standards and policies for both School-Based Assessments and Board Examinations. These include:

- Guidelines for designing SBA tasks and internal tests aligned to assessment standards.
- Policies and manuals for the administration, marking, verification, and reporting of Board Examinations.
- Submission timelines for coursework marks and protocols for handling board assessment materials.

- Integrity guidelines, including authenticity checks for SBA tasks and security protocols for Board exam papers.

These standards ensure consistent assessment practices across all schools and examination centres.

11.5 Teacher support and professional development

BCSEA supports teachers in strengthening assessment literacy for both SBA and Board Examinations through:

- Workshops and training on SBA design, competency-based assessment, and classroom marking practices.
- Subject-specific training that helps teachers understand the mark scheme used in Board Examinations.
- Exemplar items and sample scripts showing expected performance standards.
- Guidelines for maintaining accuracy and fairness in school-level marking.

This helps ensure teachers understand what high-quality assessment looks like and how to apply standards consistently.

11.6 Internal standardisation and school-level monitoring

Schools are required to conduct internal quality assurance of School-Based Assessments before sending marks to BCSEA. This includes:

- Moderating SBA tasks and internal tests within the school.
- Ensuring teachers use rubrics and mark scheme consistently.
- Keeping proper records of SBA marks and verification decisions.
- Verifying the authenticity of student work.

School heads oversee the implementation of BCSEA guidelines at the school level.

11.7 Dzongkhag/regional monitoring

BCSEA ensures compliance with assessment standards for both SBA and Board Examinations by working with Dzongkhag Education Officers (DEOs) and Thromde Education Officers (TEOs).

Monitoring includes:

- School visits to verify SBA processes, documentation, and moderation practices.
- Inspections of examination centres during Board Examinations.
- Review of reported irregularities in both SBA and Board Examinations.

This helps maintain uniformity across all schools and regions.

11.8 External verification

BCSEA conducts external verification primarily for school-based assessments where internal marks contribute to board results.

This involves:

- Schools submitting samples of SBA work.
- Verifiers reviewing the accuracy of school marking.
- Adjustments to marks if variances are found.
- Feedback to schools on SBA accuracy.

This ensures fairness and board consistency in SBA marks.

11.9 Marker training and standard setting (Board Examinations)

For Board Examinations, BCSEA ensures consistency in marking through:

- Marker orientation, training, and standard-setting sessions.
- Practice marking using selected scripts before live marking begins.
- Monitoring of each marker by chief markers.
- Retraining or corrections if a marker's standard drifts.

11.10 Monitoring exam administration (Board Examinations)

BCSEA enforces strict procedures for Board Examination administration. Monitoring includes:

- Ad hoc visits by BCSEA officials, DEOs / TEOs, and monitoring teams.
- Checking of exam hall arrangements, invigilation, and timing.
- Ensuring secure storage and distribution of question papers.
- Investigating any malpractice or breaches in exam conduct.

11.11 Feedback and reporting

BCSEA provides feedback for both SBA and Board Examinations, such as:

- Verification reports highlighting the accuracy of SBA marking.
- Chief Marker reports summarising student performance in Board Examinations.
- Centre inspection reports providing guidance for improvement.
- Recommendations for teacher training based on observed challenges.

Feedback helps schools refine their assessment practices and strengthen learning outcomes.

11.12 Addressing non-compliance

BCSEA has a zero-tolerance approach to assessment non-compliance. Measures include:

- issuing warnings or improvement requirements
- re-training teachers
- withholding results when serious malpractice occurs
- suspending or removing centre affiliation

These measures ensure Board Assessment credibility and fairness. Schools must demonstrate corrective actions to maintain approved centre status.

12 Roles of Stakeholders in Assessment

This section outlines the assessment protocol encompassing the roles of stakeholders. These components establish assessment as a shared responsibility within the school community. A robust and credible national assessment system relies on the clear delineation of roles and shared responsibilities among the MoESD, the BCSEA, the CSCD, and schools. The protocol encompasses four interrelated components: stakeholder engagement, assessment planning, learners' appeal mechanisms, and records of achievement, and is designed to uphold the integrity, reliability, and continuous improvement of assessment standards in Bhutan.

The table below provides a concise overview of the key roles and corresponding stakeholders involved in Bhutan's national assessment system. It clarifies responsibilities across policy, curriculum, assessment design, implementation, marking, and quality assurance. By outlining who is responsible for each function, the table supports transparency, accountability, and coordinated action among all agencies and participants in the assessment ecosystem.

Role	Stakeholder	Board Examinations	School-Based Examinations	Coursework/ practical examinations
Sets policy, provides resources, and oversees compliance	MoESD / policy makers	✓	✓	✓
Manages national assessments and ensures quality and standards	BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Aligns curriculum with assessment and updates content using data	CSCD / BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Develops assessment design frameworks and blueprints	BCSEA / teachers / subject experts	✓	✓	✓
Provides expert oversight on assessment quality (Chief marker role)	Senior teachers / BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Designs, delivers, and reviews assessments; provide feedback	Teachers / BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Sets and writes assessment items and tasks	Teachers / item writers / BCSEA panels	✓	✓	✓

Registers candidates for Board Examinations using the online system	School / BCSEA	✓	NA	✓
Administers assessments and examinations	School leaders / teachers / BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Implements school assessments and ensures fairness and integrity	School leaders / teachers / BCSEA / MoESD	✓	✓	✓
Promotes fairness and supports assessment environment	Parents / guardians / teachers / community / MoESD	✓	✓	✓
Participates in assessments and uses feedback to improve learning	Learners / BCSEA / DSE / schools	✓	✓	✓
Marks scripts accurately and consistently	Teachers / markers / BCSEA	✓	✓	✓
Manages assessment data securely and systematically	BCSEA / schools / EMIS	✓	✓	✓
Uses data for decision-making, intervention, and improvement	MoESD / BCSEA / schools / CSCD / policy makers	✓	✓	✓
Grades performance and applies grade boundaries	BCSEA / Chief examiners	✓	Grade performance only	✓
Generates and issues assessment reports	BCSEA / schools	✓	✓	✓
Supports learner progress and engages with assessment information	Parents / guardians / teachers / community	✓	✓	✓
Issues certificates	BCSEA / schools	✓		
Conducts quality assurance across assessment processes	BCSEA / MoESD (EMD) / schools	✓	✓	✓

Ensures security, integrity, and prevents malpractice	BCSEA / schools / supervising examiners/ Invigilators	✓	✓	✓
Ensures compliance, integrity, and quality in assessment processes (inspections / audits)	BCSEA / EMD / schools / CSCD	✓	✓	✓
Builds teacher capacity and conducts assessment research	RUB / BCSEA / teachers	✓	✓	✓

12.1 Policy and governance

The MoESD, the BCSEA, and the CSCD jointly provide policy leadership, regulatory oversight, and curricular coherence to ensure a robust and credible national assessment system. MoESD offers strategic direction and system oversight, BCSEA operationalises assessment policies and ensures compliance, and CSCD ensures that learning outcomes and assessment practices remain aligned and coherent across the curriculum.

To operationalise these governance functions, the following responsibilities are carried out by the respective agencies:

12.1.1 Dissemination of assessment and examination policy directives:

MoESD leads the dissemination of policy directives on assessment and examination across all stages of learning, ensuring that schools and agencies implement coherent, dynamic, and future-oriented assessment practices. BCSEA and CSCD support by translating these directives into operational guidelines and curriculum documents.

12.1.2 Monitoring, review, and compliance assurance:

BCSEA monitors the national and School-based assessment and examination systems, reviews implementation practices, and recommends amendments based on evidence and emerging needs. This includes establishing audit mechanisms, ensuring regulatory compliance, and upholding the integrity and transparency of assessment processes. MoESD provides system-level oversight, while CSCD contributes curriculum-aligned reviews to ensure coherence between teaching, learning, and assessment.

12.1.3 System reporting and data-driven insights:

MoESD produces consolidated reports on the health of the education system, drawing on performance data, curriculum intentions, and reports from relevant agencies. BCSEA contributes national assessment and examination data trends, while CSCD provides insights into curriculum implementation. Data analytics are used collaboratively to identify systemic gaps, track progress, and guide policy adjustments.

12.1.4 Professional development and capacity building:

BCSEA and CSCD plan, coordinate, and deliver professional development programmes focused on strengthening teacher assessment literacy, improving alignment between curriculum and assessment, and promoting innovative, high-quality assessment strategies accordingly. MoESD ensures that these initiatives are aligned with national goals and broader system-level competencies.

12.1.5 Inter-agency coordination:

MoESD coordinates structured inter-agency reviews involving BCSEA, CSCD, and other stakeholders to ensure coherent policy implementation, address systemic issues, and foster continuous improvement across the national assessment system.

12.2 BCSEA

BCSEA, as the national assessment agency, oversees the design, review, and validation of all assessment and examination materials to guarantee fairness, validity, and alignment with curriculum and assessment standards. This entails:

12.2.1 Providing reliable examination, certification, and equivalency accreditation services.

12.2.2 Offering stakeholders' clear perspectives on assessment and monitoring educational standards.

12.2.3 Developing research literature in the assessment of student learning and teaching competencies.

12.2.4 Building a reliable and accessible information system to support assessment and examination functions.

12.2.5 Exploring innovative approaches to mobilise, build, and manage resources for assessment and examinations.

12.2.6 Incorporating the highest standards of assessment and feedback practices into the curricula to objectively assess learning outcomes and inform teaching and learning practices.

12.2.7 Ensuring assessment practices are inclusive, as outlined in the Section: Special Considerations for Assessment, to provide all learners with equal opportunities.

12.2.8 Providing professional development for subject teachers and stakeholders, supported through forums for discussion and exchange of best practices.

12.2.9 Engaging CSCD, subject-matter experts, and school practitioners to validate assessment content and ensure classroom feasibility.

12.2.10 Recommending assessment strategies that support the development of personal and professional skills, beyond the measurement of knowledge.

12.2.11 Regularly reviewing assessment policies and regulations to ensure assessment remains dynamic, effective, reliable, valid, and transparent.

12.2.12 Monitoring the full assessment lifecycle, including development, administration, scoring, verification, grading, and reporting, to ensure quality, consistency, and adherence to national standards.

12.2.13 Ensuring that schools comply with assessment policies and conducting reviews of affiliated institutions to verify adherence to regulatory and operational standards.

12.2.14 Providing targeted training on assessment standards, marking, verification, test development, grading, and quality assurance to strengthen national assessment capacity.

12.2.15 Conducting periodic audits of assessment processes and enforcing corrective actions to address non-compliance, strengthen system integrity, and uphold the credibility of national assessments.

12.2.16 Establishing, reviewing, and validating grading frameworks, performance standards, and grade boundaries to ensure fairness, comparability, and consistency across schools, subjects, and assessment cycles.

12.2.17 Analysing and utilising assessment data to inform policy development, system improvement, curriculum review, and targeted interventions, while ensuring ethical data use, confidentiality, and responsible reporting to stakeholders.

12.2.18 Ensuring robust security and confidentiality across all stages of the assessment lifecycle, including item development, storage, printing, distribution, administration, marking, and data management, to protect assessment integrity, prevent malpractice, and maintain public confidence in national examinations.

12.2.19 Implementing a sustained capacity development strategy through induction, professional development, leadership strengthening, international exposure, and research-driven innovation.

12.2.20 BCSEA will verify the coursework marks submitted by the centre. The marks submitted by the centre are subject to change based on the verification process.

12.3 Centre for School Curriculum Development (CSCD)

Curriculum developers at the Ministry conceptualize and design curriculum content, innovative policies, and strategies that leverage technological advancements and contemporary pedagogical paradigms. They shall:

12.3.1 Review and map learning objectives across subjects and class levels to ensure clarity, progression, and alignment with national education goals.

12.3.2 Integrate appropriate digital tools, platforms, and innovative pedagogical approaches to enhance learner engagement and support diverse learning pathways.

12.3.3 Engage BCSEA, subject experts, school practitioners, and relevant stakeholders to validate curriculum content and ensure classroom feasibility and practicality of implementation.

12.3.4 Use performance data, research findings, and report recommendations to revise and enhance curriculum documents, instructional guidelines, and learning materials.

12.3.5 Ensure curriculum outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned with national assessment practices and competency expectations.

12.3.6 Evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in collaboration with BCSEA, Dzongkhags/Thromdes, and schools, using evidence from classroom practices and learner performance.

12.3.7 Recommend curricular adjustments and updates based on assessment results, performance trends, teacher feedback, school reports, and emerging educational needs.

12.3.8 Coordinate with BCSEA during school visits, monitoring, and inspection activities to observe assessment practices, ensure curriculum–assessment coherence, and provide informed feedback for system improvement.

12.3.9 Ensure that textbooks, teacher guides, digital resources, and supplementary materials are aligned with curriculum intent, defined assessment requirements, and learner competency expectations, supporting coherence between teaching, learning, and assessment.

12.4 School leaders

School leaders, in collaboration with teachers and assessment officers, ensure that school-based assessment practices align with national standards. Their responsibilities include:

- Embedding high standards of assessment and feedback into curricular implementation.
- Ensuring inclusivity and fairness in all assessment practices.
- Integrating authentic, reliable, and valid assessment tasks into school-based assessment.
- Facilitating professional development and building teacher assessment literacy.
- Encouraging assessment strategies that foster holistic competencies beyond content knowledge.
- Reviewing school-level assessment policies and practices regularly for fairness, transparency, and reliability.
- Maintaining secure, ethical, and standardised testing environments to uphold the integrity of assessments.
- Documenting, analysing, and reporting learner outcomes accurately and on time, in line with national requirements.
- Aligning school-based assessments, verification processes, and reporting systems with national assessment standards.
- Cooperating with external audits, implementing recommended corrective actions, and ensuring compliance with national quality assurance mechanisms.

12.5 Teachers

Teachers are facilitators, guides, evaluators, and reflective practitioners. Their responsibilities include:

- Designing and delivering holistic assessment practices that integrate inclusive formative and summative approaches, ensuring tasks are authentic, competency-based, and aligned with intended learning outcomes.
- Developing, administering, and monitoring assessment tasks, ensuring these tasks are manageable, equitable, clearly communicated to learners, and supported by transparent criteria and guidance.
- Reviewing various assessment tasks regularly to ensure validity, reliability, manageability, and appropriate levels of challenge, and to ensure adequate time for meaningful feedback.
- Providing home-based support and encouragement for learners.
- Preparing students effectively for Board Examinations by aligning teaching, school-based assessments, revision programmes, and feedback strategies with national assessment standards and specifications.
- Ensuring administrative compliance for Board examination processes, including maintaining confidentiality of exam materials, adhering to timelines, and supporting students through ethical and structured preparatory activities.
- Providing timely, constructive, and actionable feedback to support learner reflection, improvement, and self-regulation.
- Developing learners' assessment literacy by integrating self-assessment, peer assessment, rubrics, exemplars, and learner involvement in task design where appropriate.
- Ensuring learners receive clear information on task purposes, intended outcomes, assessment methods, criteria, and expectations.
- Communicating student performance accurately to parents or guardians and explaining how School-Based Assessments contribute to overall learning outcomes.
- Seeking parental feedback on assessment practices through structured platforms such as meetings, consultations, and digital communication tools.
- Analysing various assessment tasks, and School-based examination results to identify learning gaps and adjust teaching strategies accordingly.
- Engaging in continuous professional learning as outlined in the Capacity Development Strategy for Teacher Assessment Literacy, to strengthen understanding of validity, reliability, moderation, inclusive assessment, and data-informed decision-making.
- Supporting schools in maintaining fairness and transparency in assessments through awareness and involvement.

12.6 Learners

Learners are active partners in the assessment process. They are expected to:

- Participate fully and sincerely in all assessment activities, including classroom tasks, coursework, and examinations, to demonstrate their learning accurately.
- Use teacher, peer, and self-reflection feedback constructively to identify areas for improvement and take meaningful steps to progress.
- Monitor and reflect on their own learning, recognising strengths, identifying gaps, and setting achievable learning goals based on assessment information.
- Engage in self-assessment and peer-assessment activities to build skills in evaluating quality work, providing constructive feedback, and understanding assessment criteria.
- Prepare responsibly and systematically for high-stakes assessments, including Board Examinations and National Education Assessments, by developing effective study habits and revision strategies.
- Apply assessment criteria, mark schemes, and examples to understand expectations and improve the quality of their work.
- Demonstrate academic integrity by completing tasks honestly, following submission requirements, and respecting assessment protocols.
- Acquire core competencies such as, transversal competency, digital literacy, and sustainable citizenship through participation in varied assessment tasks that require application of knowledge and skills.
- Use digital tools and online platforms responsibly where assessments or feedback require online engagement.
- Seek support from teachers, parents, or peers when needed, especially when facing difficulties in understanding tasks or preparing for assessments.

12.7 Parents

Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's learning and well-being throughout the assessment process. Their engagement ensures that children are motivated, confident, and able to balance academic and personal growth. Key contributions include:

- Creating a supportive learning environment: Establishing a structured and motivating home setting, particularly during exam preparation periods.
- Monitoring progress: Tracking children performance through report cards, assessment data, digital platforms, and teacher–parent meetings.
- Understanding assessment: Familiarising themselves with the purpose and nature of assessments (formative vs. summative, coursework vs. examinations) to better support their child.
- Encouraging independent learning: Promoting effective study habits, time management, and resilience to help children take responsibility of their own learning.
- Engaging in school communication: Actively participating in meetings, sharing feedback, and collaborating with teachers to support academic, social, and emotional well-being.
- Providing motivation and emotional support: Helping children manage exam-related stress and maintain balance in demanding assessment contexts.
- Attending parent-teacher meetings to share insights on learners' growth and development.

12.8 Community

The community contributes to assessment integrity and support by:

- Promoting a culture of honesty and accountability by encouraging parents, local leaders, and community members to reinforce ethical behaviour during school-based assessments, examinations, and home learning activities.
- Supporting conducive learning environments at home by ensuring students have time, space, and encouragement to complete assignments, coursework, and exam preparations without undue pressure or distractions.
- Participating in school meetings, parent–teacher conferences, and awareness programs to understand assessment processes, grading systems, and expectations, enabling more informed support for their children.
- Ensuring fairness during home-based components of assessment, such as projects or extended tasks, by guiding students without providing direct answers or doing the work on their behalf.
- Providing local knowledge, cultural context, and real-life resources to enrich project-based and competency-based assessments, making learning more relevant and authentic.

12.9 Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)

The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) supports school-level assessment quality, inclusivity, and accountability. It collaborates with MoESD, BCSEA, CSCD, school leaders, teachers, learners, parents, and communities.

RUB's key roles include:

- **Teacher education and capacity building** – Through colleges like Paro College of Education (PCE) and Samtse College of Education (SCE), RUB trains pre-service and in-service teachers to design inclusive and holistic assessments. It facilitates professional development via workshops and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to enhance assessment literacy.
- **Curriculum and assessment alignment** – Collaborates with CSCD and BCSEA to align curriculum frameworks with assessable learning outcomes, integrating GNH values, digital tools, and modern pedagogies.
- **Research and evidence-based improvements** – Conducts research to analyse learning gaps, assessment effectiveness, and educational trends, informing curriculum revisions, policy adjustments, and BCSEA's assessment monitoring.
- **Stakeholder collaboration and inclusivity** – Engages with schools, parents, communities, and international organisations (e.g., ACER, UNICEF) to refine assessment protocols and promote equity for diverse learners. Supports learner participation in self- and peer-assessment.
- **Innovation and ethical assessment practices** – Advocates for dynamic, fair, and reliable assessment approaches, minimising over-assessment and leveraging technology, while supporting ethical responsibility and equitable learning opportunities.

12.10 Item writers

Item writers play a critical role in ensuring high-quality, valid, and curriculum-aligned assessment materials. They shall fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Work under the guidance and instructions of EAOs to ensure consistency with national assessment standards.
- Sign a letter of undertaking and declare any potential conflicts of interest before beginning the item development process.
- Attend all orientation and capacity-building programmes organised by BCSEA to understand assessment requirements and expectations.
- Develop test specifications in consultation with the respective EAOs to ensure clarity, validity, and alignment with the assessment syllabus.
- Prepare test items and mark scheme strictly based on the approved test specifications.
- Ensure all test items are fully aligned with the assessment syllabus and reflect the required knowledge, skills, and cognitive demand.
- Review, refine, and revise test items collaboratively with EAOs to improve quality, accuracy, and fairness.
- Submit the question paper and mark scheme to the respective EAOs within the stipulated time.
- Submit all materials related to test development, including drafts, notes, and supporting documents, to the EAOs for secure record-keeping.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all assessment materials, processes, and responsibilities assigned.

12.11 Item reviewers

Item reviewers play an important role in ensuring the quality, validity, and fairness of test items before they are finalised for use in examinations. They shall fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Work under the guidance and instructions of the EAOs to ensure that the review process is consistent.
- Sign a letter of undertaking and declare conflicts of interest before participating in the item review process.
- Attend orientation or briefing sessions organised by BCSEA to understand the expectations, standards, and procedures for reviewing test items.
- Review test items and mark scheme prepared by item writers to ensure accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness.
- Ensure that all test items are aligned with the approved assessment syllabus, learning outcomes, and test specifications.
- Review the language, structure, and instructions of items to ensure they are clear, unambiguous, and suitable for the intended level of students.
- Identify any potential bias, ambiguity, or technical errors in the items and suggest necessary revisions.
- Provide constructive feedback and recommendations to improve the quality, fairness, and reliability of the test items.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of all assessment materials, review discussions, and responsibilities assigned.

12.12 Markers

Markers are responsible for ensuring accuracy, fairness, and consistency in the marking of answer scripts. They shall adhere to the following responsibilities:

- Work under the guidance and instructions of the Chief marker and provide full support throughout the marking process.
- Participate actively in the standardisation meeting to ensure shared understanding of marking criteria and expectations.
- Cooperate with the Chief marker and strictly follow all marking guidelines and instructions provided.
- Use only a red pen when marking to maintain uniformity and clarity across all scripts.
- Mark only the questions assigned by the Chief marker, ensuring accuracy and focus.
- Maintain strict confidentiality regarding all marking-related materials and processes.
- Indicate marks for each part or subpart clearly in the right-hand margin of the answer booklet.
- Record the total marks for each question in the left-hand margin and circle the final total at the end of the question for visibility and verification.
- Avoid carrying mobile phones, tablets, or any digital devices inside the marking room to uphold security and integrity.
- Report any suspected cases of malpractice immediately, including missing pages, double handwriting, or identification marks such as names, school names, or index numbers, to the Chief marker.
- Ensure clarity, fairness, and consistency in marking, applying the mark scheme without bias.
- Uphold professionalism and appropriate conduct throughout the marking process to maintain the credibility of the assessment system.

12.13 Monitoring officers

Monitoring officers are both BCSEA staff and BCSEA-assigned officials who are authorised to conduct monitoring visits to examination centres. Their roles and responsibilities are comprehensively defined in OGEA, which ensures the smooth, secure, and fair conduct of examinations by monitoring compliance with BCSEA procedures. They shall:

- Prepare thoroughly for visits to assigned examination centres by reviewing the Centre Inspection Procedures and Checklist prior to the examination period.
- Conduct inspections using the prescribed forms and guidelines and submit completed reports to the Supervising Examiner and Convenor.
- Address any issues or suspected malpractice promptly, in consultation with the SE and Convenor, and when necessary, with the Controller of Examinations, and submit a detailed report with signed statements to BCSEA or place it in the miscellaneous box.
- Provide guidance to the centre to ensure smooth and fair conduct of the examinations and submit recommendations for improvement to BCSEA for future reference.
- Conduct systematic auditing of assessment processes and documentation, including item development, moderation, printing, conduct of examinations, marking, and result processing.
- Verify compliance with BCSEA guidelines, policies, and operational procedures to ensure consistency, fairness, and quality across all centres and stages of assessment.
- Review examination records, reports, and evidence to identify discrepancies, risks, or irregularities that may compromise assessment integrity.
- Ensure proper documentation and secure storage of assessment materials, preventing unauthorised access, loss, or manipulation of sensitive information.
- Provide clear findings and recommendations to strengthen processes, improve efficiency, and enhance the credibility of national assessments.
- Hold individuals and centres accountable for non-compliance or malpractice, following due procedures and reporting mechanisms outlined by BCSEA.
- Promote continuous improvement through follow-up audits, capacity-building, and regular monitoring to ensure sustained adherence to assessment standards.
- Uphold transparency and ethical conduct in all auditing activities to maintain public trust in the national assessment system.

13 Communication Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement

13.1 Introduction

The successful accreditation of Bhutan's National Student-Learning Assessment Framework (NSLAF) with Cambridge requires not only robust technical alignment but also clear and sustained communication with all stakeholders. The revised framework introduces new developments in assessment design, grading policies, competency-based approaches, and assessment integration. These changes represent a major shift from traditional practices and therefore demand effective advocacy, awareness, and stakeholder engagement.

The BCSEA recognises that communication is critical to ensure a smooth transition, widespread understanding, and trust in the revised system.

13.2 Purpose of the communication strategy

The communication strategy seeks to:

- Advocate for the reforms introduced under the revised assessment framework in line with Cambridge accreditation requirements.
- Build broad-based awareness of new assessment and grading practices.
- Provide stakeholder-specific communication tools to address differing information needs.
- Promote ownership and confidence in the fairness, reliability, and comparability of the new assessment system.
- Support capacity building among teachers, leaders, and examination personnel.
- Ensure that stakeholders are not only informed but also engaged in shaping the implementation.

13.3 Objectives

- **Awareness:** Ensure all stakeholders understand the rationale, benefits, and processes of the revised framework.
- **Engagement:** Establish two-way communication channels to gather feedback, address concerns, and strengthen trust.
- **Capacity Building:** Empower educators and administrators with knowledge and tools to implement the framework effectively.
- **Transparency and Credibility:** Demonstrate openness in sharing changes, decisions, and outcomes, reinforcing credibility with both national and international partners.
- **Sustainability:** Institutionalise communication mechanisms that endure beyond accreditation.

13.4 Key developments requiring communication

The following reforms must be communicated effectively to stakeholders:

Reform area	Status	Key milestones completed	Upcoming steps
New grading system	Ongoing	Framework + descriptors drafted	Full national rollout 2027
Coursework integration	Ongoing	Policy shift + templates drafted	National verification system 2026
Competency-based assessment	Partially implemented	Embedded in curriculum	Full integration in 2027 Board Examination
Redesigned national exams	In progress	Test specs + item writing reform	Release of new exam models 2026
Cambridge accreditation	Advanced	Documentation + reviews + training	Final audit and approval 2027

- **New grading system:** clear explanation of revised scales, descriptors and grade boundaries for both continuous and summative assessments.
- **Coursework integration:** weighting (Classes IV–XII) emphasising classroom-based evidence of learning.
- **Competency-based assessment (CBA):** focus on higher-order thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and communication, in alignment with international standards.
- **Redesigned national examinations:** improved test specifications, item-writing protocols, and mark scheme.
- **Cambridge accreditation alignment:** principles of validity, reliability, fairness, impact, practicality and comparability embedded in assessment processes.

13.5 Stakeholder-specific communication strategies

Effective communication is essential to ensure that all stakeholders clearly understand assessment reforms, procedures, and expectations. Tailored communication strategies help provide the right information to the right audience, promote transparency, and support consistent implementation across schools, agencies, and communities.

13.5.1 Policymakers and education leaders

- **Objective:** Secure policy alignment, resource support, and high-level endorsement.
- **Approach:** Policy briefs, executive presentations, national education dialogues.
- **Materials:** Accreditation reports, benchmarking comparisons, impact summaries, dashboards.

13.5.2 School leaders and teachers

- **Objective:** Equip implementers with capacity and clarity on reforms.
- **Approach:** Intensive workshops, webinars, peer learning networks, school-based orientation.
- **Materials:** Teacher guides on continuous assessment, coursework, exemplar items, marking rubrics, classroom resource kits.

13.5.3 Students

- **Objective:** Provide clarity on expectations, grading, and opportunities in the new system.
- **Approach:** Orientation sessions, interactive digital platforms, school-based campaigns.
- **Materials:** Student-friendly guides, FAQs, videos.

13.5.4 Parents and guardians

- **Objective:** Build confidence in the fairness and international credibility of the revised framework.
- **Approach:** Parent–teacher consultations, community information sessions, radio/TV programmes.
- **Materials:** Simplified guides in English and Dzongkha, infographics on grading changes, FAQs.

13.5.5 Examination personnel and item writers

- **Objective:** Ensure assessment instruments meet Cambridge standards.
- **Approach:** Technical training, accreditation-linked capacity development, refresher sessions.
- **Materials:** Item-setting guidelines, examiner handbooks, verification protocols, mark scheme exemplars.

13.5.6 Media and the public

- **Objective:** Promote transparency and strengthen public trust in accreditation.
- **Approach:** Media briefings, press releases, talk shows, social media campaigns.
- **Materials:** Fact sheets, press kits, success stories, performance reports.

13.6 Channels of communication

- **Mass Media:** Newspapers, national television, and radio.
- **Digital Platforms:** BCSEA website, social media, newsletters.
- **Direct Engagement:** Seminars, workshops, community dialogues, consultative meetings.
- **Print and Multimedia:** Posters, brochures, videos, infographics.

13.7 Phased implementation

Phase	Description	Timeline
1. Advocacy and awareness phase	Launch nationwide advocacy to explain the <i>why, what, and expected impact</i> of the reforms to schools, parents, students, and stakeholders.	2026-2027 (Initiated in 2025; ongoing advocacy until full reform rollout)
2. Capacity-building phase	Provide targeted training, guidelines, and resources for teachers, school leaders, item writers, markers, and Dzongkhags to implement reforms effectively.	2025–2026 (Major training and reinforcement in 2026 before implementation)
3. Consolidation phase	Maintain continuous communication, monitor implementation, collect feedback, refine procedures, and address challenges based on evidence.	2025 onwards (Starts with initial rollout in 2026 and continues annually)
4. Accreditation review phase	Present documentation, evidence, and transparent practices to demonstrate compliance with Cambridge standards and international benchmarks.	2025–2026 (Aligned with Cambridge’s audit visits and accreditation review cycle)

13.8 Monitoring and evaluation

- **Feedback loops:** Surveys, focus groups discussions, and stakeholder consultations.
- **Reach metrics:** Tracking participation in workshops, downloads of materials, media coverage.
- **Impact evaluation:** Assessing shifts in understanding, confidence, and implementation readiness.

13.9 Conclusion

The revised National Student-Learning Assessment Framework signifies a transformative step towards internationally benchmarked education assessment in Bhutan. For this change to be fully effective and sustainable, communication must extend beyond information dissemination to advocacy, engagement, and co-creation. Through a structured, stakeholder-specific communication strategy, BCSEA will ensure that reforms are understood, trusted, and embraced, ultimately paving the way for successful Cambridge accreditation and stronger educational outcomes for Bhutan.

14 Annexures

14.1 Glossary

Anchor script: It refers to answer script used as reference in the standardisation process to ensure consistent and fair marking across markers.

Assessment: It is a systematic process of collecting, measuring, and interpreting evidence to make informed judgments about the quality, level of performance, or progress of learning. It involves both measurement and judgment: measurement refers to gathering evidence of learning through tasks, tests, or activities, while judgment involves evaluating this evidence against established criteria or standards to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved.

Assessment protocol: It encapsulates approaches to assessment practices. It includes a set of principles, procedures, and responsibilities for different stakeholders, who have a shared commitment to the implementation of the protocol.

Auditing: It refers to a systematic and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether assessment tasks and related learners' outcomes comply with curriculum standards and education goals.

Authentic assessment: (also called work-integrated assessment) refers to assessment tasks and conditions that closely reflect real-life contexts and applications. It evaluates learners' ability to apply knowledge and skills in situations similar to those they would encounter outside the classroom.

Benchmark: A benchmark is a point of reference or criteria against which something can be measured and evaluated. In the context of assessment, benchmarks are specific points of reference related to performance or outcomes against which learners' competencies are monitored and measured.

Board Examination: It is a formal, high-stakes assessment conducted at a national or central level under standardised conditions and regulations. It contributes to the certification or progression of learners and is designed to ensure consistency, fairness, and comparability of results across schools.

Certification: The formal recognition of a qualification awarded to a successful learner.

Competency: Ability to perform, behave, and act in diverse areas and situations through the application of knowledge, skills, and values.

Construct: A construct is a human attribute such as attitude, emotion or intelligence. It cannot be observed directly, and assessment tries to gather data and make inferences and decisions about such constructs.

Course: An integrated set of discrete learning units within a curriculum comprising core, compulsory, and optional subjects.

Coursework: A supervised, internally assessed and externally verified form of assessment that complements written examinations by evaluating competencies and skills beyond those which can be easily assessed by written examinations including application of learning and higher-order thinking. Coursework typically allows for sustained engagement and may include multiple components. Examples include *Practical Test, Test, Speaking Test, Portfolio, Research project / Investigative Task, Field Research, Presentations*.

Curriculum: The overarching layout for a path of study referring to the philosophies and intention, delivery methods and outcomes of a course; more specifically the learning goals, teaching and assessment methods, course content and learning activities.

Evaluation: The process of looking at a learner's work or performance and making a judgment about how well they have learned or achieved the expected goals.

Evidence of learner performance: The collection of the learner's work that is used to compile his or her internal assessment mark.

Examination: A formal test designed to measure a learner's knowledge, understanding, skills, or competencies in a specific subject or area, usually under controlled conditions.

External verification: The process by which coursework assessment is reviewed by an external body to verify the accuracy, consistency, and fairness of marking across schools and to ensure alignment with prescribed standards and assessment criteria.

Formative assessment: An integral part of teaching and learning. It does not contribute to the final mark given for the module; instead, it contributes to learning through providing feedback.

Grade: A letter grade is assigned to bands of marks to reflect how well assessment criteria have been met or indicate the level of achievement across a course of study.

Grading: Grading is a method used to evaluate and summarise students' academic performance. Instead of reporting only marks or percentages, a grading system groups scores into categories such as A, B, C, and so on. Each grade represents a level of achievement and demonstrates the student's understanding of the subject.

Internal verification: The process by which a school reviews and standardises the marking of coursework to ensure consistent application of assessment criteria and rubrics across assessors within the school.

Mark scheme: A structured guideline that specifies how marks are awarded in an assessment, detailing the criteria, expected responses, and rules to ensure consistent and fair marking.

Moderation: The process of reviewing and verifying examination papers to ensure they are valid, fair, clear, and aligned with the syllabus and assessment standards before being finalised for administration.

Outcomes: The end products of a learning process. The outcomes are stated at the beginning of a learning activity or course of study and should clearly indicate what learners should be able to demonstrate at the end of the process.

Percentage Uniform Marks: The Percentage Uniform Mark (PUM) is a standardised score on a scale of 0 to 100 that indicates a candidate's level of performance relative to the grade boundaries set for an examination. Raw marks obtained by candidates are first converted to grades, and the grades are then converted to PUM in accordance with the established grading scale.

Practical examination: An assessment in which a learner demonstrates subject-specific skills, techniques, or procedures through hands-on tasks or performances under controlled conditions. It assesses the application of knowledge and practical competence that cannot be adequately measured through a written examination alone.

Promotion: The progression of a learner from one grade to the next when that learner meets the minimum required level of achievement per subject in a particular class.

Qualitative evidence: Descriptive information in a student report that illustrates performance, skills, and learning behaviours through narrative feedback, observations, or examples. It captures the *quality* of achievement rather than numerical measures.

Quantitative evidence: Measurable information in a student report expressed through scores, grades, percentages, or statistical indicators. It captures the *extent* of achievement in relation to defined standards.

Rubric: An assessment tool which expresses expectations of quality around an assessment task and often delineates consistent criteria for grading allowing teachers and learners alike to evaluate criteria, which can be complex and subjective.

School-Based Assessment: It refers to assessments written, conducted and marked within schools during the academic year as part of the overall evaluation of learner achievement. It may include coursework, practical tasks, tests, or examinations, and is guided by standardised criteria and quality assurance processes to ensure consistency and fairness.

Seed Paper: It refers to a candidate's script that has been pre-marked by the chief marker, assistant chief marker, or any experienced marker and then included, blind, among the scripts assigned to markers.

Standards: Broad descriptors of where learner achievement needs to be at specific stages of schooling in order to fully access and meet the demands of the National Curriculum.

Subjects: Specific units of study within a course usually designated by class level and specialisation. Subjects may be determined as core, compulsory, or optional.

Summative assessment: Summative assessment demonstrates the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme, and which contributes to the final mark given for the module.

Tracking: refers to the process of collecting and using assessment data to monitor learners' learning and growth over time, at different key points and against educational standards.

Transversal Competencies: These are the key skills, knowledge and attitudes, encompassing learning, literacy and life skills, that students apply across subjects and contexts to learn effectively, communicate and manage real life challenges.

Verification: A quality assurance process in which internally assessed coursework marks are reviewed to ensure they have been applied consistently and fairly across candidates and centres. It includes internal verification within a centre to standardise marking before submission, and external verification by BCSEA to check that internal marking aligns with the prescribed standards and is comparable across all centres.

Written examination: It is a formal assessment conducted under timed and controlled conditions in which a learner responds in writing to set tasks or questions. It assesses knowledge, understanding, analysis, and written communication through objective, short-answer, or extended-response items.

14.2 Acronyms

AOs: Assessment Objectives
ACER: Australian Council for Educational Research
BCSE: Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education
BCSEA: Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment
BE: Board Examination
BHSEC: Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate
CBA: Competency-Based Assessment
CFA: Continuous Formative Assessment
CSCD: Centre for School Curriculum Development
DSE: Department of School Education
DTI: Digital Technology and Innovation
EAO: Examination and Assessment Officer
ELPC: English language proficiency certificate
EMD: Education Monitoring Division
EMIS: Education Management Information System
FAQ: Frequently Asked Question
G2C: Government-to-Citizen
GNH: Gross National Happiness
ICT: Information and Communications Technology
IEP: Individual Work Plan
LCSC: Language and Culture Studies Certificate
MoESD: Ministry of Education and Skills Development
NEP: National Education Policy
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
NSLAF: National Student-Learning Assessment Framework
OGEA: Operational Guidelines for Examinations and Assessment
PCE: Paro College of Education
PLCs: Professional Learning Communities
PRIM: Pre-referral Intervention Manual
PUM: Percentage Uniform Mark
RGoB: Royal Government of Bhutan
RUB: Royal University of Bhutan
SA: Summative Assessment
SBA: School-based Assessment
SCE: Samtse College of Education
SE: Supervising Examiner
SEN: Special Educational Needs
SOP: Standard Operating Procedures
SUPW: Socially Useful Productive Work
TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UMS: Uniform Mark Score
WE: Written Examination

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