



Academic Policy

Heads of Departments (HODs) AS ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

The academic affairs of the College are managed by the Deputy Head (Academic) and Assistant Deputy Head (Academic) through the Committee of the Heads of Departments, members of the ICT department, the Resource Centre and the Academic Support Teacher (BSU). This committee is effectively the Academic Committee. The committee meets twice a term under the chair of the Deputy Head (Academic). The meetings take the form of a 45-minute administrative meeting and the second meeting is a 90-minute meeting to allow for more significant and philosophical matters to be discussed. The mandate of the committee is to primarily create policy and ensures that policy is adhered to. The committee will ensure that the academic programme for the year is properly planned and executed, including the assessment procedures, timing of assessment, and the administration of mid-, mock and end-of-year assessment.

The committee will also ensure an annual review within departments of their teaching and learning programmes, including decisions to be implemented to ensure improvements on a regular basis.

DBE (WCED) AS EXAMINATION PROVIDER

Bishops takes part in the DBE NSC Grade 12 exit examination. As an independent school we are obliged to participate fully in the requirements and moderation as stipulated by the DBE for Grade 12 only. We enjoy the freedom and flexibility of designing and managing our own programmes for Grade 8 to 11. We are still obliged to meet with the our WCED Circuit Manager at the end of the year and discussing our overall marks and progressions.

LANGUAGE POLICY

The official language of teaching and learning is English, and the administration of the school is in English. We offer two South African languages – Afrikaans and IsiXhosa at First and Second Additional Language level.

From Grade 8, boys must choose English and an Additional (official) language, and if they have received exemption (due to immigrant status) from having to study a second official language, still need to offer a South African language up until the end of Grade 9, but they are not required to pass it. They may take French at Second Additional Language level.

Boys who are exempt from having to take an additional language due to learning difficulties need to attend the additional language in Grade 8 and 9, but can offer any another subject from Grade 10. This will need to be arranged and funded privately. Details of the tutor will need to be provided in order to have the results reflected on the mid- and end-of-year reports.



SUBJECT CHOICE IN GRADE 10 – 12

Boys are required to offer English Home Language, a South African First Additional Language, Mathematics (or Mathematical Literacy from Grade 11 only), Life Orientation and 3 elective subjects. Our subject choice stipulates that a boy needs to offer Physical or Life Science and 2 other electives.

Our timetable allows for 7 subjects to be taken during the school day. Boys who would like to offer an additional subject need to privately source and fund a teacher and provide details to the Deputy Head: Academic. These results can be included on mid- and end-of-year reports. Historically History has been offered as an additional option in Open period. This will continue as long as we have a willing teacher, as it is not an expectation on our staff. No staff member may be paid for this offering.

In addition, Advanced Programme Mathematics and English are also being offered during the school day in Mathematics and English lessons respectively.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment occurs in all subjects on a regular basis and is monitored in the following ways. All marks achieved from any formal assessment during the year are captured on the school's database, and a rolling average for all subjects is kept and displayed for pupils, teachers and parents to be constantly aware of the level at which the pupils are performing.

In Grades 8-12, there are Industry Reports in Term 1 and 3 in which a similar process of bringing together all the assessments of the period into a percentage figure is combined with a pastoral reflection from the House to produce an Industry Report. There should have been at least three assessments conducted during each report period. The Industry report is communicated with the parents and forms part of the boy's profile.

There are examination or assessment sessions at the midyear and at the end of the year in all Grades. Examinations/tests would be written, assessed and the results combined into reports which are then sent to the boy's parents, together with a comment on each subject from the subject teacher, as well as the boy's Tutor and or House Director.

MODERATION

Moderation occurs in a number of ways during the course of teaching and assessment. Within departments, individual teachers are expected to set tests or examinations which apply across the whole grade. These examinations and tests are distributed to members of the department to moderate the questions to ensure appropriateness, comprehensiveness and correctness. If the marking of the examination is undertaken by several persons across the grade, then moderation of the marking should take place to ensure consistency of approach. Once the various examination results are combined to produce a final result for a particular subject, the staff members of the department will meet and moderate the marks for appropriateness.

REPORTING AND TRACKING OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Apart from the Rolling average mark maintained on the on-line system, as part of the assessment programme, pupils' achievements are periodically combined into reports. These are analysed by the boys' House Directors and tutors before being sent on to the parents for their comments and reactions. Pupils would be interviewed either for congratulations or for some form of encouragement or intervention to bring about a more positive or appropriate response from the pupils. If necessary, the



pupil might be referred to the Bishops Support Unit (BSU) for further assistance. These reports are kept on the school's intranet together with all the other information in the pupil's profile. There are two types of report - the Industry Report, and the half- and year report. The Industry reports are single page reports which contain mostly marks and rankings and will give some indication of the boy's progress and position relative to other pupils, as well as an indication of his level of application to the subject.

The half-year report contains the mark and rankings, but also contains a written comment from each of the boy's teachers, as well as his tutor's comment and his House Director's comment.

REVIEW OF LEARNING PROGRAMMES, DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING PROGRAMMES, AND EQUIPMENT

All departments will regularly review the teaching materials and programmes they are using. This review should be minuted in departmental minutes to form an on-going record of the learning material.

LEARNER APPEALS PROCEDURE

A Formal Learner Appeals procedure has been in place since the beginning of 2006.

1. The learner who wants to appeal against results achieved, or reports provided, communicates this through his Head of department (of the affected subject) and his tutor or House Director.
2. Once the appeal has been made, the Deputy Head (Academic) will review the case put forward by the learner, and will convene a meeting of the learner, his parents (if so desired), the Head of Department and his tutor or House Director. This body will attempt to resolve the difficulty.
3. In the event of the learner not being satisfied, an appeal to the Principal can be made. His decision will then be final.

STAFF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff Development is a major concern of the school's executive committee, and is the responsibility of the Staff Development Committee, chaired by the Deputy Principal. Academic development is one of the aspects of this, and a number of opportunities for staff academic development are built into the ongoing weekly programme of Staff development. All Staff take part in the Staff Conference at the beginning of the year, and the Seminar which takes place during the mid-year school holiday. In addition, staff are encouraged to take part in professional growth seminars organized by appropriate bodies such as ProGro and others.

STAFF APPRAISAL

All staff are required to take part in an annual appraisal process. There are a number of areas in which staff members are appraised, including the academic, the co-curricular, and the various responsibility areas that a staff member might be engaged in.

LEARNER SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION POLICIES

When learners apply to join the school, they are asked to write an Entrance test assessing English and Maths to determine their level of competence and to ascertain what level of support (if any) they will need if they are offered places. When boys are accepted into the school, parents are asked to complete various **online** forms providing further information for use by various parts of the school, including the Bishops Support Unit (BSU).



The Bishops Support Unit (BSU) was established in 2001, and consists of two psychologists, one Clinical and the other Educational, a learning support teacher, an Office administrator and two Educational Psychology Interns. The BSU consults with external educational psychologists, psychologists and psychiatrists. The Unit falls under the guidance of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the College. The Unit is housed in its own premises on the school grounds, with 4 offices, kitchen and toilet facilities, and has a separate venue for the other support staff and boys writing exams with concessions.

The vision of the unit is: To have a unit staffed by a multi-professional team, which is dedicated to encouraging the optimal psychological, emotional, social and academic development of individual pupils at Bishops and individuals and families in the community. The Unit provides the following dedicated services.

- A. Counselling services and Psychotherapy for the pupils and staff.
- B. Vocational Guidance and Psychometric testing.
- C. Psycho-educational and learning support services for the pupils.
- D. Career guidance (together with, but going beyond Life Orientation classes).
- E. Psycho-educational workshops for teachers, parents, sports teams etc.

A clearly defined policy and procedure exists for handling special circumstances relating to examinations: this caters for those candidates who need extra time or readers / scribes, as well as responding to short-term problems such as illness or injury.