

Academic Policy Document

Hods as Academic Board

The academic affairs of the College are managed by the Deputy Head (Academic) through the Committee of the Heads of Departments which comprises all the academic departments in the school as well as the Librarian and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) This committee is effectively the Academic Board. The Principal and Deputy Principal are also members of this committee. The committee meets twice a term under the chair of the Deputy Head and deals with all issues relating to the academic activities of the school. The body creates 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- and end of year assessment. It will also ensure the maintenance of academic standards through the moderation of results reported on by each department in a special post-examination meeting.

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.

WCED as examinations provider

Bishops takes part in the NSC Grade 12 examination procedures and takes part fully in the attendant moderation and development requirements as set out by the Department.

Language Policy

The official language of teaching and learning is English, and the administration of the school is in English. We offer to teach three other languages - Afrikaans both at First Additional Language level, isiXhosa at First Additional Language level, and French at Additional Language level.

All learners take three official languages up to the end of Grade 7. From Grade 8, they may choose English and an Additional (official) language, and if they have received exemption from having to study a second official language, they take French as an Additional language.

In addition to this, there is a special programme for all Grade 8 learners in which they all learn conversational isiXhosa skills in a project shared with the LEAP school

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 pupil, teachers and parents to be constantly aware of the level at which the pupils are performing.

In Grades 3-5, there are regular Mark/Industry reports on a termly basis and the same procedure is followed as in other grades. In Grades 6 and 7, there are midyear and end of year exam/tests, and Mark/Industry reports as well.

In Grades 8 and 9, there is a formal Portfolio Review which happens twice a year. Staff draw together all the work produced during the term, and produce a percentage figure which is then combined with all the other learning areas into a report which is discussed with the pupil, communicated with the pupil's parents and which then forms part of the boy's profile. There is also a meeting to which all parents are invited during which a review of all the boy's portfolios takes place, and parents sit with their boys and go through each portfolio.

In Grades 10-12, there are regular Industry Reports (one or two per half-year) in which a similar process of bringing together all the assessments of the period into a percentage figure which is then combined to produce an Industry Report. There should have been at least three assessments conducted during each report period. The Industry report is discussed with the boy, communicated with the parent and forms part of the boy's profile. There are exam or assessment sessions at the midyear and at the end of the year in all Grades. Exams/tests would be written, assessed and the results combined into reports which are then sent to the boy's parents, together with detailed comment on each subject from the subject teacher, as well as the boy's Housemaster, and the Principal.

Moderation

Moderation occurs in a number of ways during the course of teaching and assessment.

Moderation of tests and at exam times: Within departments, individual teachers are delegated to set tests or exams which apply across the whole grade. These exams and tests are taken to department meetings where all the other members of the department moderate the questions to ensure appropriateness, comprehensiveness and correctness. If the marking of the exam is undertaken by several persons across the grade, then moderation of the marking should take place to ensure consistency of approach. Once the various exam 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. Once the marks for all of the subjects have been combined, there is a special Marks moderation meeting of the Heads of Department committee to consider the overall marks.

Moderation at other times (i.e. Oral assessments by different teachers) is the responsibility of the Head of Department to ensure that consistent and appropriate standards are set in these situations.

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' achievement is periodically combined into reports. These are analysed by the boys' housemasters 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 for further assistance. These reports are kept on the school's intranet together with all the other information in the pupils' profile. There are two types of report - the Industry Report, and the half-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, his Housemaster's comment and an acknowledgement from the Principal. These reports are presented as a booklet.

Review of Learning programmes, development of learning programmes, and equipment

All departments will review regularly 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. From time to time, the HOD committee (Academic Board) will ask each of the departments to complete a review of its learning programme for the past year, for every grade, and to table the findings of this review to the Committee at the first meeting of each new year. These review findings are to be made available to the Quality management committee for incorporation into the annual review conducted by the QMC.

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 the boy's tutor or Housemaster.
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 the boy's tutor or Housemaster. This body will attempt to resolve the difficulty.
3. In the event of the learner not being satisfied, an appeal to the Headmaster 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 Headmaster (Prep). 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 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 forms providing further information for use by various parts of the school, including the Bishops Support Unit.

The Bishops Support Unit was established in 2001, and presently consists of two school Counsellors, a remedial teacher, an Office manager, two Psychology Interns, and a panel of five or six consulting educational psychologists, psychologists and psychiatrists. There is also an Educational Psychologist and a Counsellor dedicated to the boys in Grades 0 - 7. The Unit falls under the control of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the College. The Unit is housed in its own premises on the school grounds, with seminar room space, kitchen and toilet facilities, and offices for the resident and the consulting staff. The vision of the unit is: To establish a unit staffed by a multi-professional team, which is dedicated to encouraging the optimal psychological, emotional, social and intellectual 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 remedial 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, as well as responding to short-term problems such as illness or injury.

Management of Information system, and Learner profiles

The School has an extensive database of information relating to the academic progress of all learners within the school. This information is accessed through the school's Intranet, to which all staff have access. The information contained in the database includes: the boy's contact details, his parents' contact details, his marks (both interim reports and half-yearly reports), comments from teachers for the mid-year and end of year assessments, his timetable, the record of attendance, his disciplinary records, commendations, information notes from the learner's Housemaster, notes from the BSU, the teachers who teach him, and the teachers who run his co-curricular activities such as sports, societies and cultural activities. These detail are also available to the boy's parents or guardians.

Homework Policy

All pupils are expected to do homework daily during school terms. The purposes of homework include follow-up from the day's lesson; preparation for the next lesson, working on projects and assignment scheduled in the term planner. Homework also encourages self-study practices, and allows for development of self-discipline and time management skills.

The expectation is that pupils should be doing about two hours of homework each night. In Grades 8 and 9, there is a set timetable of homework allocations, with each subject being given its allocation during the two week cycle. In Grade 10, 11 and 12, there is a block system operating, in which homework is set on Mondays for Thursdays and on Thursdays for Mondays.

Plagiarism and Cheating

A policy has been developed for responding to instances in which plagiarism or cheating is detected or suspected. This provides for decisions about marks to be awarded as well as for actions to be taken to try and inculcate more meticulous and honest behaviour on the part of learners.

Information Technology

Teaching and learning from Grades 9 to 11/12 are enhanced by the use of personal laptops for the boys (bought by the parents) and either laptops or personal computers for the staff (provided by the school), and an extensive array of learning programmes, resources, planning materials and storage capacity which we call the Intranet. Teaching and learning proceeds on the expectation that the use of ICT is fully integrated into what is being done in classrooms and for homework. The expectation also exists that using ICT for teaching and learning the subjects in the curriculum also teaches the skills relating to ICT that all pupils will need to acquire to be successful in the world at large. The school's whole academic and administrative infrastructure relies completely on the school's network and all entering, manipulation and storing of marks, reports and comments happens on the intranet. Academic staff are expected to be fully computer literate, and to be able to compose and place learning