

European Schools
Office of the Secretary-General

European Baccalaureate Unit

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Orig.: EN

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW MARKING SCALE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Meeting on 15, 16 and 17 April 2015 - Prague

1.- Background

Document 2011-09-D-47-en-5 “Structure for all syllabuses in the system of the European schools” and document 2011-01-D-61-en-3 “Assessment Policy in the European Schools” establish a competence-based pedagogical approach in the European School system in regards to teaching, learning and assessment.

Both documents are also a clear declaration of the intention to bring the European School system in line with the current educational policy of the European Union.

Curriculum development in the European School system explicitly originates from the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006]¹

In this sense, all syllabuses in the European School System need to be revised so that pupils progress is sequenced and organized in a way that teaching and learning converges towards the attainment of the 8 key competences as defined in the aforementioned document.

Each subject will need to define in its syllabus the learning objectives for each cycle and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will facilitate the pupils' progress and attainment. At the same time, it will be necessary to establish clear assessment criteria and attainment descriptors for each subject at each cycle.

The attainment descriptors will be inspired in the structure of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). Therefore, there will be 5 positive descriptors to express the extent to which pupils have fulfilled the syllabus requirements and 2 negative descriptors for pupils who do not meet the subject requirements.

The revised syllabuses will be ready for approval in February 2017, as agreed in the Joint Teaching Committee of 12th and 13th of February 2015 in Brussels.

A new marking scale suited to the attainment descriptors will have to be adopted.

2.- Preliminary considerations

It is believed that a more detailed and clear **assessment system** with specific criteria and attainment descriptors for each subject at each cycle will help the harmonization of assessment and evaluation across the different language sections and across the European School system.

A **marking scale** is just a symbolic and arbitrary system of representation that serves the purpose of measuring, ranking and / or classifying pupils. It can be adjusted to any particular assessment system.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962>

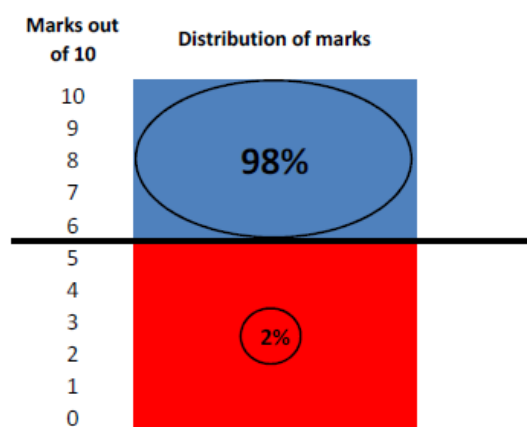
In this sense, a modification in the assessment system or in the marking scale does not necessarily imply a modification in the other.

3.- The current European Schools marking scale

The current marking scale in the European School system is a scale from 0 to 10 with a pass mark of 6. Therefore, the mark range for negative performance is wider (0 - 5.9) than the mark range for positive performance (6 - 10).

There are 8 attainment descriptors, 4 for positive and 4 for negative. In practice, 2 of the negative descriptors corresponding to mark 0 and mark range 0.1 - 1.9 are hardly ever used and 1 of the negative descriptor corresponding to mark range 2 - 3.9 is seldom used.

Most pupils achieve positive marks and the overall success rate is around 98%.



The current European Schools marking scale is not a common standard and may lead to confusion with other scales where the pass mark is in the middle of the range.

Nowhere in the European Schools literature can be found that the current pass mark, 6, equals to 60% of the material that should have been covered yet some people tend to think that it could be so. In fact, many teachers coming into the European School system often find it hard to adapt to its scale, especially in the first years, because of that erroneous assumption.

In any case, some aspects of the current marking scale are valued as positive by most stakeholders:

- It is based on the decimal system, which makes it easy to understand and to operate with.
- It allows the use of decimals, which facilitates finer classification or ranking (granularity).

4.- Assessment principles

Assessment, Evaluation and Testing.

	Assessment	Evaluation
Purpose	Formative: Improve teaching and learning	Summative: Measure attainment
Focus	Process oriented: Monitor progress. How learning is going	Product oriented: Meeting of criteria, requirements. What has been learnt.
Usage	Diagnostic: Identify areas for improvement	Judgmental: Arrive at a mark, score, rank

Tests and Examinations: Instruments to measure performance and attainment.

The European Schools system considers formative and summative assessment.

Formative assessment focuses on the process of learning and summative assessment on the performance of a pupil at the end of a given period of instruction.

In the European Schools' General Rules it is established that formative assessment is reflected by "A marks" and summative assessment by "B marks".

The **B marks** are the marks obtained in the term or semester examination(s).

These examination(s) check the pupils' competences acquired during an extensive period of time in certain subjects. They are held under certain physical conditions (room arrangement, use of specific formats, invigilation, etc.) and under time constraints.

The **A marks** represent the pupils' **daily work** in a subject, which consists of a variety of tasks and aspects such as:

- focus and attention in class;
- active participation and quality of interventions in class;
- regularity and consistency in the work in class and at home;
- positive attitude towards the subject;
- signs of initiative, independence and autonomy;
- short written progress tests or oral interrogations;
- noted progress;
- etc.

All the stakeholders value as positive the current use of formative and summative assessment to measure pupils' attainment.

5.- Norm and criteria referencing

Norm referenced assessment compares and rank pupils in relation to one another whereas criteria referenced assessment measures pupils' attainment in relation to the level at which the learning objectives defined in a given syllabus have been achieved².

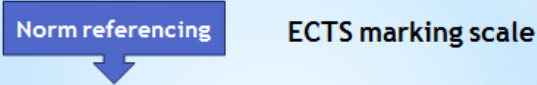
The use of a criteria referenced system of assessment implies that very clear assessment criteria and attainment descriptors have to be produced for each syllabus. This is especially important in order to assure a harmonised assessment within and across schools.

² See more about norm and criteria referencing here: <http://edglossary.org/norm-referenced-test/>

Criteria referenced assessment allows to describe precisely pupils' attainment. It relates to the learning objectives expressed in a syllabus and describes the level at which the required competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) have been achieved.

All stakeholders acknowledge that a criteria referenced system of assessment gives a clearer information on the pupil's profile and of the competences attained.

6.- ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)³



Grade	best/next	Definition
A	10%	outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	25%	above the average standard but with some errors
C	30%	generally sound work with a number of notable errors
D	25%	fair but with significant shortcomings
E	10%	performance meets the minimum criteria
FX		Fail - some more work required before the credit can be awarded
F		Fail - considerable further work is required

The European Credit Transfer System is used as a framework to compare the studies and marks obtained in the different education systems in Europe. It allows the transfer of learning experiences between different institutions and aids pupils' mobility.

When the European School system adopts a marking scale inspired in the ECTS framework, this reinforces the principle of aligning with European policies in education.

A very useful characteristic of the ECTS system is that it has 5 positive attainment descriptors and 2 negative one, and these can be also matched with a numerical scale.

However, the ECTS system is norm-referenced and not criterion referenced. This is a feature of the framework that it is not going to be retained.

³ See more here http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm

7.- Pupils performance in the European School system

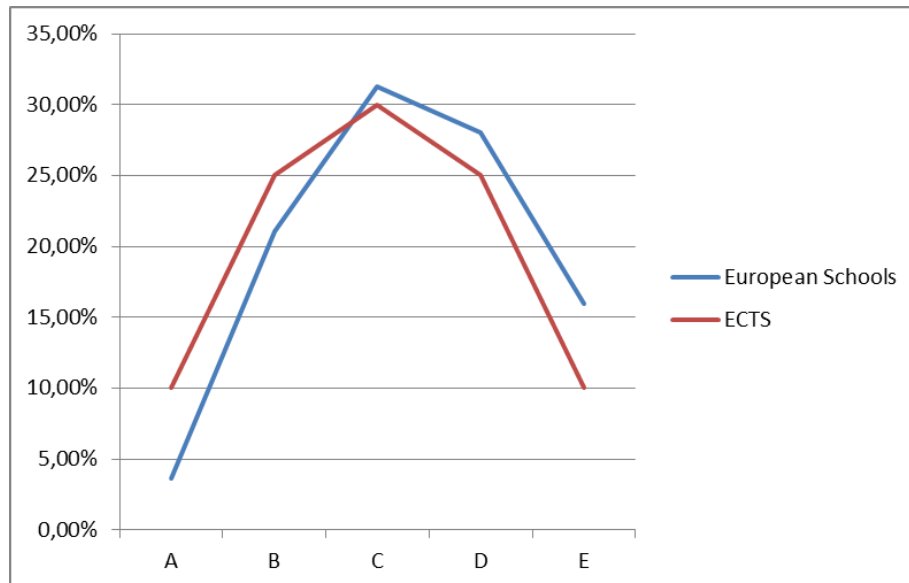
European Schools		ECTS	
A (9 – 10)	3,63%	A	10%
B (8 – 8,9)	21,09%	B	25%
C (7 – 7,9)	31,31%	C	30%
D (6 – 6,9)	28,05%	D	25%
E (5 – 5,9)	15,93%	E	10%
FX (3 – 4,9)	1,86%	FX	N/A
F (0 – 2,9)	0,08%	F	N/A

Just to compare pupils' performance in the European School criteria referenced assessment system with the ECTS system, all positive final marks of the last 7 Baccalaureate sessions have been converted into ECTS.

First numerical values were assigned to the alphabetical ECTS marks and then a conversion formula was used to translate the marks from one scale to the other.

It can be observed that there is a great coincidence in central values but not in the extremes. On one hand, on the higher side of the scale the European School numbers are smaller, whereas on the lower part of the scale the European School numbers are greater. This illustrates the difficulty of achieving very good marks in the European School system.

Here is a graphical representation of the comparison above:



8.- Proposed new marking scale for the European School system.

The proposed new marking scale aims at keeping the strengths of the current system and correcting its weaknesses as well as getting in line with European policies in education. Its main features are:

- 5 positive descriptors and 2 negative ones.
- Marks based on a decimal scale to facilitate operations and allow finer ranking.
- Formative and summative assessment.
- Criteria referenced. Clear description of learning objectives and competences attained.
- Inspired in the ECTS framework.

Proposed new marking scale:

Definition	Grade	Numerical Mark	Performance
Excellent though not flawless performance entirely corresponding to the competences required by the subject	A	9.0-10	Excellent
Very good performance almost entirely corresponding to the competences required by the subject.	B	8.0-8.9	Very good
Good performance corresponding overall to the competences required by the subject.	C	7.0-7.9	Good
Satisfactory performance corresponding to the competences required by the subject.	D	6.0-6.9	Satisfactory
Performance corresponding to the minimum of the competences required by the subject.	E	5.0-5.9	Sufficient
Weak performance almost entirely failing to meet the competences required by the subject.	FX	3.0-4.9	Failed (Weak)
Very weak performance entirely failing to meet the competences required by the subject.	F	0-2.9	Failed (Very weak)

9.- Harmonised assessment and standards

The adoption of the new marking scale does not mean lowering the standards. The new pass mark will be 5 instead of 6 but this will still represent the same minimum attainment requirements⁴.

In this sense and in order to harmonise assessment, attainment descriptors will need to be produced for each syllabus at each cycle using the structure of the proposed new marking scale.

10.- Implementation calendar

The implementation of the new marking scale is foreseen for school year 2017-2018 for years s1-s6 and for school year 2018-2019 for year s7 according to the following flowchart



ANNEXES

- Annex 1 - Current marking scale / New marking scale
- Annex 2 - Financial Statement

⁴ See Annex 1

OPINION OF THE JOINT TEACHING COMMITTEE

The Joint Teaching Committee scrutinized and approved the proposed new marking scale system, provided it enters into force according to the following implementation calendar:

The implementation of the new marking scale is foreseen

- for school year 2017-2018 for years s1-s6;
- for school year 2018-2019 for year s7 (thus for 2019 Baccalaureate session).

PROPOSAL

The Budgetary Committee is requested to take note of the proposal for a new marking scale of the European School System, in view of its gradual entry into force as from the 2019 Baccalaureate session, with the following implementation calendar:

- School year 2017-2018 : years s1-s6;
- School year 2018-2019 : year s7 (First Baccalaureate session: 2019).

OPINION

The Budgetary Committee took note of the proposal for a new marking scale of the European School System, in view of its gradual entry into force as from the 2019 Baccalaureate session, with the following implementation calendar:

- School year 2017-2018 : years s1-s6;
- School year 2018-2019 : year s7 (First Baccalaureate session: 2019).

The BC expressed a favourable opinion on the January 2015 amending budget, with the EC entering a reservation.

PROPOSAL

The Board of Governors is requested to approve the proposal for a new marking scale of the European School System, in view of its gradual entry into force as from the 2019 Baccalaureate session, with the following implementation calendar:

- School year 2017-2018 : years s1-s6;
- School year 2018-2019 : year s7 (First Baccalaureate session: 2019).

Current marking scale		New marking scale			
9-10	The performance meets the requirements of the subject and the question particularly adequately. The mark 10 does not mean that the performance is flawless but it does denote a performance which is outstanding in all respects.	Excellent though not flawless performance entirely corresponding to the competences required by the subject.	A	9.0-10	Excellent
		Very good performance almost entirely corresponding to the competences required by the subject.	B	8.0-8.9	Very good
8-8.9	The performance fully meets the requirements of the subject and the question.	Good performance corresponding overall to the competences required by the subject.	C	7.0-7.9	Good
7-7.9	The performance generally meets the requirements of the subject and the question.	Satisfactory performance corresponding to the competences required by the subject.	D	6.0-6.9	Satisfactory
6-6.9	The performance does show weaknesses but still meets the requirements of the subject and the question on the whole.	Performance corresponding to the minimum of the competences required by the subject.	E	5.0-5.9	Sufficient
4-5.9	The performance does not meet the requirements of the subject and the question but shows that the necessary basic knowledge exists and that the weaknesses can be remedied in the foreseeable future.	Weak performance almost entirely failing to meet the competences required by the subject.	FX	3.0-4.9	Failed (Weak)
2-3.9	The performance does not meet the requirements of the subject and the question, the basic knowledge being so sketchy that the weaknesses can be remedied only in the comparatively distant future.				
0.1-1.9	The performance does not meet the requirements of the subject and the question, the basic knowledge being so sketchy that the weaknesses cannot be remedied in the foreseeable future.	Very weak performance entirely failing to meet the competences required by the subject.	F	0-2.9	Failed (Very weak)
0	This assessment will be given in the event of a blank or unacceptable script, of the absence of an answer or of a practical project or of cheating.				

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FOLLOW-UP ON THE BoG's 2007 MANDATE AND NEW MANDATE FROM THE JBI AND THE JTC – FEBRUARY 2015 – With a view to definitive approval of the new marking scale: Updating of all the S1-S7 subject syllabuses

At its meeting of 11 February 2015, the Joint Board of Inspectors approved document 2011-09-D-47 'Structure for all syllabuses in the system of the European Schools' and the related actions:

- Application of the document in all syllabuses that are under revision at the moment in both primary and secondary.
- The secondary Inspectors will revise/rewrite/develop the syllabuses for their respective subjects, will define the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to have been acquired by the end of each cycle and will produce the subject-specific attainment descriptors for assessment in each cycle.
- The syllabuses containing subject-specific assessment criteria and attainment descriptors for secondary years 1-6 must be ready to be approved in February 2017. Their entry into force will start in September 2017.
- The syllabuses containing subject-specific assessment criteria and attainment descriptors for secondary year 7 must be ready to be approved in February 2018. They will therefore take effect for the 2019 Baccalaureate session. That document may enter into force earlier if the Inspectors responsible for the different subjects deem it expedient.
- Adaptation of current syllabuses according to the document as soon as possible and information for directors/deputy directors/teachers about changes.

At its meeting of 12 and 13 February 2015, the Joint Teaching Committee took note of the document 2011-09-D-47-en-5 and approved the related actions through the document 'Competence-based syllabuses including assessment criteria and subject-related band descriptors', ref. 2015-01-D-62-en-1⁵.

As these two decisions are closely associated, approval of the 'Proposal for a new marking scale of the European School system' (ref.: 2015-01-D-23-en-1) implies revision of all the syllabuses and the production of attainment descriptors for each subject and at each level.

This is a crucial point allowing harmonised assessment to be guaranteed as part of the quality process.

⁵ The related actions have now been included in document 2011-09-D-47-en-5, meaning that document 2015-01-D-62-fr-1 has been concluded.

THIS WORK HAS TOP PRIORITY: Work to be completed by February 2017

Approximately 93 syllabuses to be revised in the course of 2015 and 2016.

3 meeting days per syllabus – to be charged to the OSG’s budget: 1 Inspector + 1 expert

Estimate of the Costs to the OSG’s 2015 budget: request for a supplementary budget

Inspector	Expert	Number of people to be reimbursed	Number of days requested	Number of Inspector days requested	TOTAL
Estimate of Costs 2015					
1	1	2	105	210	€111 510
					<i>Approximately €100 000 for 2015</i>

As regards the 2016 budget, the estimate was already taken into account in the initial request – cost estimated at approximately €250 000.