



Schola Europaea

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

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Proposal for additional training measures and a possible revised time schedule for implementation of the new marking scale in the secondary cycle of the European Schools

Board of Governors

Meeting on 4-6 April 2017 – Berlin

1. Background

For many years, the old and still valid marking scale of the Secondary Cycle of the Europeans Schools had been criticised for several reasons.

Among the weaknesses it had been pointed out especially the fact that “the mark range for negative performance is wider (0 - 5.9) than the mark range for positive performance (6 - 10).” This had been considered as being unsatisfactory and even inappropriate.

After a long time of discussion and different approaches a “Proposal for a New Marking Scale of the European School system” was approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting on April 15th-17th in Prague (2015-01-D-23-en-4).

The document reflects very well the new marking scale’s background and explains its implications and consequences:

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

[...] 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. [...]

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 harmonisation of assessment and evaluation across the different language sections and across the European School system.”

2. Present situation

The Working Groups concerned have together with the BSGES very well and extensively supported the revision of syllabuses and the development of attainment descriptors connected to the new marking scale for most subjects and cycles.

A great amount of time, energy and effort has been invested into this process. As scheduled in the implementation calendar for the new marking scale, most syllabuses have already been revised, and for those which have not been, attainment descriptors have been developed.

In the implementation calendar it is scheduled that from Sept. 2017 the new marking scale will be introduced in S1-S5, from Sept. 2018 in S6 and from Sept. 2019 in S7 (1st Baccalaureate session in 2020).

A series of decentralised trainings at all European Schools, accredited and official, has been piloted in November 2016 and will start and continue during February till April 2017.

These trainings are held by the inspectors of the WG Assessment with the support of the Head of the Bacc Unit. All teachers will receive clear and detailed information about the background, general features and consequences of the new marking scale. There has not been a decision or a common approach in what way teachers will be trained in subject specific application/usage of the new marking scale and attainment descriptors and how appropriate assessment criteria are going to be developed and applied in correcting and marking.

One reason for that might be that there are clear differences between subjects regarding their needs and challenges for the implementation process, e.g. the challenges for subjects without revised syllabuses and (identical) harmonised exams across all language sections are different from the challenges for subjects, for which harmonisation implies other aspects and areas (e.g. L1 and L2-L4).

Therefore some stakeholders consider it would be very useful to organise subject related trainings or/and provide specific guidelines before the new marking scale enters into force. The structure of these trainings/guidelines – and who is providing them – would have to be specific, depending on the subject.

3. Proposals and alternatives

Inspectors and the Working Groups concerned have been very busy and successful in the revision of syllabuses as well as in developing the attainment descriptors. Following this extensive work, it seems that additional measures to support teachers in the implementation process of the new marking scale and the application of the attainment descriptors could be provided.

The following options/proposals might be discussed in the Board of Inspectors Secondary and the Joint Teaching Committee in order to express an opinion about possible modifications of the further implementation process of the new marking scale:

I. Additional, subject related preparatory trainings/guideline

Inspectors are invited to organise specific trainings/develop specific guidelines for their subjects in such a way, that – as much as possible – a common practical application of the new marking scale will be realised in all areas of assessment.

These trainings/guidelines cover especially the format of exams and kinds of tasks, assessment criteria, correction and marking schemes, but also means of class room assessment etc.

To be cost and time efficient, either a limited number of subject teachers (e.g. coordinators/subject referent) will be trained to train, normally one from each school, or a small working group will develop guidelines for all teachers involved (e.g. for all L1-teachers in the different schools).

After the above mentioned initial training, there should be extra communication on a school or supra school level, initiated by the trained subject teacher (coordinator/referent), inspector or working group in order to multiply the content and the results of additional measures (training, guidelines) and improve a common practice of assessment and grading in all

subjects and cycles, but also especially for each school year.

It is recommended to provide and use the same material (e.g. model exams) in all schools in order to facilitate/support cooperation and harmonisation among all language sections and schools. In this follow-up-process the use of online-tools provided in Office365 could be very helpful.

However, it is believed that for the above (2.) mentioned reasons the approach and structure of all these trainings/guidelines have to be carefully developed and could be quite different depending on the subject concerned.

II. Possible re-scheduling of the implementation calendar

If the opinion of the Pedagogical Boards regarding part I. is positive, it could be discussed whether the preparatory phase of the coming few months is still considered as being sufficient or whether the implementation calendar should be re-scheduled.

The Board of Inspectors (Secondary) as well as the Joint Teaching Committee is invited to express their opinions on the following possibilities:

- A. The additional trainings/development of guidelines can be scheduled within the foreseen timeframe, because the period after the general trainings in Feb-April (April till June) would be enough time to do so. If “starting-problems” happen in S1-S5, there is still a whole school year to go for adjustment and clarification before the new marking scale will be introduced in Sept. 2018 for S6, a far more crucial and sensitive year: It is part of the Bacca-laureate cycle and many students apply for university studies with their results of S6.
- B. The additional trainings cannot be scheduled within the limited time-frame. They should be spread over a whole school year to have enough time to prepare for the best possible implementation. Therefore it would be necessary to postpone its implementation for one year.

There seem to be 2 sub-options for option B:

1. There is a serious concern that a delay in the implementation process of the new marking scale could have a negative impact. Therefore it is a possible alternative to postpone the entry into force for one year and start for S1-S6 in September 2018 and – as already foreseen – in September 2019 for S7, so that the first Bacca-laureate session according to the new marking scale would still be in 2020.
2. There is a serious concern that implementing the new marking scale right from the beginning also for S6 could mean an unnecessary risk, since S6 is already part of the Bacca-laureate cycle and many students apply for university studies with their results of S6. Therefore it is a possible alternative to introduce the new marking scale for S1-S5 in September 2018, for S6 in September 2019 and in September 2020 for S7, so that the first Bacca-laureate session

according to the new marking scale would be in 2021, instead of 2020 as is scheduled now.

The Board of Inspectors and the Joint Teaching Committee are invited to express their opinion to the above listed proposals and options.

The proposal will be then forwarded with a financial statement to the Budgetary Committee and to the Board of Governors for decision.

Opinion of the Board of Inspectors (Secondary)

The inspectors had a common understanding regarding the necessity of additional measures/trainings in cases where it is needed in order to implement the new marking scale properly and flawlessly. The inspectors agreed on expressing their specific needs following the reunion in order to keep up with the implementation timeline. (I. Point).

Even though some inspectors expressed their concerns, the Board of inspectors (Secondary) agreed that any additional training would not affect the foreseen timeframe of the implementation process and the scheduled date of the entry into force, that is from September 2017 in S1-S5, from September 2018 in S6 and from September 2019 in S7 (1st Bacculaureate session in 2020). Therefore they did not recommend to postpone the entry into force (Option II.A.).

Opinion of the Joint Teaching Committee

The Joint Teaching Committee took note of the document. With the exception of COSUP, there was a strong commitment and a common agreement that the new marking scale was a major step forward and was not to be questioned. The work done by the Inspectors and the working group to prepare for the new marking scale's introduction had been carried out and would continue. However,

- All the stakeholders involved supported the proposal of modification, of the implementation process. Implementation of the new marking scale would start from September 2018 for S1-S6, with the first Bacculaureate still scheduled for 2020, according to option II.B.1.
- additional implementation measures, which were structured and planned by the Inspectors concerned, would start immediately and would be continued in the 2017-2018 school year.

INTERPARENTS expressed a favourable opinion on modification of the implementation process, but strongly opposed to this timeline, of option II.B.1. For them, the new marking scale should not enter into force for S6 in the first year of its introduction. They prefer a 'cohort-approach' in which the introduction of the new scale starts in the first cycle and then 'grows' into the system year by year.

The document would be forwarded with a financial statement to the Budgetary Committee for its opinion and to the Board of Governors for a final decision.

Opinion of the Budgetary Committee:

The Budgetary Committee expressed a favourable opinion on the proposal put forward by the JTC. On the other hand, the Spanish delegation drew attention to and supported the opinion expressed by the Board of Inspectors (Secondary). Interparents supported the change to the time schedule but also proposed that a three-phase approach be maintained.

Proposal to the Board of Governors:

The Budgetary Committee invites the Board of Governors to examine the proposals made in point 3 of the document and to take account of the opinions expressed by the different Committees as set out above, in order to be able to take a final decision.

