

Assessment Policy

Introduction to VLC's Approach to Assessment

At VLC our approach to assessment is inclusive and accessible for all our students. We recognise the importance of accurate assessment, capturing progress and thorough preparation for external examinations. At VLC, we are creative with assessment. When assessing students, we consider motivation, wellbeing, emotional triggers, confidence and ability of each individual learner.

One to One Continuous Assessment makes us unique

At VLC, the ratio of quality teaching staff to students is second to none. In this way, our students are continually assessed and receive direct and immediate feedback at all times whilst learning. There is no more effective or bespoke feedback. Staff are trained to “diagnose”. They continually identify specific areas for improvement and plan specifically to help with these.

Achievement Ladder

We recognise that for some of our students, exam style papers can be a trigger for negative emotions and behaviours. As such, we celebrate progress towards the ability to complete formal academic tests in small steps. This is one area in which we can prepare students for return to mainstream schooling. The aim is to give students who find formal tests a challenge, the strategies they need to be confident and to accept and act on feedback. Our ladder is attached below. The steps are numbered and each student will be given a number on the ladder. Despite, often, severe anxiety around assessment, we are proud that the vast majority of our students will progress towards completing full mocks, in exam conditions prior to external examinations.

Baseline Assessment

When a student first begins with us at VLC, it is expected that they complete a Baseline Assessment. The purposes for this:

1. To identify a position on our achievement ladder.
2. Diagnosis. Students have often missed significant time in education and are all too aware that they are falling behind their peers. We identify ‘gaps in learning’ which, in turn, allows staff to create a bespoke plan for learning to address these.
3. To provide a baseline (alongside the academic information provided by commissioners) by which we can measure progress.

For students who are higher on our Achievement Ladder, the Assessment is traditional and written. Other students, especially more vulnerable ones, might not realise they are completing an assessment. The questions are presented in a non-threatening way, and are often given one by one, dependent on the confidence of the learner.

Academic Progress Checks

We check progress towards a GCSE grade each half term. For students able to access exam-style questions, they are encouraged to work through a mock, or one or two mock based questions at GCSE, or formal written assessment at KS3. For those students who are yet able to access exam-style question papers (please see the “Achievement Ladder” paragraph). Staff work with the students creatively to find a therapeutic approach to the assessment. This might mean completing questions in an exercise book, or being given questions that are worded more accessibly, or might be presented in a non-threatening way.

Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Health and Wellbeing (WEMWBS) Scale

At VLC we recognise that a large part of our therapeutic and positive approach supports students with their wellbeing and mental health. We are part of the WEMWBS project and use their 14-point wellness scale. Students revisit this each half term. The maximum score would be 80. Students answer this in confidence, but if we are concerned about any findings, we would report them using the Green Form system.

Exercise Book Marking and Feedback

VLC take every opportunity to recognise, state and praise all our students in every aspect of their 'life' at the centre.

Staff are trained and expected to give specific feedback in regards to students learning. **FAR** marking is adopted:

- States a key skill or learning outcome that is **Fantastic**
- Gives students a specific **Action** to complete in order to challenge them, further their learning and consolidate prior learning
- Allows for the student to **Respond** to this action.

Reponse time: Pupils must be given time to reflect on learning. Pupils should respond to The "Action" feedback.

Pupils should be also given time to reflect on their own work on a very regular and frequent basis. Modelling and criteria grids should be used in order to facilitate this.

Data Capturing

VLC captures both qualitative and quantitative data, from assessments where possible.