Guidelines for Assessment
Guidelines for Assessment in *English Discoveries Online*

**Introduction**

A blend of delivery methods calls for a blend of assessment tools. *English Discoveries Online* provides teachers with a wide range of tools to carry out both Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment. Edusoft’s computerized placement tests, local quizzes, and printable exit tests provide traditional quantitative assessment tools, freeing up time for the teacher to devise qualitative, continuous forms of classroom assessment, based on projects and portfolio work, in which students apply target language to simulated contexts. Completion and time on task reports help provide teachers with a more complete picture of their students’ progress, while online communication tools such as email and forums can also be incorporated into qualitative assessment tasks. *English Discoveries Online* further supports alternative assessment approaches by providing suggested rubrics and checklists for teachers to share with their students.

**Placement Test**

Edusoft’s English language Placement Test was designed to place students at the appropriate level of Edusoft’s online courses and CD products. The Placement Test aims to provide:

- Placement which is both time-effective and accurate
- Balanced picture of students’ English skills
- Introduction to the format and content of *English Discoveries Online* courses
- Positive test-taking environment

The test is comprised of three sections: Reading, Listening, and Grammar.

**Format**

- The test is adaptive – all students begin at the same level and the number of tests they take depends on their knowledge of English.
- The test offers students a choice between a localized version and an English-only version. The localized features are the help and instructions.
- There are a total of nine tests (one for each of the nine levels: Basic 1-3, Intermediate 1-3, and Advanced 1-3). Each test is comprised of ten questions.
- The test should take a minimum of 15 minutes for students at the Basic 1 level to 40 minutes for advanced students (who are able to take more tests based on their knowledge of English).

**Results**

- The results are analyzed by the system and presented in the form of a histogram along with a recommended starting level (one of nine levels).
- Students can read about the course in which they have been placed and express a preference for a higher or lower course.
• Students’ Placement Test results and preferences are recorded in the Teachers Management System where they can be referred to for the purpose of assigning courses.

• Results are correlated with TOEFL and TOEIC scores and are incorporated in the Study Planner.

Component Tests

The program provides students with the opportunity to check their comprehension of each component. The tests are basically short quizzes that focus on the main points of the Explore mode. Results are presented in the form of a percentage grade and a written comment. The passing grade for these tests is set in the Teachers Management System. It is important for students to realize that the Practice exercises will help them succeed in the Test and to make sure that they do not skip them. The component tests provide students and teachers with an efficient method of formative assessment which is particularly rewarding for students as they receive instant feedback on their scores, as well as being provided with the opportunity to check their mistakes and retake tests in order to improve their average score.

Self-Evaluation: My Progress and Study Planner

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by using the Study Planner, which will enable them to create a personal study plan based on the number of hours they want to study per week, the level of English they want to achieve, and the amount of time they can devote to their course of study. On the student side, the Study Planner appears on the English Discoveries Online home page in the form of a graphic representation of his/her progress in relation to the plan. The student has the option of creating and updating the study plan throughout the course.

The My Progress reports allow students to assess their progress at all times. Student progress is calculated in terms of completion of course material and component test results. Students also receive an average completion and test score for each unit and overall progress for the course they are taking. Student progress is also calculated in terms of components and students can view an alternative breakdown based on their progress in the different Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Grammar sections.

Community Site

English Discoveries Online Community Site enables students to develop their online communication skills in an environment that has been specifically designed with their needs in mind. The online students’ community provides opportunities for authentic communication where students can develop important skills such as providing and asking for information, negotiating, clarifying, turn taking, etc. The amount of time students spend on the different features is recorded in the Teacher Management System, enabling teachers to keep track of students’ participation. Participation in the Community Site activities, such as writing emails, joining in chat sessions, and posting forum messages, can be turned into an additional requirement of their course of study and incorporated into a final grade. Community Site activities can also be developed into projects or written presentation tasks which can be assessed qualitatively by the teacher (see below for more information).
TMS Reports

In a computer-assisted language setting, it is important to keep track of students’ progress, as each student is able to work at his/her own pace and may have a choice of tasks. The Teachers Management System allows teachers to follow their students’ progress and provides a variety of different reports for individual students and whole classes so teachers can track the rate at which students complete their assignments and the average test scores that they receive.

The TMS provides the following reports:

- Placement Test Reports
- Class Summary Reports
- Student Progress
- Class Completion
- Class Test Scores
- Class Summary
- Unit Overview
- Time On Task

The reports help teachers pinpoint their students’ abilities and/or weaknesses. You can use the information provided by the reports to direct the students to additional material in areas that need reinforcement or to features in the program that could help them in those areas.

The Assessment Section

The Assessment Section in the Teacher Management System provides a range of printable qualitative and quantitative assessment tools to supplement those provided by the online program.

**Qualitative Assessment Tools**

**Rubrics**

A rubric is a scoring guide used in qualitative assessments. A rubric can be an explicit description of performance characteristics corresponding to a point on a rating scale. A scoring rubric makes explicit expected qualities of performance on a rating scale or the definition of a single scoring point on a scale.

- Use the rubrics as a guideline to assess your students’ oral and written presentation skills, and adapt where and when suitable.
- Share rubrics with students at the start of an activity in order to provide clear guidelines or criteria for assessment.
- Share rubrics with students after the project has been submitted and assessed in order to provide students with a list of their strengths and weaknesses.
Projects

We suggest expanding on work done in *English Discoveries Online* with class projects involving both offline and online collaborative tasks. Ideally, the projects should provide a choice of tasks, which take into account different learner styles and intelligences. Projects provide students with the opportunity to synthesize what they have learned in the unit and allow for the reentry of the content and language functions associated with the topic. The criteria for assessment of the project can be set by the teacher and/or negotiated with the students. These criteria serve both as a checklist for work in progress as well as a tool for self/peer/teacher assessment. At the end of the project, students should be encouraged to reflect and give feedback on both the process and the product of the project. The assessment section provides a suggested project for each of the nine *English Discoveries Online* courses.

Teaching Suggestions:

- Read the project (title, task, procedure) and ensure that its level, topic, and objectives match your course objectives and content.
- Divide the class into small groups. Present the project in class allowing students to ask clarifying questions.
- Stress equal contribution by all group members, although you may want to assign different tasks to individuals within the group such as secretary, researcher, presenter etc.
- Allow a midway meeting with each group to check progress and offer advice.
- Communicate with students on a regular basis using *English Discoveries Online* Communication Tools to answer questions and check progress.
- Use the checklists and rubrics provided to assess oral and written presentations.

Role Plays

Role plays provide an effective classroom activity for developing students’ speaking skills. They can also be employed as a tool for assessing students’ speaking competence although it is important to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere when assessing role plays so that students will not feel intimidated and under perform.

Teaching Suggestions

- Read the role play and ensure that its level, topic, and language functions match your course objectives and content.
- Present the role play in class allowing students to ask clarifying questions.
- Provide an estimated time limit.
- Students take part in an observed role play with another student or the teacher.
- Assessment is based on students’ interaction and use of appropriate language. Use the Rubrics for Assessing Oral Presentation to assess student performance.
- Alternatively, you can ask for volunteers to act out their role play in front of the class and give a more general grade for participation.
Quantitative Assessment Tools

Exit Tests

Achievement tests for each of the nine levels are available on the Teachers section of the TMS. Teachers can download the tests and administer them as “paper and pencil” tests in the classroom after students have completed a level. The tests include two reading comprehension passages, grammar questions, and a short writing task all related to the units in the course. Answer keys for the teacher are available. The answer keys also include criteria for assessing the writing task.

Teaching Suggestions:

• Have students take the relevant Exit Test at the end of their course,
• Correct the tests and return them to students as soon as possible,
• Note common errors, present them in class, and have students identify and correct the errors.

Integrating English Discoveries Online Assessment with your Local Institution’s Assessment Program

English Discoveries Online assessment tools can be combined with other forms of assessment to provide a complete picture of student progress and level. Assuming that an institution has an assessment system in place, a four-part student profile can be created comprising of:

• English Discoveries Online reports generated by the TMS
• Project work and role plays
• Non-linguistic assessment such as participation, motivation, attendance, and course completion
• Classroom-based local assessment such as quizzes, tests, homework, and oral interviews

The following diagram illustrates the structure of this form of assessment. The weightings percentage shown is one example of generating this four-part model. The actual weightings of the components should be guided by the local school policy and the extent to which English Discoveries Online contributes to the English language curriculum. In the example shown below, English Discoveries Online and related activities (presentations, role plays, etc.) form 50% of the actual English program and therefore a total weighting of 50% is applied to that aspect of the assessment. The remaining 50% weighting is devoted to the non-linguistic assessment and local classroom assessment.
The sample student grade sheet above shows all four components of the assessment. The color coding sections make it easy for both teachers and students to read the document. It is important that during a student’s orientation session, the assessment model is made explicit. The student should be made aware of course requirements in terms of *English Discoveries Online* and other grades, attendance, course completion, and institutional assessments. Students should be provided with a copy of the assessment document to which they can refer.