

1. The context

Ambitious College uses a person-centred approach to assessment. Assessment is an intrinsic part of the learner journey in the College. At Ambitious College we believe that young people should be involved in their assessment and it is a process that is 'done with' learners, as opposed to 'done to' learners.

The purpose of assessment at Ambitious College is to:

- Provide a context in which learners with autism can demonstrate what they understand
- Provide motivation, challenge and encouragement to learners to ensure progress
- Develop learners understanding of what he/she needs to do to progress
- Provide baseline measures to ensure that teaching and learning challenges our learners and gives us the appropriate starting point from which to measure progress
- Inform planning and target setting
- Track and monitor learner progress
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Gather and report information for learners, parents, colleagues and outside agencies

2. When do we assess?

Pre enrolment assessment involves the learner, parents/carers and wider professionals involved in the young person's life. It is a process that supports the learner, parents and carers to make an informed decision about whether they want to proceed with the referral process and for the College to make an informed decision as to whether we can best meet the young person's assessed need.

The pre enrolment assessment process usually involves attendance at one of the Colleges Parent Open Days, completion of a Professionals Questionnaire and a Parent/Carers Questionnaire and a visit to observe the young person in their current educational provision and/ or home.

From this the College Admissions Panel (consisting of the Senior Leadership Team) will make a decision to offer a place or not.

Initial (or baseline) assessment takes place in the first six weeks of the academic year or the first six weeks of when a learner's placement commences. We assess learner's current skills set in order to make sure we have a solid foundation from which we can measure progress. We also take account of what is set out in the learner's most up to date Education, Health and Care Plan. (EHCP)

Formative assessment is ongoing assessment of learning. It is used to support learners understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This is a continuous process in the college. Staff take daily notes to share with parents and carers in the handover at the end of a college day. Half termly trans disciplinary team meetings take place to discuss how learners are progressing against the targets set out in Individual Learning Plans and these targets are reviewed and reset at the TDT termly meetings.

Summative assessment is assessment of learning. It is used to assess a learner's progress after a set period of time. The results of summative assessment inform the

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setting of new smart targets and also informs the learner's annual review meeting and end of year report.

3. Why do we assess?

We assess learners to allow us to get a picture of their current skills set which in turn allows us to set targets which we can monitor progress against.

Assessment is a key component of effective teaching and learning. Assessment affects decisions about support needs, personalised curriculum, and, in some cases, funding.

Assessment inspires us to ask questions such as:

- "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?"
- "Are learners learning what they are supposed to be learning?"
- "Is there a way to teach more effectively, thereby promoting better learning?"

4. What are we assessing?

- Current skills set against subject areas for courses: Engagement and Interaction, Maximum Independence and Preparing for Employment.
- How a learner learns
- Adaptive behaviours
- Barriers to learning
- Maths/Numeracy
- English\Literacy
- Communication
- Occupational Therapy needs
- Speech and Language Therapy needs (appendix 1)
- Any other special needs

5. What assessment tools do we use?

What are we assessing?	The tools we use:
Key skills for subjects on each curriculum course	Baseline assessment tools and key skill areas set out in course curriculum packs
Behaviour	VB Map and Assessment for Functional Living Skills
Literacy and numeracy	The pre entry level curriculum framework, the adult literacy and numeracy core curriculum diagnostic tools
Communication/SaLT (see Appendix 1)	Essentials for Living Assessment, against the milestones set out in the Pre entry level curriculum framework, using a SLT, Adaptive Behaviour Scales
Occupational Therapy Assessments	Beery VMI for visual motor integration- hand eye coordination; Sensory Profile assessment-sensory processing; Functional based assessment (specific to the individual); Observations in the classroom and community; Self-care questionnaire for parents/guardians.

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6. How do we record progress?

Through formative and summative assessment, we can make informed decisions about the distance a learner has travelled with us.

The results of formative and summative assessment are recorded in a Learner's Evidence File and shared within a multi-agency, trans disciplinary annual review meeting held annually.

For some learner's progress can be measured against learning outcomes set out in accredited learning opportunities. The college is registered with OCN London and we use their Personal Progression Pathways. Where learning is non accredited we use RARPA¹ both as a means of recording progress and quality assurance (appendix 2)

7. How do we report on progress?

All staff have a responsibility for reporting on progress and achievement – our learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and learning throughout the college day and not just in formal teaching time.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring progress is evidenced. This will normally be done in Databridge, the college Management Information System (MIS). The central point for recording progress and achievement is the Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Transdisciplinary Team Meetings focus on discussing learners and their progress.

Learners have an annual review meeting each year and an end of year report. Parents and carers are involved in this process as are other professionals involved in the young person's life.

Staff undertake training in person centred planning to ensure learners' voices are heard throughout the assessment process.

¹ Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement

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Speech and Language Therapy Our Approach to Assessment

1. Context

Ambitious College is a specialist day college for young people with autism. The learners at the college have a variety of needs. They all present with different levels of attention and listening, understanding of language, expressive language and social skills. Therefore, there is a wide range of speech, language and communication ability.

Communication is one of the fundamental building blocks of society. It is the means by which people relate to each other, learn from each other, express their unique identities and become included in their families and their wider communities.

The highest form of human communication is through the use of a common language – the ability to represent meaning symbolically through speech and the written word and to share that meaning with others.

As an individual develops from childhood to adulthood and their experience widens into different environments, language normally develops to represent ever more complex, subtle and abstract concepts, initially through the spoken word and later through reading and writing.

Learners at Ambitious College may find it difficult to utilise these forms of communication. They may make use of a wide range of strategies to communicate their wants, needs, ideas, feelings and thoughts, including:

- facial expression, gesture or eye-pointing
- tactile communication or objects of reference
- signing systems such as *Makaton*
- symbol systems, such as PECS
- pictures, including everyday photographs or more formal systems
- information and communication technology (ICT)
- sounds and the spoken word
- communication books and passports

A Total Communication Environment Approaches like the ones mentioned above may be used in addition to (or to augment) speech sounds or instead of (or as an alternative to) conventional speaking and listening. These approaches provide alternative ways of representing meaning symbolically, for example through signing or pictures. They offer a 'formal' language which allows people some control when they are still largely dependent on others to give them the relevant vocabulary. Since language only works if it is commonly shared, everyone else in the person's environment(s) needs to share the meaning if the person is to be fully 'included'.

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Communication environments that enable several different strategies to be used are challenging for staff but allow responses to learners with communication difficulties to be highly personalised.

Staff at Ambitious College use a range of appropriate communication approaches to ensure each learner accesses the curriculum and college life to the best of his/her abilities. This is what is termed a 'Total Communication Environment'.

2. Our Approach

Due to the differing degrees of ability, need and methods of communication, the Speech and Language Therapy team at the college uses a flexible and varied approach to assessment.

3. The Process

An initial assessment of a learner's communication skills and needs is carried out by a Speech and Language Therapist within the first six weeks of the learner starting at the college

Assessment at the college is conducted informally as there are no standardised assessment (i.e. norm referenced) for our learner cohort. Therefore, a mix of observations and observation check lists, informal but structured activities, published assessments (where appropriate) and discussions with staff and parents are used to gather a baseline for the learners' skills in the following areas:

- Attention and listening
- Understanding of language
- Understanding of visual support
- Use of language
- Use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Social skills and interactions

Observations take place during lessons, lunch times and any leisure time the learners have at the college. These are useful contexts as it allows for assessment of skills and needs within real situations that are purposeful to the learner.

The following is assessed during observations:

- Environment and ability to cope with the environment – distractible, appropriate for learning, communication friendly.
- Interactions with peers and staff- duration, frequency, type.
- Initiation of communication – requesting, rejecting, social interaction, commenting.
- How much support learners need to attend to tasks and instructions and what strategies staff are/are not using to support this.

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- The length of instruction that the learner can follow and what strategies staff are/are not using to support this.
- The type of words that the learner can understand and those they can't – familiar, high frequency, nouns, adjective, concepts etc.
- The length of utterances they are using, their purpose and structure – single words, full sentences etc.
- Use of AAC to support communication and independence levels.

Information from initial assessments is used for setting baselines for skills and setting appropriate targets in collaboration with the Learners family and the transdisciplinary team. This information and detailed results of the assessments are written in an Initial Assessment Report which is shared with the learner's parents/carers and the team around them. It details what has been agreed regarding what levels the learner is at, their targets and strategies for supporting their current needs and developing their communication skills.

A summary of the learner's needs is also written in a Communication Passport, which is a one page document that staff can use for quick reference. This is a useful tool for people engaging with learners.

Ongoing assessment happens throughout the term through observations and discussions with staff. Data is collected for specific targets so progress can be monitored. Targets for learners can be updated and reviewed at any time to ensure flexibility in meeting the learners needs. It also ensures they continue to make progress if their targets are achieved before a scheduled review.

Attached are details of the observation checklists and published assessments that are used and why they are used.

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Assessment Name	Type of Assessment	What it assesses	Considerations for use
Module 9	Observation checklist created by the charity Scope.	All areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties • Sets communication skills in to levels using the Milestones curriculum framework • The results can be seen in a diagram to show whether all or most of the skills at each level have been achieved for quick reference and identification of areas that need to be developed • Can be carried out during observation or by someone who knows the learners well.
Renfrew Action Picture Test	Published assessment	Use of spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at sentence length and structure as well as the amount of relevant information the learner uses spontaneously • Can be used in conjunctions with the Blank Levels of Questioning to look at inferencing and reasoning skills. • This assessment is quick and can easily be broken up in chunks if the learner can not cope with doing the whole assessment in one go. • Simple resources so not distractible • The pictures are on separate flash cards so can be presented one at a time to help with attention. • Needs to be carried out in a 1:1 situation
Blank Levels of Questioning	Checklist	Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used as a reference in any activity or setting • Useful baseline for staff to refer to. • Gives clear guidance for next steps. • Useful tool to consider when rephrasing directions to learners when they have difficulty understanding.
Pre-School Language Test	Published assessment	Understanding and spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good screening assessment to look at levels • Has a clear checklist of skills so easy to see level and also sets out next steps. • Uses objects to assess so learners have something tangible – gives it more of a purpose and helps with motivation and attention. • Needs to be carried out in a 1:1 setting.

Appendix 2 – The RARPA Approach in Ambitious College

Ambitious College is committed to providing high quality, learner focused teaching and learning and recognises the benefits of an embedded RARPA process for learners, teachers and the service as a whole. Through a robust quality system Ambitious College quality assures the five stages of RARPA throughout its learning offer.

Ambitious College map the RARPA standards to the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), as detailed below, which are used as a basis for the weekly Trans-Disciplinary Team meetings.

RARPA standard	CIF reference(s)
<p>Stage 1 Clearly stated aims for all programmes appropriate to an individual learner or group of learners</p>	<p>Individual learning programmes challenge learners to develop their independence and prepare them for their future.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point</p>	<p>Staff identify learners' support and additional learning needs quickly and accurately through effective initial assessment.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives</p>	<p>Teaching, learning and assessment are tailored to enable all learners to make good progress and prepare for their next steps.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Recognising and recording progress and achievement during the programme (formative assessment)</p>	<p>Staff assess learners' progress and performance and ensure that assessments and reviews are timely, frequent, fair, informative and reliable</p>
<p>Stage 5 End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor assessment; review of overall progress and achievement (summative assessment)</p>	<p>Learner's gain skills and progress to become more independent in their everyday life and/or progress to positive destinations such as employment</p>

How RARPA is implemented at Ambitious College

RARPA standard	College Implementation
<p>Stage 1 Clearly stated aims for all programmes appropriate to an individual learner or group of learners</p>	<p>In consultation with learner/parent/carer and relevant documentation, a personalised study programme is created for each learner.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point</p>	<p>Six week assessment period on entry to college to determine learners' needs through baseline and functional skills assessments.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives</p>	<p>Results of assessments are reviewed at the Trans-disciplinary Team meeting; this informs the Individual Learning Plan and forms the individualised timetable based on the college curriculum: Preparing for Adulthood.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Recognising and recording progress and achievement during the programme (formative assessment)</p>	<p>The Trans-disciplinary Team review learner progress termly. A learner will have a person centred annual review meeting and an end of year report to review progress.</p>
<p>Stage 5 End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor assessment; review of overall progress and achievement (summative assessment)</p>	<p>Each learner has a person centred annual review and an end of year report and is supported through the Trans-disciplinary team with the transition out of college. Qualification(s) are claimed if appropriate.</p>