

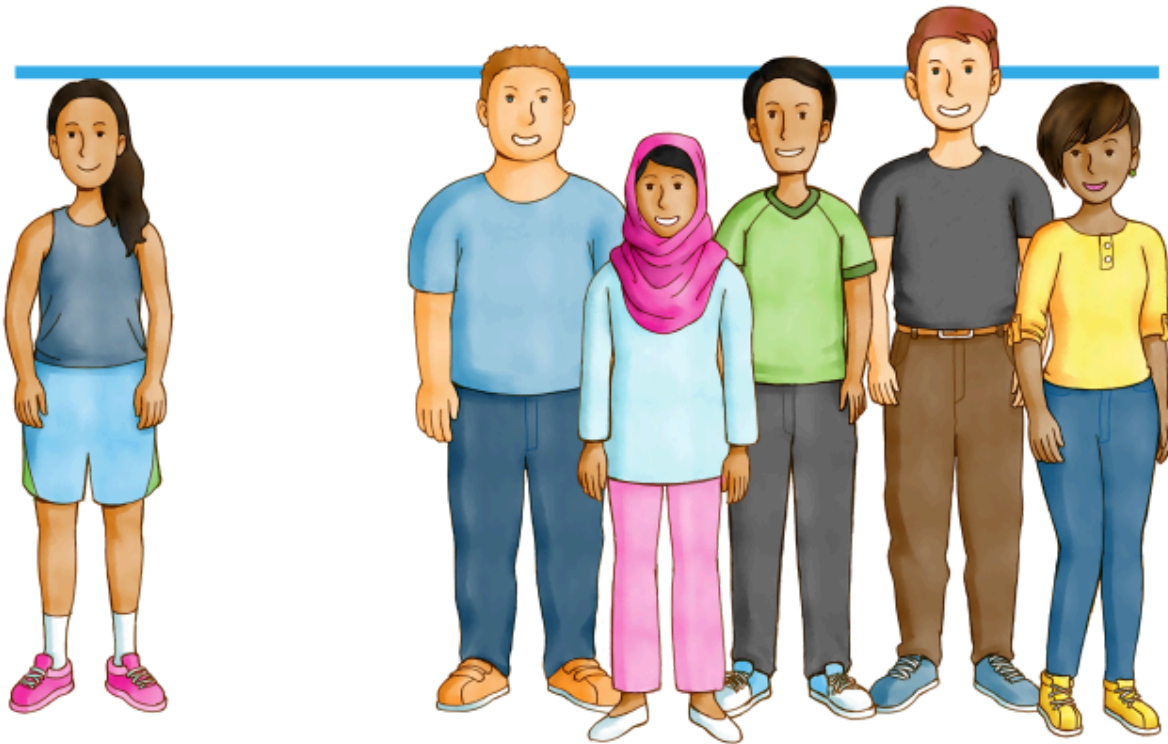
DOMREMY COLLEGE

ALLOCATING GRADES

With Semester 1 Reports being prepared we thought it would be opportune to take a closer look at how grades are allocated to students in Years 7 to 10.

Most of us grew up in the era when schools allocated grades based on *norm-referencing* principles. This method awards grades on the basis of student **ranking** within a particular cohort. Norm-referencing involves fitting a ranked list of students' 'raw scores' to a predetermined distribution for awarding grades. Usually, grades are spread to fit a 'bell curve'.

Norm-referenced tests compare a student's performance against the performance of their peers.



This method of grade allocation is long gone now with NESA adopting a standards-referenced approach. *Standards-referencing* or *criterion-referencing*, as the name implies, involves determining a student's grade by comparing his or her achievements with clearly stated criteria for learning outcomes and clearly

stated standards for particular levels of performance. Unlike norm-referencing, there is no predetermined grade distribution to be generated and a student's grades are in no way influenced by the performance of others.



Criterion-referenced tests compare a student's knowledge and skills against a predetermined standard, cut score, or other criterion.

In criterion-referenced tests, the performance of other students does not affect a student's score.

Schools in NSW use a standards-referenced approach to report student achievement. Achievement standards are based on what students are expected to learn and how well they have achieved. Grades are not determined or influenced by a student's attitude to learning or learning profile.

The NSW syllabuses state the intended learning for students by the end of each stage. A to E grade scales describe how well students have achieved. Teachers make professional on-balance judgements to decide which grade description best matches the standards their students have achieved at a particular point in time. These decisions are based on evidence of achievement and information teachers have collected during the teaching and learning cycle. While we do consider evidence garnered from assessment tasks,

teachers use a variety of other evidence to determine grades from learning activities, observations and other methods of assessment that are collected over time and in different situations.

Teachers do not award lower grades to students in the lower year in a stage, for example, a student in Year 7 is not limited to a D or C purely because they are at the beginning of a stage. Decisions are made based on student achievement of the learning in which they have participated up to that point in time.

To ensure the accuracy of our report grades teachers follow a process of 'moderation' to ensure that grades awarded are consistent with published standards. This means that the grade a student receives in one school can be compared to the same grade anywhere in NSW. Teachers moderate their judgements by comparing work samples for their students with samples aligned to grades A to E.

The Common Grade Scale shown below is used to report student achievement in both primary and junior secondary years in all NSW schools and describes performance at each of the five grade levels.

Grade	Description
A	The student has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.
B	The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.
C	The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.
D	The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
E	The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.

At a school like Domremy that focuses on student growth, report grades are never an endpoint. They are an indicator of a student's achievement at a point in time and should not be considered in isolation. This is why we encourage parents and students to meet with us at Parent/Student/Teacher Interviews to discuss learning goals and formulate strategies for improvement.