

HELENA COLLEGE

Bringing out the best together



Glen Forrest Campus Homework Guidelines (6-12)



Scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to clarify for parents, students and teachers why the College values homework as part of each student's learning, the common types of homework, an indication of the time a student can expect to dedicate to homework and how the homework is communicated between teacher, student and parents.

Throughout the document, reference is made to *homework*. This is, generally, a specific task or tasks set by a teacher with a due date associated with it and will be checked or marked during class time after the due date has passed. Reference is also made to *individual study*. These are ongoing activities that form part of a student's work activities outside normal classes. This could be, but not limited to, reading a novel, practising a language using a CD, using an online application such as *Mathletics* to practise numeracy etc. This would be included in the suggested time spent on homework and may occur more regularly at times when a student has less homework and may be temporarily left to one side at busier times eg when a number of assignments are close to a due date or a senior student is specifically preparing for a series of examinations.

Sections

- Benefits of homework
- The purpose of homework
- Types of homework
- Time spent on homework
- Expectations of students, parents and teachers
- Communication associated with homework between home and school

Benefits of homework

Compared to other aspects of school life, there has been comparatively little detailed research into the benefits of homework. What research exists seems to draw the conclusion that both no homework and significantly large amounts of homework can lead to a negative impact on student achievement. A moderate amount of regular, meaningful homework appears to have the maximum impact on student achievement with the least impact in the earlier years increasing to a significant impact on student achievement in the final years of schooling. Also, the quality of the homework has a much greater positive impact than the quantity, so in essence, to maximise student achievement through homework there must be some homework which should be of moderate duration but high quality on a regular basis, gradually increasing in length and complexity as the student moves through their years of study.

The purpose of homework

Homework serves a range of purposes which vary according to the subject, the age and ability of the student and the stage in the academic year. In general, regular homework irrespective of the subject from which it comes, provides students with the opportunity to improve and develop lifelong skills such as time management, establishes a habit of individual study, self-discipline and concentration, strengthens links between home and school and provides parents and caregivers an insight into what is being taught in the classroom.

Types of homework

Homework can be categorised into:

- Practice exercises – giving the student the opportunity to apply and consolidate new knowledge and skills.
- Preparatory homework – providing students with opportunities to gain background information to allow for better preparation for a future lesson or lessons
- Research and extension assignments – providing students with the opportunity to pursue knowledge individually and with imagination, sometimes over a more extended period of time.
- Individual study – this will often be set up at the beginning of the academic year by teachers and students would be encouraged to undertake individual study whenever formal, set homework allows.

eg on an evening where a student has completed set homework early, he/she may choose to read a novel, practise language skills or spend time on an educational application such as *Mathletics* to improve their numeracy.

To maximise the benefit of the various types of homework, parents and caregivers should be aware of the homework and support the student with their homework (see below). Homework tasks should be explicitly explained by the teacher, particularly in the earlier years, should have a clear timeframe and should be marked or checked during class time.

Time spent on homework

As stated in the introduction, a moderate amount of homework is generally believed to have a maximal impact on student achievement and, whilst it is the quality and not the quantity that matters, it is important for teachers, students and parents to have an agreed expectation of what is a reasonable amount of homework. Students should have the opportunity to balance their homework with other activities such as sport, recreation, external learning (such as a musical instrument) and leisure time.

Below are some guidelines as to what is a reasonable expectation based on a student's stage at school. Generally, the expected time spent on homework will gradually increase, particularly as a student enters Years 11-12, but varying amounts of homework will occur at different times of the academic year, sometimes between students and between subjects. It is important that there is clear and early communication between home and school if there are concerns about the amount of time spent on homework. This could be due to students not devoting enough time and equally some students who regularly spend significantly more time than outlined below.

Year	Time per day	Frequency	Weekly total time
Year 6	30 minutes	4 -5 times a week	2-2.5 hours
Year 7	45 minutes	4 -5 times a week	3-3.75 hours
Year 8	60 minutes	4 -5 times a week	4-5 hours
Year 9	60-90 minutes	4 -5 times a week	4-7.5 hours
Year 10	60-90 minutes	4 -5 times a week	4-7.5 hours
Years 11-12 (mainly General)	90 minutes	4 - 5 times a week	6-7.5 hours*
Years 11-12 (mainly ATAR)	120-150 minutes	6-7 times a week	12-15.5 hours*

*includes 3.75 hours private study

Students in Years 11-12 receive 5 periods each week at school during which time they could be completing homework tasks. This time totals to almost 4 hours per week. Also, Years 11-12 students who are working in mainly ATAR subjects, will certainly require more time studying at home as they prepare for the examinations at the end of each semester in Year 11, the Semester One examinations in Year 12 and the mock and final WACE examinations towards the end of Year 12. Time management at these times can be challenging and every student is encouraged to create a study programme leading up to each of the examination sessions.

Expectations of students, parents and teachers

In order for the benefits of homework to be maximised, it is essential that there is a common, shared understanding between students, parents and teachers.

Students are gradually introduced to homework from the commencement of Year 6. The aim is for students to form good study habits, early. Time management is a vital skill that should be learnt and students are encouraged from the very beginning, not to leave homework until the last minute and ensure that they are

doing all they can to stay on top of their homework. It is important that, if they are experiencing difficulties with their homework, they communicate that at an early stage rather than waiting until the due date. Teachers will set homework and students will be expected to develop strategies to record what is set and when it is due. This could be done using the 'to do' list as part of SEQTA's Learn package or students may prefer to use one of the commercially available diaries.

For parents, homework is an opportunity to gain an insight into what a student is working on during their time at school. Parental support for homework is an important aspect and research suggests that, where parents show an ongoing interest in their child's homework the student is more likely to complete homework and to a higher standard. There is, however, a fine line beyond which parental support is counter-productive. Parents should aim to provide a student with a regular location where they complete their homework with minimal distraction. Ideally, this should not be a student's bedroom, a better option being the family room with TV and music off and at a regular time. The same time every day is a good habit to adopt, but other commitments may require a more flexible schedule. For students in the more junior years, parental assistance with time management may be required, but as the students move into the senior years the students themselves should become more adept at managing their own time. Parents should also monitor time spent on homework (see guidelines above) and if they have concerns about a student either consistently doing too little homework or equally too much homework contact with the College is advised.

Teachers value homework as a means to maximise contact time in the classroom. This could be giving students preparation work for an upcoming lesson or lessons, practice of a new skill learnt, or practice questions for an upcoming assessment. In every case, homework should be kept manageable meaningful and be followed up in a subsequent class. Teachers should be mindful of individual students and their needs and, where appropriate, teachers should differentiate homework to make it manageable yet challenging for all students. Care should be taken where the homework set is to complete work started in class. This will often leave the most able students with no homework as they will usually complete the task or tasks during class and may also leave less able students with a large amount left to complete at home as they tend to work at a slower pace. It may be preferable, where possible, to set extension and reinforcement homework tasks to support the class work at home.

Where homework consists of ongoing research over, sometimes, a number of weeks, teachers should monitor student progress during class time to ensure they are 'keeping up' and not leaving an unrealistic amount to do in the last few days. If teachers are expecting students to complete individual study on a regular basis it is essential that they make clear at the beginning of the year what is expected in terms of what is to be done, how frequently and for how long as well as what students should do if they are having difficulties with the study. If teachers are concerned with a student's homework it is good practice to communicate the concerns to parents at the earliest opportunity and certainly prior to the publication of a formal report.

Communication associated with homework between home and school

With the range of digital communication available today, there is no longer just one means to communicate information regarding homework. Having said that, it is important that teachers are clear and consistent in communicating homework expectations to all students in their class, taking account the various learning styles in a typical class and the age of the students etc. It is equally important that students develop a means by which they record homework as and when it is set, including a clear due date. Some students may prefer to do this using the range of digital tools available through SEQTA or other digital tools, or may prefer to use some form of paper diary. Help and guidance may be needed in the younger years but students should expect to take greater responsibility for this as they move into their later years at the College. Teachers are encouraged to communicate homework directly to parents where this is seen to be helpful either for the class or for individual students (SEQTA is useful in this regard), again particularly in the younger years. Parents who are finding information regarding homework hard to come by for their child should contact the teacher concerned to ensure that their child is, firstly, receiving homework in that subject and secondly how that homework is being recorded.

The importance of the three-way communication between teacher, student and parent cannot be over emphasised and homework will be most effectively completed where the lines of communication remain open and are used when and where required.

Bibliography

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