

## A. Summary

### 1. What is the purpose of homework for students?

- to achieve a lifelong good work ethic by developing the appropriate attitudes, practices and habits about learning and working while still at school.
- to provide sufficient time each week to fully complete the requirements of the Australian Curriculum and to fully develop each student's potential growth in learning.
- to take ownership of their own learning and develop the attitudes and skills to become an independent learner

### 2. What are the school's homework expectations for all students?

- Years 7 to 9 – 2 hours per week each for EN and MA; 1 hour for each of the other 5 subjects and 1 hour for the student's second co-curriculum ILP [10 hours]
- Year 10 (Pre VCE) – 2 hours per week for each of the six subjects [12 hours]
- Year 11 – 2½ hours per week for each of the six subjects [15 hours]
- Year 12 – 3 hours per week for each of the five subjects [15 hours]

### 3. What do students do in their homework time?

- For all subjects the learning tasks have the same priority order:
  - (i) finishing any work not completed in the class time
  - (ii) working on any homework tasks/assignments/projects set by the teacher so that they can be completed by the due date (specified on Compass)
  - (iii) active revision and preparation just prior to any tests/exams
  - (iv) looking back over previous work to see how it relates to what is currently being learnt. This activity helps you to see the 'big picture' as well as refreshing your memory about previous learning
  - (v) open ended enrichment activities to practise what you have learnt or extend your interest and understanding of related information

### 4. How does the student organise their homework?

- A proforma weekly plan is filled in each term with the assistance of their home group teacher.

## B. Rationale – how we have developed the expectations summarised above:

- Students in most English speaking countries (Aust, NZ, UK, USA) are not achieving their expected learning outcomes compared with students in countries like China, Singapore, Korea, Finland and Canada (according to OECD international PISA testing). The research shows that it is not because the second group are more intelligent, but rather, their societies have strong work ethics and consequently students characteristically spend more time after school working on their school work.
- The VCE has been designed with the expectation that students should spend 100 hours on each semester unit. About 60 hours is provided in class and consequently each student needs to spend another 40 hours of out of class time for each subject for each semester. This corresponds to 2½ to 3 hours per subject each week for students to reasonably achieve the scores they are capable of.
- Surveys of our Year 12 students over the last few years indicate that many of our students do less than the recommended hours and as a consequence achieve actual subject results lower than their predicted subjects scores (calculated from the GAT) i.e. their work ethic is not sufficiently developed for them to be as successful as they could be. In a competitive world that is not good for the individual, for our school, or for our country. Consequently, there will be an increased emphasis placed on Homework at all year levels in 2017
- As a school strategy, Fairhills provides guidelines and support to help students to achieve the attitudes, practices and habits necessary for a good work ethic. We are doing this in a progressive way starting with Year 7 and gradually increasing the expectations as each student matures and progresses to the more sophisticated and challenging learning opportunities contained in the later years of the Australian Curriculum and VCE/VCAL.
- So fundamentally we are saying that for students (of all ability levels) to reasonably achieve their potential, they need to see their schooling each day as 5 hours learning *in class* plus 2 to 3 hours (depending on their year level) further learning *out of class*. This approach also helps the student to take responsibility for their own learning and to move along the pathway to become independent learners.

### C. Homework expectations guidelines

- The first step is for the school to be explicit about the importance and purpose of homework so that students know why they are doing it. We do not provide homework as some form of punishment or for no good reason. The 3 key purposes of homework are:
  - to achieve a lifelong good work ethic by developing the appropriate attitudes, practices and habits about learning and working while still at school
  - to provide sufficient time each week to fully complete the requirements of the Australian Curriculum and to fully develop each student's potential growth in learning
  - to take ownership of their own learning and develop the attitudes and skills to become an independent learner
- The second step is for us to be explicit about how much time needs to be spent on homework (i.e. school work done out of class). Based on our progressive development approach, we have set the following expectations for all students so they gradually build their work ethic and learning capability:
  - Year 7-9 – 2 hours per week each for EN and MA; 1 hour for each of the other 5 subjects and 1 hour for the student's second co-curriculum ILP [a total of 10 hours]
  - Year 10 (Pre VCE) – 2 hours per week for each of the six subjects [12 hours]
  - Year 11 – 2½ hours per week for each of the six subjects [15 hours]
  - Year 12 – 3 hours per week for each of the five subjects [15 hours]
- The third step is to be explicit about what is done in the allocated times. The focus needs to be on tasks that lead to learning rather than just 'busy work'. The time also needs to be used productively with the student actively engaging with the learning rather than just filling in the time or just getting the tasks finished and ticked off as quickly as possible. The types of tasks (for all subjects) in priority order are:
  - finishing any work not completed in class time
  - working on any homework tasks/assignments/projects set by the teacher so they can be completed by the due date (specified on Compass)
  - active revision and preparation just prior to any tests/exams
  - looking back over previous work to see how it relates to what is currently being learnt. This activity helps you to see the 'big picture' as well as refreshing your memory about previous learning
  - open ended enrichment activities to practise what you have learnt or extend your interest and understanding of related information
- The fourth step is to be explicit about when in the week the student is going to do their homework. Each student is provided with a copy of the following weekly plan proforma every term, so that they can plan what will work best for them. The students' home group tutor assists them to fill in the proforma and periodically discusses with them how it is working out and any improvements that could be made. The following is an example for Year 7.

Time slot	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
After school 4.00-6.00	Maths (30) Hum (60)	Eng (30) Food Tech (60)	Maths (30) Eng (30)	Core ILP: Basketball Club	Maths (30) Eng (30)	PE (60)	Catch up (60) -if needed
Meal break	//////	//////	//////	//////	//////		
After tea 7.00-9.00	Sci (60)	Lang (30)	Extra ILP: School Musical (60)	Lang (30) Maths (30) Eng (30)	Youth Group		
<b>Total hours (10)</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	-

Note that for most students, much of the work can be done before tea leaving some time after tea for family activities, TV, phoning friends etc. Other commitments like youth group, part time work, the student's first ILP etc. are also shown in the plan (shaded grey) because this time is not available for doing homework. With the above example, some time is also allocated at the weekend to catch up if something gets missed during the week.

#### D. Common questions and answers from students and parents

*Q1 Can a student spend even more time on homework?*

A1 Yes, if they want to but they should not need to if they are using the recommended times productively. It is also important to learn how to get a good life balance between work and leisure, because too much work can be undesirable.

*Q2 If I spend extra time on one subject can I spend less time on another?*

A2 Occasionally, to get some urgent work completed then this is okay, but overall for the whole term you are advised to keep it balanced so that you make good progress in all of your subjects, not just your favourite ones.

*Q3 What if I have 'a bad week' and don't spend much time on my homework?*

A3 Don't give yourself a hard time. We are all learning how to do things well and sometimes things can go wrong. Put last week's experience behind you and concentrate on getting it right this week. You may need to adjust the subject balance a bit to help you meet any outstanding deadlines. Talk to your teacher about the situation, they will want to help you get back on track.

*Q4 What will happen if my student regularly spends less than the recommended time on their homework, or doesn't use the time productively?*

A4 The simple answer is that of course your student will not achieve their potential if they don't put in the necessary work. They may still pass their subjects (i.e. achieve an 'S' rating indicating satisfactory progress) or they may not, or they may even do well in it but in effect they will be coasting and not doing as well as they could. In addition they will not be sufficiently developing good work ethic attitudes and practices. This is not good for your student, the school or your student's future study options and contribution as a citizen and productive member of our society. At Fairhills we like to work with students and their parents as a team to get the best possible outcomes. If you have any concerns in this area, please arrange an interview so that we can jointly develop a plan.

*Q5 My son often says he doesn't have any homework. What should I do?*

A5 Get him to show you what he has done in class and then check Compass to see what work is listed. Then talk with him about the 5 homework task priorities listed in the summary box above. If all set work is completed, discuss with him what he could do about priorities #4 and #5. Also you could phone the class teacher and seek their advice.

*Q6 I try to spend the recommended time on my homework but I sometimes can't understand how to do it and get stuck. What should I do?*

A6 Don't despair, we all get stuck sometimes. Re-read the instructions more carefully and look at the work you did in class, or check your text book – this often helps. If you are still stuck, ask an older brother/sister or your parents, or phone one of your friends to help you. This is collaborative learning which is an effective way of learning. Sometimes they can help, sometimes they may not be able to. As a final option, change to some homework in another subject for the evening and ask your teacher for help the next day. They will be impressed with how conscientious you are and will be pleased to give you some extra help. The key point is to persevere until you get it – persistence is one of our five 'Fairhills Values'!