

Advice Sheet: Homework and Study at NHS

A Guide for Parents and Guardians

At Nossal High School the students, especially in the senior years, are given significant amounts of self-directed time. This is in line with the notion of an **Adult Learning Environment**, and is a deliberate decision to enable students to develop the independence and self-reliance, as well as the organisational skills and self-discipline, which will be essential to them as life-long learners.

It also means that students need to develop a clear appreciation of the difference between homework per se and study or revision practices.

Finally, it's important to remember that many of our students are academically skilled (and are increasing this skill set all the time). As a result, they tend to be more efficient when performing class-work and homework tasks than students might be in another context.

Homework

Homework is work that needs to be undertaken between one class and the next, either to finalise a task set in class, or to prepare materials essential to the running of the next class.

NHS has a clearly defined set of guidelines relating to the amount of homework students should expect to be doing at each level of study.

The **formal guidelines** for homework during the term, as expressed in the School's Homework Policy, are as follows:

YEAR LEVEL	HOURS PER NIGHT	HOURS PER WEEK
9	1.5	7.5
10	2	10
11	2.5	12.5
12	3	15

There are certain exceptions to these guidelines, which are outlined in **Appendix A: Special Cases**. The appendices can be found at the end of the document.

When staff set a long-term assignment (or even a larger homework task based on the fact that the next lesson with that class is some days in the future), they may attempt to help their junior students by expressing the requirements in terms of "time per night" to encourage them to distribute their practice rather than "cramming" things at the last minute. For Year 10 students, they might talk about a "number of study periods" to remind them that this is exactly the sort of thing they could be using their study periods for.

Making this sort of decision-making explicit to the students is a very valuable way to help them to manage their time and the anxiety which they may feel in the context of more than one task "due" on the same day.

Holiday Homework

While students are often given some work to do over the holidays, not all teachers set work for the break. Many feel that their students are better served by having a proper break from school. Our

students tend to put themselves under significant amounts of stress during the term, and a proper period of rest and recuperation is important if they are to return to school both willing and able to give their best in the next term.

Where teachers choose to set holiday homework, they do so with the following recommendations in mind:

YEAR LEVEL	HOURS PER HOLIDAY	HOURS PER SUBJECT
9	6	1
10	9	1.5
11	12	2
12	15	3

See **Appendix A** below for a discussion of the holidays between Terms 3 and 4, and their place in the Year 12 curriculum.

Study

Study may include any one of a large number of revision and consolidation tasks aimed at embedding the knowledge students gain in the course of their classes. Different subject teachers will have specific tasks which they deem to be “high yield” for their students, and they will have articulated these to the class. More junior students, in particular, tend to be confused by the distinction between study and homework, and may need guidance and reminders to do **both**, not just the more-urgent-feeling homework tasks which have well-defined “due dates.”

Year 10 students, in particular, have the benefit of a relatively large number of allocated “study periods” in their timetable. This *may* mean that parents do not see a significant increase in the amount of time spent by their students studying at home, despite the increased workload which tends to come with the entry of most of our Year 10 students into at least one VCE subject. Parents seeking to support their students through this year may want to actively ask their students how they are allocating their study period time and whether this approach is proving fruitful.

Typical tasks which are useful during “study” sessions include (but are not restricted to):

- creating summaries of work done in the last week or two
- creating visual representations of specific concepts and how these relate to each other
- reviewing terms from a relevant technical glossary & ensuring that they know how to use these in context
- (re)reading key texts and annotating these
- reading material provided by the teacher for breadth of understanding (e.g. critical reception of a text in English, some historical context etc)
- dedicated wide reading for enhanced general knowledge, vocabulary and fluency
- attempting practice questions and/or essay questions
- returning to previously attempted problems which may have caused difficulty, and establishing whether these are now understood
- creating a list of specific questions to be followed-up with the teacher during a study period or after class
- working with a study group on a specific task or topic area

Appendix A: Special Cases

Homework for VCE Music Performance students

Students studying VCE Music Performance (and other similar subjects) do not get much written homework. For them, the homework load is replaced by an expectation of regular practice, and the amount of practice is typically somewhat higher than the NHS homework guidelines (especially depending on their level of expertise). By default, Music Performance students are expected to undertake at least **5 hours** of instrumental practice every week. In addition, they are expected to practice their Aural skills for 10 minutes per day.

Holiday homework for English students

All Nossal students are encouraged to read regularly, both in support of their literacy skills and in support of their broader understanding of the world. In line with this, English students are all expected to pre-read all of their set texts over the summer holidays, and are further advised to re-read specific texts over each holiday break. This is typically set as an expectation in addition to any other holiday homework which may be set.

Holiday homework for Year 12 students

Special guidelines exist for the holidays between **Terms 3 and 4** for **students of Unit 4 subjects**. These students are expected to begin their revision for the end of year examination period during these holidays, having typically completed their Unit 4 coursework at the very end of Term 3. This is less of a “holiday” for them and more of a “non-contact period.”

Some teachers choose to set trial exams or revision activities for these students during the holiday period. Late in 2018, the Curriculum Committee discussed the notion of revision sessions and trial exam events over the holidays in some detail. The committee was concerned about equity for students who cannot attend school at that time, as well as the possible well-being impacts on students of having multiple events at school during this non-contact period. As a result, a set of clear and detailed guidelines were established which are utilised by staff in managing these types of commitments.