

Our Lady's Secondary School

Policy on Homework and Assessment

Homework

Introduction

Homework forms an integral part of the learning experience for each student at Our Lady's and therefore requires careful co-operation between the student, teachers and parent/guardians. In order to gain the maximum benefit from their time in the school, students need to develop a regular study and homework routine from the very beginning of their secondary education. In addition to written work set by teachers, homework also involves a range of other activities including, learning, research, oral work, revision, preparation, completion of projects, etc, and serves a number of functions:

- It consolidates and reinforces skills and understanding developed at school.
- It encourages students to develop the skills, confidence, self-discipline and motivation needed to study effectively on their own. This is vital given the importance for students in the future of life-long learning and adaptability.
- It extends school learning, for example through additional reading.
- It sustains the involvement of parents/guardians in the management of students' learning and keeping them informed about the work students are doing.
- It allows the students to manage particular exam course work.
- It directs research.

The school strongly discourages students from holding part-time jobs during the course of the school year. Part-time work may lead to poor focus on study, tiredness and underperformance in state exams. The responsibilities of students, parents/guardians and teachers in relation to homework are set out below. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour, Special Needs Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Guidance Policy and other related policies.

Role of Students

- Record all homework-written, learning, preparation, research assignments in the homework journal.
- Complete homework to the very best of your ability and present it on time
- In consultation with teachers and parents/guardians, prepare a study plan which is suitable to his/her individual situation
- Insure that the student journal is signed by a parent/guardian each week and as required by class teachers or school management.
- Provide a written explanation from a parent/guardian, when due to exceptional circumstances, homework cannot be presented.

Role of Teachers

- To assign relevant homework, taking into account age, ability and time available to students and the number of subjects being studied
- To monitor and correct homework and provide constructive feedback within a reasonable time after completion of the homework
- To communicate concerns in relation to homework to parents/guardians, initially through the journal and subsequently by phone or meeting.
- To communicate concerns regarding individual student's homework to the Class Tutor and Yearhead.

- To ensure that expectations in relation to homework are explained fully and that students have adequate time to record homework in the journal
- To give a reasonable amount of time for completion of longer homework assignments
- To use a range of incentives and rewards to reinforce good homework practices among students.
- In line with the school's Code of Behaviour, to apply sanctions where relevant in relation to non-completion of homework
- To be part of a whole-school approach to the development of effective homework/study skills

Role of Parents /Guardians

- To provide, where possible, a suitable location for study that is free from distractions and interruptions
- To foster regular habits and to encourage high standards in relation to the completion of homework
- To monitor and sign the homework journal on a weekly basis
- In exceptional circumstances, to provide explanation for non-completion of homework
- To contact the school by telephone for an appointment where any concerns arise in relation to homework

Role of Board of Board of Management

- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time.
- To approve the policy.
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.

Role of Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads

- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
- To monitor the implementation of the policy

Special Needs Students

In setting homework for students with special educational needs teachers are encouraged to balance the right of students to share fully in the work of the class, including homework tasks, with their individual learning needs. These needs may include consolidation and reinforcement of specific skills. For some students, the continuing involvement of parents is very valuable. Subject teachers will collaborate where possible with Learning Support teachers to ensure class tasks are manageable, and individual skill practice can be incorporated without overloading the student. Where possible, subject teachers will guide gifted student in their learning and research.

Time for Study

While the study habits of students vary greatly and students approach study in a diversity of ways we make the following recommendations following consultation with parents/guardians, teachers, and students at Our Lady's:

First year:	1.5 - 2 hours per night
Second year:	2 - 2.5 hours per night
Third year:	3 hours per night
Fifth year:	3.5 hours per night
Sixth year:	4 hours per night
TY	Study time may vary but students are expected to maintain good study habits over this year

LCA

Much of the work associated with this course is school-based but students will from time to time be expected to conduct research and complete tasks at home

Supervised Study after School

The school provides supervised study on a paid basis for students, five evenings per week throughout the school year. Students who avail of this facility are expected to be punctual and work earnestly for the duration of the study time. It is expected that students who use this service will complete the remainder of their homework when they go home after study. Parents / guardians are encouraged to monitor the progress made at supervised study and to ensure that the remainder of homework is completed at home.

Where demand arises the school will also provide Saturday morning study for students in the second and third term.

Assessment

Introduction

“Assessment in education is about gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways, such as to test and certify achievement (e.g. Junior and Leaving Certificate), to determine the appropriate route for students to take through a differentiated curriculum or to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given student” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, <http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Afllleaflet2.pdf>).

Assessment at Our Lady’s Secondary School is an integral part of the learning process; its purpose has as much to do with providing information to the student and the teacher as with forming the basis for the award of grades or a process of reporting. Consequently, learning at Our Lady’s is well supported; students are aware of what they are trying to achieve in particular pieces of work, and through reflective marking they gain clear insight into what they have achieved and where they can improve. The school knows it is important that marking should have a positive impact on students’ attitude, motivation and self esteem, and that students have the opportunity to respond to assessment through reflection. The teachers use their assessments to set work which is well matched to their students’ capabilities. Students are involved in the process of assessment, taking responsibility for their own learning, developing their ability to be self critical and setting targets for subsequent work.

Assessment Procedures at Our Lady’s

- Prospective First Year students sit an entrance test for diagnostic purposes before entering the school in September. The results of this test are used in the creation of mixed ability classes and to help identify students who might benefit from interventions at this time.
- Questions and answers are used at the start of lessons, during the teaching process and at the end of class. Different levels of questioning and varying methods of asking questions of the class and of individuals are used. Project tasks, homework, class tests are used to assess students’ progress.
- Homework is assessed in accordance with the school’s homework policy.
- Regular Class tests are given on completion of a topic or section of the course and teachers record the results of these in their class journals.
- Formative assessment techniques include teachers adding constructive remarks whereby students can develop their own work, involving students in self-assessment, peer assessment etc.
- Reports are sent to parents in November, February and June for all non exam classes. The November and February report consists of a mark and comment based on continuous assessment/class tests. The June report is based on a timetabled exam and consists of a mark and comment.
- Junior and Leaving Certificates students receive a report based on continuous assessment/class tests in November. The Pre-Exams take place in early February and are sent outside the school for correction. The results of these exams are sent to parents/guardians with a comment from the class teacher when results are available. The results of the Leaving and Junior Cert Exams are given to students in August and September respectively.
- Transition Year Students are assessed on the basis of a Portfolio produced during the course of the year and receive reports in November, February and June.
- Assessment for LCA 1 and LCA 2 follows the requirements set down by the Department of Education and Science.
- Educational/Psychological Assessments funded by the Department of Education are offered to students based on recommendations from class teachers, the results of the Entrance exam, consultation with primary schools, self-referral by students and other relevant criteria.

Assessment at Our Lady's:

- Takes place regularly
- Reflects skills applicable to content and course objectives
- Consists of a range of formative and summative activities applicable to the year or course
- Reflects positive achievement (where possible)
- Is used to diagnose individual student learning problems
- Produces indicators for guidance for career and university orientation
- Is based on work presented for correction and cannot be taken as a guarantee of future performance in State Examinations.

Students can expect to:

- Have a clear idea of the knowledge and/or skills that are being assessed.
- Be aware of the weighting of each assessment in the overall assessment pattern.
- Receive clear feedback regarding a mark or grade that has been awarded.
- See each graded assignment.
- Be provided with the opportunity to have their performance assessed qualitatively.
- Have access to all criteria being used in the assessment.
- Be given advance warning of any assessment for which preparation is necessary and be clear about the date of the assessment.
- Receive informal feedback/assessment on some pieces of work.

Review Procedures

The School's Homework and Assessment Policy will be reviewed in 2011 or earlier if required. The review team will conduct the review in light of the views and experiences of parents/guardians, students and teachers in relation to the policies. School records will be analysed to assess the impact of the policies on students' academic progress and particular attention will be paid to the progress of students with special educational needs.

Policy ratified by the BOM in October 2008

Reviewed August 2009

Homework and Assessment Policy available on the Resource Folder

Agreed Assessment Procedures for 2009 – 2010

November Assessment

- Based on at least three monthly tests (or significant pieces of work)
- Reports to be completed for all year groups 1 – 6 by Tuesday, 24 November 2009

February Assessment

- Based on Pre-Examinations for Junior and Leaving Certificate classes
- 25% continuous assessment (based on monthly tests) + 75% examination for fifth year students
- 100% continuous assessment (based on monthly tests) for first and second years
- Reports for all non-exam classes to be completed by Thursday, 25 February.
- Date for completion of reports on Pre-Examinations to be decided.
- Review of examinations to be conducted to ascertain where continuous assessment is required in the June assessments for first and second year pupils.

June Assessment

- Based on Leaving Certificate model for senior cycle students (e.g. project, practical, oral/aural mark or 100% terminal examination)
- Based on terminal examination for first and second year students (continuous assessment to be used for SEN students and/or at the discretion of the teacher for other students)