

Regulations Governing the Course Assignments Policy

Alexandria City Public Schools

The student is the center and heart of the learning process. Therefore, students are expected to assume responsibility for their own learning. They will work in partnership with the instructor and peers and contribute to classroom activities and discussions. They will complete all assignments according to instructor specifications, deadlines, and evaluation criteria. Additionally, they will revisit work in a timely manner when standards and expectations are not achieved. As part of this process, students will play an active role in monitoring their own progress, including tracking formative and summative assessment data to understand their individual progress in achieving standards proficiency.

Rather than being passive recipients of information, students must take an active role in constructing meaning for themselves in response to the content they are studying— including asking probing questions to ensure that they truly understand the subject matter. Ideally, students will demonstrate analytical and critical thinking in all aspects of their learning. In their classroom, students will demonstrate efficacy and responsibility, continually affirming their active and direct role in their own learning process. As a result of these commitments, students will graduate with proficiency in the five ACPS College Preparation Competencies: *Reading Complex Text, Writing in the Content Areas, Discourse within the Disciplines, Data Analysis and Interpretation, and Effective Speaking and Listening.*

Operational Definition of Course Assignments:

Any assignment completed by students in order to deepen their understanding and skills related to required curriculum content.

Assignments, including reading assignments, shall serve a valid purpose and be clearly aligned to course skills and content standards. Specifically, course assignments should function as assessments of students' progress towards standards mastery in accordance with Policy IFA: Assessment and Evaluation and its Regulations.

Purposes of Course Assignments:

- To extend and refine students' independent application of the knowledge and skills they are learning in class.
- To deepen students' understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it.

- To promote student responsibility for self-monitoring and self-adjustment as they progress toward achieving long-range learning goals and specific lesson objectives.
- To provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice the application of knowledge and skills with growing levels of independence.
- To provide opportunities to move from teacher-modeled learning behaviors toward growing levels of guided and independent transfer.

Teacher Guidelines for Course Assignments:

Course Assignments should be a meaningful extension of the student's instructional program and should have a clear and meaningful connection to the curriculum being studied.

All course assignments should have a clearly communicated purpose consistent with one or more of the following:

- To provide independent time for students to practice and rehearse what they have learned in class.
- To review prior knowledge required as background information for new learning.
- To prepare students to acquire new information that has not been studied previously to support their understanding of new curriculum content.
- To elaborate on information that has been introduced in class but requires deeper levels of understanding and independent use by students.
- To provide time for students' completion of assigned readings required for their understanding of curriculum content.
- To encourage student investigation and research to promote independent investigation of aspects of key curriculum content.
- To provide students with formative assessment feedback in anticipation of summative assessment tasks (e.g., tests, transfer tasks).

Course assignments should have specific and clear directions that include a description of required products and performances aligned with specific S.M.A.R.T. goal outcomes (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-sensitive).

Course assignments should be differentiated to match the needs of students, including, where feasible, differentiation for students whose learner profiles, primary languages, need for enrichment and /or practice, and family support systems may vary.

Subject to the availability of collaborative teacher planning opportunities, instructors are encouraged to be sensitive to the following contingencies:

The need to abide by Course Assignment Policy Regulations requiring that:

- Mandatory course assignments not be assigned over long vacation breaks (e.g., Thanksgiving, winter and spring breaks, etc.), including the two block days preceding a vacation break at the high school level.

- Significant long-term assignments be due not earlier than five days (or later) upon return of students and staff from long vacation breaks.
- Breaks from school officially begin at the end of the last school day prior to the beginning of the break and last until the beginning of the first day back from the break.
- The need to avoid assignment "traffic-jam" periods when an excessive number of significant long-term assignments (e.g., essays, research projects, unit tests, etc.) are due at the same time. At least one full calendar week should be allotted per every long-term assignment. Assigning more than one long-term assignment per week is considered excessive.

Deadlines and requirements for major assignments (e.g., essays, research projects, unit tests, or anything worth the equivalent of a test grade or above) should be coordinated with support/resource teachers at the elementary level; with co-planning teams at the middle school level; and with instructional leadership teams (e.g., department and grade-level content teams, International Academy teams, etc.) at the high school level.

In addition to making course assignments teachers should work with students to monitor and reinforce their application of self-regulation and organization skills via such processes as time organizers and schedules; weekly course assignments folder review; self-assessment of progress in completing course assignments, etc.

Teachers will work with students and parents to ensure that learners complete missed course assignments or other make-up work when students return from absences.

At the middle and high school levels teachers will post all course assignments within a course assignments tab on Blackboard in a timely manner, i.e., the day the assignment is given or prior to when it is given.

Teacher Guidelines for Monitoring and Assessing Course Assignments:

Teachers will provide students with timely feedback on all course assignments (using a combination of written and oral feedback provided in a combination of ways, e.g., one-on-one, small group, whole group). This feedback should reinforce and enhance student learning.

At the elementary level, assignment completion should be reflected in the mastery grade on the report card.

At the secondary level, assignment grades should not be used as a punitive measure; course grades are expected to reflect students' mastery of required curriculum content and skills.

Teachers will communicate with parents when a student consistently has difficulty completing or attempting course assignments. Strategies will be developed to support the student's completion of assignments.

School Guidelines for Course Assignments:

Schools will develop common practices to ensure consistent assignment expectations within grade levels and/or teams and departments.

Course assignment expectations will be communicated to parents and guardians early in the year at conferences and Back-to-School Nights, on school websites, and through newsletters.

Schools will provide parents and guardians with suggested strategies for helping their children develop effective study skills and complete course assignments, such as:

- Provide space for doing assignments, as well as a specific time for study.
- Provide books and other opportunities for students to read independently.
- Read to and with your child.
- When feasible, enrich the content being studied with family field trips, library visits, museum visits, internet searches, etc.
- Encourage students to write down questions that need further clarification from the teacher.
- Maintain communication with teachers and counselors.