

Our mission is for every student to enjoy their youth!

Our vision: Educating for self-awareness, curiosity and integrity in a changing world.

RISS Homework Guidelines

1. Philosophy

At RISS, we strongly believe that homework plays a central role in the education of our students. Homework helps reinforce and extend learning within the classroom and promotes the development of important skills and aptitudes, and is “an integral part of the study skills (which) benefits students' learning outcomes significantly” (Pillana 2022). Our commitment to fostering global awareness is evident in our homework policy, which engages students with diverse materials that foster critical thinking and empathy toward different cultures.

Our commitment extends to monitoring progress, ensuring that homework remains meaningful, impactful, and contributes to the holistic development of our students as global citizens and independent learners.

2. Mission, Vision and Core Values

This policy is born from the need to respond further to our vision of “Educating for self-awareness, curiosity and integrity in a changing world” and contribute to embedding our mission “for every student to enjoy their youth” within our central business: learning.

It also seeks to align our instructional practices with our accrediting bodies, the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), International Baccalaureate (IB), Council of International Schools (CIS) and The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The school governance, leadership, teachers, students, and parents support, embody and promote this document to consolidate our day-to-day practice.

The document is also inspired by our core values of respect, responsibility, relationships and courage. They are our key principles and guiding ideals when working for and with our students. We aim to establish a culture of learning in line with our identity as a provider of international education united by a common belief in the importance of an inclusive, culturally diverse, child-centred, inquiry-driven education that not only prepares young people for further studies and life beyond but that ensures young people actually enjoy their youth.

The above also serves to help set a desired level of performance within our practice as indicated in our key strategic drivers, linked to leadership, curriculum, community, wellbeing, professional development and organisation. Ultimately the school seeks to become an exceptional example of an international school.

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3. Purpose

The purpose of our homework guideline is to provide a framework for developing and implementing meaningful, purposeful, and balanced homework tasks that are tied to the curriculum, students' needs while also being aligned with our school's mission and vision.

We recognise that homework is not just about completing tasks but also about fostering a love of learning and promoting the development of important life skills that will serve our students well beyond the classroom.

4. Defining Homework

Homework refers to the academic tasks assigned by a teacher to be completed outside of the classroom, typically to reinforce or extend learning, to develop skills and independence, and to prepare students for upcoming lessons or assessments.

Homework should reflect our core values at RISS.

Respect: As reflected in our Academic Integrity Policy, we expect students to approach their homework with respect by completing homework diligently, avoiding plagiarism, and submitting homework on time.

Responsibility: We believe that students should take responsibility for their own learning and homework and that teachers should provide a reasonable and balanced approach. Students should communicate with teachers if they are struggling with homework or need additional support.

Courage: We encourage students to take risks and push themselves beyond their comfort zones in their homework tasks. We also recognise that some activities may be challenging and encourage students to persevere and seek help if needed.

Relationships: We believe that positive relationships between teachers and students are essential for a successful educational experience. Teachers should provide feedback on tasks in a timely manner, and students should have access to resources and support, such as textbooks, technology, and assistance from teachers.

Study vs. Homework:

While homework and studying are related, they are not exactly the same. Homework is usually assigned with the expectation that students will complete it independently while studying often involves working collaboratively with classmates or seeking out additional resources (such as online tutorials or study groups).

Studying: The act of reviewing and practising material that has already been covered in class, often to deepen understanding and improve performance.

Homework: academic tasks given to students outside of class time, which they are expected to complete and turn in on a specific deadline, often designed to reinforce learning and develop skills.

5. Homework Guidelines

We believe that these homework guidelines reflect our commitment to providing a high-quality education that is respectful, responsible, courageous, and focused on building positive relationships between students and teachers.

In accordance with these values, we have developed the following guidelines for homework:

1. Homework should be purposeful, varied, meaningful, and tied to the curriculum. It should reinforce and extend what has been taught in class.
2. Homework tasks should be reasonable and balanced in terms of the amount and level of difficulty. Teachers should consider students' other obligations, such as extracurricular activities and family responsibilities. A dialogue between teachers and students is encouraged to establish this.
3. Homework with clear expectations and deadlines should be assigned promptly, consistently and effectively. Teachers will provide feedback on tasks.
4. Time Management becomes more of an important skill set as students move up the school. Students will be given recommendations on expectations for time spent on tasks, but the school recognises that the time taken will be different for each student. Students should seek to manage their time accordingly.
5. Grade 6 students will receive no homework for the first month in Term 1.
6. Students should have access to resources and support, such as textbooks, technology, and assistance from teachers.
7. Students are expected to complete homework to the best of their ability and to turn in activities on time. Students should communicate with their teachers if and when extenuating circumstances arise which may impact their ability to meet deadlines.
8. The school will periodically review and revise these guidelines to ensure that it is aligned with the school's mission and goals and meets the needs of students and teachers.
9. Homework is not a graded component for any subject. The exception to this relates to assessed projects which may extend beyond classroom time and may be considered as homework.
10. Grades 6-9 shall receive no homework which extends into or over holidays.

6. Principles and Practices

Principles are the underlying values or ideas that inform how homework should be approached, practices are the specific actions taken to implement these principles, such as differentiating homework tasks, providing clear instructions, and encouraging independent study. Together, principles and practices shape how homework is structured to ensure meaningful learning experiences for students outside of the classroom. Below is a table showing various homework practices employed by teachers.

The benefits of homework are obvious. Checking students' degree of learning and their mastering of the learned knowledge. Linking the new experience with the previous one, paying attention to the students' individual differences, attracting the students' interest towards the lesson and achieving independency, responsibility, and self-guidance in order to increase learning (Azizi, Kralik, 2020; Azizi, Pavlikova, Masalimova, 2020; El-shar'a, Abed, 2008; Zeiton, 1998).

Below is a table showing various homework practices employed by teachers.

Homework practices:

	Engaging	Skills Based	Authentic	Knowledge Focused
Definition	Inquiry-based Interactive Stimulating Curiosity	Critical Thinking Communication Social Skills Self Management Research Independent Learning	Based on the real-world Experiential	Developing subject-specific vocabulary Deepening understanding
Examples	Podcasts Game-based learning Documentaries	Problem-solving Reading Writing Listening Speaking Self Management	Interviews Snap polls Simulations Podcasts Modelling activities	Flipped classroom: video lessons, reading

7. Policy- Source of Information

These Homework Guidelines have been composed by reading research papers (see Bibliography) regarding the benefits of homework and also taking into account student agency by conducting a student survey in November of 2023 with grades 7, 8 and 9 students on their opinions of the homework they were assigned to complete. In addition, this policy is in accordance with the following official documents:

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Student Charter
- RISS Handbook
- RISS Strategic Plan 2022-2026
- Teaching and Learning Policy

8. Homework Guidelines Monitoring:

Curriculum leaders work with their teams to ensure that the homework guidelines and timings are adhered to at all times. Furthermore, curriculum leaders, tutors and student representatives will review and update this policy every two years. Homework is announced on both Magister and Google Classroom.

Additional surveys focused on homework at RISS will be undertaken in the future to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the school's approach to homework.

9. Recommended homework timing for students

- The table below outlines the recommended time for homework across each year group of the school.
- RISS recognises that each student has different learning needs (see points 10 and 11 below).
- We therefore empower students to speak to teachers, parents and learning diversity coordinators to discuss best practices and approaches. This will ensure that homework is completed effectively and is based upon quality learning.
- Students are expected to use the lesson time in school during which they have no class (free periods) to complete homework.
- Homework should be given a turnaround of 7 days.

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RISS Homework Timing		
Year Group	Total Days Per Week	Recommended Timings*
Foundation		
6	4	3 hours p/w (45 min daily)
7	5	3.45 hours p/w (45 min daily)
8	5	5 hours p/w (60 min daily)
Middle Years		
9	5	5.5 hours p/w (65 min daily)
10	7*	6 to 9 hours total p/w
Senior Years		
11	7*	6 to 9 hours total p/w
12	7*	6 to 10 hours total p/w

*These timings and days per week represent the upper limit for a student's weekly requirements. They are to be seen as a guide only. It is important that students develop an effective school/life balance that suits their weekly schedule.

Students are able to consolidate and extend their learning through approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours per night, with 1 hour being more appropriate at the lower level. The hours indicated in the above table take into account the research (Cooper, 2006; Pllana, 2022), but also the unique nature of RISS.

The above timings do not take into consideration elements of coursework in the Middle Years and Senior Years. For example; Extended Essays, Reflective Projects, and other coursework items.

10. Access for all:

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At RISS we want all students to be able to access the learning opportunities available to them. Students who have learning differences may need more time to complete homework tasks, this is due to a possible difficulty with working memory, organisation and concentration. To ease frustration and confusion we encourage students and parents to establish a routine at home, which includes students taking the time to proofread their work. In addition, it is important for students to spend time pre-learning and post-learning to consolidate learning.

Pre-learning can be defined as a strategy where students learn concepts, vocabulary or skills before encountering them in class. Post-learning involves reviewing concepts, vocabulary or skills that have been covered in class. If students are receiving diversity lessons, they will be taught the skills of pre-learning and post-learning and be expected to carry these out at home independently.

Students who have an Individual Education Plan will have strategies for homework encompassed into their plan. These recommendations will encourage student agency through giving choice to students so they develop the why, what and how of learning.

11. EAL Students:

EAL students may take longer to complete homework assignments as they are learning the language of instruction (English) which is not their heritage language. The use of paper dictionaries for certain subjects can increase the time needed to complete homework assignments.

12. Role of the Parents

- Support their child in terms of planning and organisation of their school work.
- Support their children in terms of work-life balance.
- Monitor Magister and Google Classroom and help their children to manage workloads
- Establish routines and practices
- Create a good working environment to enable their children to complete work effectively

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