International School Rheintal

# Homework Policy

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International School Rheintal

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# ISR Guiding Statements

## International School Rheintal Vision

ISR is the school of choice in the Alpen Rheintal region providing a high quality international education in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, inspiring international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence and responsible engagement.

*Reviewed June 2023*

## International School Rheintal Mission

ISR is a supportive, challenging and student-centred environment. We encourage each student to reach their potential whilst promoting international-mindedness, empathy and life-long learning. Through teamwork and individual endeavours, members of the school community should:

- Respect and take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment
- Appreciate and respect diversity
- Think critically
- Reflect thoughtfully
- Communicate effectively
- Celebrate success

*Reviewed June 2023*

# School Philosophy and Objectives

The International School Rheintal provides a high quality educational programme in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 designed to meet their academic , physical, social and emotional needs. The school aims to:

- Challenge and support students and staff to reach their full potential.
- Encourage students to think for themselves and acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for effective lifelong learning.
- Provide a challenging academic programme for exploring learning from global and local perspectives.
- Offer a student-centred, caring environment which fosters an enjoyment of learning and where student achievements are celebrated.
- Nurture and appreciate a diversity of languages and cultures as a way of knowing.
- Guide students to show concern for themselves, for others, for the community and for the environment.
- Develop in its students a lasting commitment to international mindedness and global citizenship.
- Cultivate respect, inclusion and acceptance of others.
- Encourage students to strive to be thinkers, communicators and risk takers who are inquiring, knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective.

*Approved by the ISR Board June 2023*

# International-Mindedness at ISR

The ISR community aims to be mindful, to be aware, respectful and appreciative of ourselves, of others and the diversity of all cultures and environments.

Through empathy, openness, inquiry, knowledge, thought, communication, care, courage, reason, reflection and principled action, our community and its members strive to understand the complexity and diversity of human interactions within and between cultures and environments.

The aim of our programs at ISR is to develop compassionate and active individuals who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, engage responsibly to create a better and more peaceful world.

*Created April 2015, reviewed June 2022*

# Whole School Homework Policy

*Homework is a vital element in the learning process, reinforcing the interaction between teacher and student and between home and school, and paving the way to students being independent autonomous learners.*

Tom Sherrington, TeacherHeads

Homework's main advantage is that it can enhance achievement by extending learning beyond the school day, and regardless of which age-group it is for, it has two main purposes:

- To provide opportunities for consolidation and practice;
- To develop students' independence and responsibility for their own learning.

Within this context, most homework will involve practice, revision, pre-study, questions and exercises. However, there should also be some opportunities for research, open-ended projects, creative products, and student choice.

For younger or less confident students, homework is most effective when it builds confidence and fluency, via carefully defined and scaffolded tasks that focus mainly on practising things they can already do. Then, as learners develop in competence and confidence, more open-ended and challenging tasks are suitable.

Homework at ISR is used as a purposeful tool to strengthen students' grasp of concepts, skills and content learned in class. Homework is set when it is beneficial to student learning. Homework is developmentally appropriate, and provides students with the opportunity to progress in a well-balanced and holistic way. Homework helps students to transfer knowledge, and to develop important self-management skills, confidence and self-discipline.

If teachers assign homework, they will do so responsibly, with consideration of students' workload and personal well-being. Homework is a tool to practise, reinforce and/or extend the tasks that have taken place within the classroom environment. It should stimulate intellectual curiosity and support the students in taking responsibility for their learning.

## Homework and the IB ATLs

Throughout all its programmes, the IB places a strong emphasis on Approaches To Learning (ATLs). These fall into five broad categories: Thinking Skills, Research Skills, Communication Skills, Social Skills, and Self-Management Skills. Within the last category, students are expected and encouraged to build strong organisational, time-management and self-management skills, and homework has a role to play here in creating opportunities for students to discover, experiment with and practise strategies that work for them.

# Approaches to Homework in the PYP

As an IB PYP school, we prioritise the holistic development of our students through a transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Our goal is to empower students with choice and ownership over their learning experiences, fostering proactive and self-initiated learning both in the classroom and at home.

Homework activities are designed to provide developmentally appropriate, engaging learning opportunities outside of school, that support all learners. We value children's free time and emphasise independence, curiosity, and creativity. These activities also prepare students for future learning pathways.

Tasks assigned by teachers focus on reinforcing skills developed in class. These might include brief assignments to review specific spelling patterns, work on maths strategies, or practise new subject vocabulary. In line with an inquiry-based approach, teachers may also assign optional or open-ended activities to encourage independent inquiry at home. Recognising that learning takes many forms, we balance skill consolidation with the benefits of unstructured play, ensuring tasks are appropriate for each child's developmental stage. We do not assign homework tasks during school holidays or weekends.

We encourage families to engage in discussions about learning, and to read the newsletter on a weekly basis to provide them with synopsis of the learning that has taken place that week.

Students in Grade 5 receive a personal planner to record their homework assignments in. This supports them with developing their self-management skills, allowing them to note upcoming events like excursions and personal commitments and practise their planning strategies.

## PYP Reading

Daily reading for pleasure can significantly enhance overall academic achievement and growth in primary-aged children. Therefore, we strongly encourage daily reading at home, whether in English, German, or the student's home language. Home readers and library books are available at school to support reading in English and German. All students are encouraged to read daily for at least 10 minutes.

# Homework in the Senior School

To be effective, homework must be purposeful and relevant. It needs to make sense to students, and students need to have adequate support to succeed in it. Even for older students, homework that is too complex, extended or unstructured can be counterproductive.

Homework is often most effective when students conduct preparatory work for upcoming topics, or, following an initial in-class exploration, tackle some questions ready for discussion in the next lesson; the latter approach also allows the teacher to monitor student understanding, and support / push as appropriate.

Moreover, given that more than half of newly-acquired knowledge fades within a few days, another key role of homework is to regularly transfer that knowledge to long-term memory. Building revision into homework avoids the need for 'cramming' at the end of the course as the exams begin to loom.

## Approaches to Homework in the MYP

Courses in the MYP include a wide range of topics that all encourage student ownership of learning. This often involves student investigation and research, and such projects and in-depth study often result in homework. While there may be regular assignments for students to practise and improve their skills, there may at other times be more revision, research, writing, or creating outside of school hours.

### Amount of homework in the MYP

As a very general guide, MYP students can expect the following amounts of homework. However, given the nature of the programme there is significant flexibility. Teachers may sometimes allocate less than this; and students may occasionally need to do more than this, for example in the run-up to exams, or for a major project.

| Grade level | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approximate daily homework time | 45 minutes | 60 minutes | 75 minutes | 90 minutes | 120 minutes |

## Lower MYP (Grades 6-8)

In the lower MYP years, the focus of homework is on strengthening skills learned in class, and reviewing prior learning. Subjects such as Maths and Language Acquisition that rely on mastering lesson material in order to advance will need regular, shorter homework tasks to reinforce understanding, while other subjects may require a different approach.

To support the philosophy of the MYP, students are also tasked with independent learning via more extended assignments that involve research, field work, and projects. These alternative assessment methods allow students to conduct in-depth inquiry and apply their knowledge to a variety of settings.

When conducting longer projects, teachers should dedicate class time for students to carry out work with the supervision of the teacher. If it is beneficial for students to work on such an assignment outside of class time, students should be given clear and specific guidance to keep them on track, and all due dates must be posted at least one week in advance on the online platform.

## Upper MYP (Grades 9 and 10)

Homework in the upper MYP years should follow the same ideals and principles of the earlier grades, continuing to build student independence and application of learning through practice and revision, but with a stronger emphasis on research and analysis.

Within the classroom, students learn the concepts, strategies and structures of the topic, with examples and practice work provided by the teacher. The goal of homework should therefore be extended practice or application of these tools. The teacher is then able to follow this with assessment of the student's understanding and capabilities, along with their limitations and any gaps in their knowledge.

# Approaches to Homework in the DP

## Purpose of homework in the DP

Research by Hattie, and prior to that by Cooper, consistently shows that homework has its greatest gain for students in the highest years of senior school, and it therefore has the potential for an excellent impact on DP students.

Students who are most successful in the Diploma are those with well-developed learning skills, independence of thought, and resilience. Homework is one way in which students develop those attributes. It also has the advantage of allowing students to work at their own

pace, get to grips with difficult ideas, or finish something properly – without the time and space constraints of a classroom.

## Amount of homework in the DP

The IB Diploma Programme is a rigorous and academically challenging pre-university course, and it requires that students spend significant time reading, studying and working on assignments outside of lesson time.

In order to be successful, students should expect to study independently outside of class each week for roughly the same amount of time per subject as they have lesson time. (Studies by Cooper and his team indicate that a student's daily homework assignments combined should take approximately as long to complete as the student's grade-level multiplied by 10 minutes, or 15 minutes for reading homeworks).

DP students should also expect to spend some time working during the academic breaks, most often on coursework assignments and/or review. Students are supported and encouraged to prioritise effectively, to maintain a balance between their studies and other aspects of their lives.

## Strategies for effective homework

- **Preparation: activities and reading to lay the foundations for upcoming lessons**
    - At their own pace students engage with material, read ahead, and make notes from curated resources, in the flipped-classroom style, leaving lesson time free to focus on questions, discussions and wonderings, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration.
- **Practice: exercises on content already covered, to practise knowledge-retrieval**
    - Students work on routine, fluency-building questions similar to those practised in class (rather than challenge-questions, which could cause students to stall)
- **Revision: reviewing material and using exam-style questions to develop fluent recall**
    - Students practise terminology, factual recall and explanations – in other words, knowledge retrieval and applying what they have learned
- **Extension: occasional longer tasks such as projects**
    - Students can develop independence, demonstrate creativity, and be inspired to pursue their interests.

# Links with other policies

The implementation of this policy is supported by wider ISR policies and handbooks, and specifically the following documents:

- *ISR Assessment Policy*
- *ISR Learning and Teaching Policy*
- *ISR PYP Handbook*
- *ISR MYP Handbook*
- *ISR DP Handbook*

ISR policies can be found on the main school website, while handbooks are located on MyISR.

*NB - Last policy review led in 2025 by Rheannon Elliott, PYP Coordinator, Andrew Shawcroft, MYP Coordinator and Vicki Hayward, DP Coordinator*

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