

Highclare Sixth Form

Academic Standards Policy

HIGHCLARE SCHOOL SIXTH FORM

ACADEMIC STANDARDS POLICY

This booklet is designed to be applicable to all 6th Form members from Sept 2009

INTRODUCTION

All of the academic staff in the Sixth Form holds appropriate qualifications (in terms of academic qualifications or experience) in their main subject area. You will find that they are passionate about their subject areas and they will expect you to be equally as enthusiastic about studying it. Indeed, there should be a combination of fun, enthusiasm, commitment and discipline to achieve a successful learning experience.

Our aim is to provide quality and breadth of learning in accordance with Highclare School's aims. We also encourage independent learning throughout the Sixth Form in all subjects. The more you put into your studies, the more you will get out. By independent learning, staff will expect you to take part in the review system by negotiating and setting targets as well as formulating an action plan for the next academic period of study.

Important Information for All Students

STUDY SKILLS for LIFE

It is important that as a sixth form student you master a number of key study skills. Without these skills you will find it difficult to remember and apply properly the large amount of information you need to successfully study an A level program of study. This also includes the ability to carry out your own assessment of progress, pass examinations, and identify strengths and weaknesses in the learning process.

During the course your teacher will help you develop the appropriate study skills at the relevant time in the course. Your year tutor and Mrs Embury may well

introduce you to some useful skills in separate study skills sessions. However, it is still important that you understand from the outset what skills you need.

During the 'Induction Day' (September) you will be introduced to some key Study Skills. These will include: Research, Reading & Note-Taking (get into the habit of producing a précis of what you read), and Essay Writing Skills. The following list gives the major areas of study skills you must develop for most subjects.

1. Studying in your own time

You cannot hope to do well simply by sitting in class and hoping to somehow absorb the information like some weird form of sponge - this does not work.

You only have at most 4.50 hours a week in AS and at most 5.00 hours a week in A2 and you spend most of that time (we hope) participating in class discussions with some note-taking. In some cases, and especially if there is only one in the class, your contact hours will be reduced in reliance that one to one tuition is more concentrated. The result of this is that learning will be more easily monitored.

By electing to study an A level subject you have committed yourself to a course that requires you - the student - **to take responsibility for your own learning.**

This means that you will need to spend some of your own time - in the evenings and at weekends, as well as your undirected time at school- getting to grips with the subject. At times you will be given homework that needs to be done (homework must be handed in on time - if it is late, you 'Fail'), while most of the time you will be expected to undertake independent study. This means that you may not be told do some extra reading - but **extra reading is necessary if you wish to obtain a good grade in the examination.**

So, how much extra time will you need to give? There is no specific guideline or rule - some weeks may be very busy indeed. However, **you can expect to do at least one hour of study outside of class - for every hour inside the class.**

There will never be a time in sixth form where you 'have no work to do' because there will always be extra learning, research, revision etc to do.

REMEMBER, YOU ARE A FULL-TIME STUDENT.

2. Read and précis the textbook BEFORE you attend Class

Some subjects can be complex subjects which you are studying possibly for the first time. The textbooks/workbooks are designed to provide you with some basic information and it is vital that you read and précis the subject area of discussion BEFORE you attend the classes.

To many students this often seems odd, since at best they may read the textbook after class. However, the subjects require much discussion and analysis and this can seem difficult if you are considering material for the first time. If you read before you attend class you will be able to follow the lesson. Indeed, if you read and précis first, you will have more time in class to listen and play a constructive part in the lesson - contributing to the debate or discussion. This helps bring life and fun to the subject and the class. **REMEMBER, READ AND PRECIS BEFORE CLASS (staff may check précis notes)**. When you go on to University you will be expected to read before Lectures and tutorials, we are simply preparing you for this methodology.

3. Taking notes in class

Before we look at this, let us quickly examine what you need to **BRING TO EVERY CLASS**.

(a) **A pen** - Yes, it sounds obvious but it is truly amazing how many students forget to bring a pen. School does not supply you with one so bring one to every lesson!

(b) **Paper** - Again it sounds stupid, doesn't it? But experience shows that students seem to think that school requires neither pen nor paper!

(c) **Your textbook** - **Sometimes** you might not be called upon to use it, but bring it anyway.

(d) **Something to keep your notes safe** - ideally a ring-binder (see later under 'Organising Your Notes') Handouts and your notes form the basis of class work and provide a fair amount of information. However they are NEVER to be regarded as all you need! They must be supplemented by other information sources. One of the most obvious of these is the information that your teacher will give you in the lesson - this will usually be explanations, examples, facts and figures which are additional to the handouts. It is vital that you take this information down.

You will probably not be told "write this down please" - it is not like GCSE - you will just be expected to do it. A lot of the time you will have to take it down on another piece of paper. In short you will not be spoon-fed - you will only get from a lesson what you put in it. If you sit there and let the lesson wash over you, you may think that you are learning. However, if you don't take notes - even if you haven't been told - you will leave the lesson with just a handout and this will not be enough.

4. How will you be taught?

Most lessons will be very different from one another. They may be based on handouts, notes taken from the Power Points and relevant discussions. But it is not just a question of reading the handouts and taking a few extra notes. Our topics are designed to provide auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles, with differentiation evident and to enhance independent learning. Handouts will often contain several exercises and questions for class to discuss (sometimes in heated fashion!) and answer. Other subjects lend themselves to role-play exercises to be done in small groups and some exercises require research and/or assessment outside the classroom in the Library and/or via a P.C. Above all, lessons are used to encourage students to actively discuss and debate contentious issues and to develop the important skills of expressing one's own argument and - equally as importantly - listening to and understanding the arguments of others.

5. What about Homework?

Please note that Mrs Viles and Mrs Embury reserve the right to withdraw from the examinations any student who fails to do scheduled homework and/or have a poor attendance record as they will not be adequately prepared.

Read and précis is compulsory for all Students. In addition a wide variety of homework exercises - including essays and other forms of assessments - will be set at different times during the academic year by your Teacher.

EXCUSES - are NOT acceptable. If you have been ill you may ask for an extension (but illness generally means you have more time to do your homework). If you are ill and offer the excuse that "*I did not know that there was work set*" - this is not acceptable and your work will be recorded as being handed in late. If you miss a class it is **your responsibility** to find out if you missed anything, not your teacher's responsibility to find you and tell you what you have missed.

- **If you hand in an essay/assignment late - you will fail the assignment** (which will be recorded on your file) and you could be given some additional work.
- **If you fail to hand in work, miss a submission date for course work or fail to sit assessments**, a 'Cause for Concern' or 'Verbal Warning' may/will be issued and Head of Sixth Form or Mrs Viles may become involved to decide whether your parents should be involved in the decision to continue on the course. **There are also very serious consequences for missing submission dates for coursework as the entry on module results may impact on your university application forms.**

6. Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

Your Teacher will hold a one-to-one review with you to discuss your work (and your individual progress). You will be asked to negotiate a target grade. Be realistic, but don't be afraid to stretch yourself. You will also be able to set down an 'action plan' to address any weak areas and enhance progression through grade boundaries. It is in your interest to refer to this plan regularly - don't just file it away and only look at it at the next review.

7. Organising Your Notes

It is important that you keep a well-ordered file filled with appropriate notes. Every year students lose large chunks of their notes on trains or around school or at home or wherever. Losing your notes severely hampers your chances of success in examinations, as does having a badly organised folder, which takes a week to sort through before you can even start revising. **If you miss a class and miss some work, or lose it, is your responsibility to catch up again. It is NOT your teacher's responsibility to replace the work.** If you know you're going to miss a lesson because of an appointment, make arrangements with a 'Study-Buddy' to collect any handouts and notes that you need. It is advisable to copy those notes up by hand before putting them in your folder. There is no substitute for missing a lesson. This is why, when copying up notes, the work will very often seem remote and unfamiliar. You will need to do extra reading to help grasp fully what you missed. When you come to revise, it is no good saying "I was away then so it is not my fault I never understood it" This may be so, **SO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!**

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

A. READING/RESOURCES

1. The Library -
2. Textbooks -
3. Internet
4. Newspapers

Remember books are often out-of-date before they leave the publishers - this is because some subjects are fast-moving. **You should always try to use the most up-to-date version of any text when carrying out research.**

4. Journals and Newspapers

It is important to keep up-to-date. Good newspapers have a lot to offer. By a "good paper" we mean a paper that addresses serious political and legal issues NOT a tabloid paper which concerns itself with the latest events in the social life of the Supermodels or David Beckham's new haircut. You should read a broadsheet newspaper like The Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, The Observer, The Independent, and The Telegraph. **You should cut out and save important, citizenship and politics articles. Refer them to your teacher to evaluate their relevance.**

5. Other Media

There are many serious documentaries and news features on the television - watch them and learn!

6. Tutors

Your teacher is an experienced professional - a mine of information. Never feel that you cannot ask them a question, no matter how stupid you think it might be (but please try using the dictionary before you ask - What does this word mean?). Your teachers' role is to answer your questions but it may be possible for you to find out the answer yourself first. However, teachers are a valuable resource so use them!

7. Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you copy someone else's ideas and/or words, from an article, book, internet or song, and pass them off as your own. Examiners are very

strict on plagiarism since it is certainly immoral and could well be unlawful. The rule is: If you quote or extract from an article, web page, book etc., you must indicate the source (to do this simply insert a footnote which gives the name of the author, name/details of the materials, and where they can be located). **Examination boards now have very sophisticated methods of detecting plagiarism so even if you have fooled your teachers, you will be found out by the examining board.**

n.b. When you do work in school or as homework and can use your textbook as a basis for study, you must not copy chunks from the textbook instead of trying to explain in your own words. You may fool your teacher but ask yourself "is that helping me learn"?

8. Recording of Classes

A STUDENT IS NOT PERMITTED TO RECORD any part of a lesson unless they have first obtained the permission from the Teacher taking that class.

B. ABSENCE POLICY

Please also note: In the Sixth Form we have a strict approach to academic discipline. Staff will not tolerate students missing lessons or failing to hand in homework on time.

1. Staff Absence

If your teacher is unexpectedly absent from school, every effort will be made to deliver an appropriate lesson. **You MUST attend all the classes.** A member of staff will record your attendance and pass on the details of the work that has been set by your teacher. **You are expected to stay in the classroom for the duration of the lesson** (Please note that you must see Mrs Embury to be excused from this requirement).

NEVER ASSUME THAT YOUR TEACHER WILL BE ABSENT OR THAT YOU CAN MISS A LESSON.

2. Student Absence

The starting point is that you are expected to attend 100% of your classes. **YOU MUST EXPLAIN IN WRITING - to your Teacher - SHOULD YOU MISS ONE SINGLE LESSON. (THERE ARE BLUE FORMS THAT MUST BE COMPLETED AND HANDED TO YOUR TEACHER FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE).**

A 100% attendance at lessons is expected and we will not tolerate anything below 90%. You are expected to use your own time outside of school hours for the non-urgent doctor or dental appointments, driving lessons etc. **Should your attendance fall below 80% you are in danger of not fulfilling your potential and you may be asked to consider not sitting an examination.**

If you know that you must miss a lesson, you must obtain a signature from your teacher on the absence form, tell the teacher in advance and find out what you will miss. If you become ill during the day and need to go home you must speak to the nurse first. Try to find your teacher and let them know, **or** leave a message at reception. You **must** also sign out at reception.

C. INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

The school and its staff have always offered support to individual students outside of normal lessons.

This support takes two forms:-

1. Subject Support:

If you experience difficulties with any part of the course, for example if you don't understand a topic or find writing essays difficult, then talk to your Subject Teacher. Don't simply say that you don't understand anything; try to be specific so that you identify the understandable parts from the parts not understandable. They may (if applicable) offer to give you extra help during a mutually agreed time. They can also offer you 'Learning Support', if you feel that the method of teaching is not suitable for you. You may agree a different strategy for learning and this must then be monitored to check out success.

2. Lower and Upper Sixth Tutor Support:

If you experience broader problems whilst at the School, do consult Mrs Embury. For example, if you are finding it difficult to meet homework deadlines because of personal problems she may offer you some advice. Or perhaps you may need to be referred to another member of staff who has specialist knowledge in a particular area, for example careers, or the learning support advisors (dyslexia, physical, sensory etc).

This booklet has been produced to help you get where you want to go with the appropriate qualifications and skills to survive your next step; wherever it may be.

We expect co-operation, respect and good communication for this to be achieved. In return, you are promised commitment and support from your teachers as well as a happy and caring environment during your sixth form experience

Should you have any concern, please feel free to discuss matters with the Head of Sixthform - Mrs Embury email sixform@highclareschool.co.uk

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As per the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act [2001].

Highclare School is committed to ensuring disabled people, including those with learning difficulties, are treated fairly. All reasonable adjustments to provision in the subject/course will be made to ensure that disabled students are not substantially disadvantaged. Any disclosure of disability will be used to help us ensure that we can support you in your studies.

In accord with Highclare School's policy and procedures, we are fully committed to Equal Opportunities.