



Coursework

A guide for parents

- ▶ **Do you have a son or daughter who is completing GCSEs or A levels?**
- ▶ **If so, this leaflet is for you.**
- ▶ **It's about coursework: what it is and how you can help. It also explains the rules that students must stick to.**

What is coursework?

Coursework is research or projects that count towards a student's final grade. It includes extended essays, investigations, practical experiments or performance work. Coursework is an excellent way for students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have gained throughout a course. Completing it will help a student gain valuable life and work skills. Coursework is done at home and in class. Students are encouraged to use research sources such as textbooks, encyclopaedias, journals, TV, radio and the internet.

What rules do students have to follow?

Coursework must be a student's own original work, and they will have to sign a declaration saying that the work is their own. Teachers also have to sign the declaration to confirm that the work is by the student.

How can I support my child?

You can encourage your child to spend time on their coursework, do it well, hand

it in on time and stick to the rules. This, along with providing a quiet place to study, will help them to achieve their best.

If your child often completes work at the last minute you could discuss with them how and when they plan to do their coursework. Encourage them to think about the project as early as possible so that if they don't understand the question or need extra information, they have time to speak to their teacher.

How much can the teachers or I help?

Teachers can provide guidance on what should be included in coursework projects. They can also explain what they will be looking for when they are marking the project. But the teacher cannot tell students exactly how to do the work – the point of coursework is for your son or daughter to work independently.

You can encourage your child to do well and provide them with access to resource materials. You must not put pen to paper - you must not write the coursework. You can discuss the project with them but you

must not give direct advice on what they should or should not write.

If your child is not sure how to complete their coursework then encourage them to speak to their teacher to get help. You can also suggest particular books that they might read or show them how to search the internet for relevant information. You should also encourage your child to use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout their coursework.

Are students allowed to quote from books or the internet?

Students can refer to research, quotations or evidence but they must list their sources. The sources could be anything – books, internet sites, television programmes.

Students must not plagiarise, copy or purchase essays or collude with anyone else. This is considered to be cheating and could lead to your son or daughter being disqualified.

Encourage your child to use their own words as much as

possible. If they do want to quote or refer to others' work, tell them to use quotation marks and references. If your child is unsure on how to reference different sources then their teacher should be able to provide examples of good and bad referencing. By referencing their sources correctly your child will avoid being accused of cheating.

How is cheating detected?

Most coursework is marked by your son or daughter's teacher and then checked by the exam board. Since teachers are familiar with their students' work as well as books on specific subjects, they will be able to tell if the student did not do the work or if the work was copied from another source.

Encourage your child to complete their work honestly and follow the rules. By taking the time to complete their coursework your child will learn to study independently, research different topics and present different types of projects.

These skills will all be valuable when they go to university or enter the world of work.





What can I do if I think the coursework rules have been broken?

Speak to your child's teacher or a member of staff at their school or college. They will be able to tackle the situation and give advice on what will happen next.

What happens if a student breaks the rules?

There are a number of things that could happen. The relevant exam board decides which action is appropriate, but the student may not receive a mark for the work, be disqualified from the whole qualification or part of it, or be barred from entering a qualification with a particular exam board for a period of time.



Finally....

Coursework takes time and effort, and because it counts towards your child's final grade it is important that they do as well as they can.

You can help by providing a quiet place to work, encouraging them to do their best and hand their work in on time.

Where to find out more

If you have any questions about coursework, or the coursework your child will be doing, speak to their teacher.

The following organisations may also have helpful information:

- ▶ www.qca.org.uk – QCA’s main website has information on qualifications, student guides to GCSEs and A levels and online versions of this guide
- ▶ www.parentscentre.gov.uk – This Department for Education and Skills site has detailed information on helping your child learn and on what they will study at school
- ▶ www.jcq.org.uk – The Joint Council for Qualifications has information on exam rules, plagiarism and appeals
- ▶ www.accac.org.uk – ACCAC’s website has information on examinations and assessments in Wales.

Your child will study qualifications from different exam boards. The website of each exam board contains information on the qualifications they offer:

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)
– www.aqa.org.uk

CCEA (Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments) – www.ccea.org.uk

Edexcel – www.edexcel.org.uk

OCR (Oxford and Cambridge and RSA examinations) – www.ocr.org.uk

WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) – www.wjec.co.uk



About this publication

Who's it for?

This leaflet is a guide for parents of young people who are completing coursework for qualifications.

What's it about?

This leaflet is about coursework: what it is and how parents can help. It also explains the rules that students must stick to.

What's it for?

To help parents understand the rules of coursework.

For free copies of this leaflet:

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QCA order reference: QCA/06/3403

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This leaflet is produced by the regulatory authorities:

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