HSC Assessments and Submitted Works
Advice to Students

HSC assessment tasks and projects are likely to be among the most challenging learning you will undertake during your time at school.

This pamphlet will help you complete your assessment tasks and external exams honestly and with confidence.

It covers all assessment tasks, exams, projects, practical works, independent research projects and performances.

Why have assessment tasks in the HSC?
HSC assessment tasks will:
• help you learn, expand your knowledge and encourage you to challenge yourself
• show how much you have learnt and where you need to improve
• prove you have satisfactorily completed a course
• contribute to your final HSC mark.

Assessment tasks allow you to show what you know, understand and can do in ways that may not be possible in a written examination. School-based assessments also give you the chance to address any weak areas in your knowledge before you sit your external HSC exams.

Make a good start
All students entered for one or more Preliminary or HSC courses must have satisfactorily completed the HSC: All My Own Work program, or its equivalent. This program helps you to follow good principles and practices in assessments and examinations. You will find HSC: All My Own Work on the Board’s website. Talk to your Year Adviser about special arrangements related to this program if you are undertaking only Life Skills courses.

In addition, there is very important information you must read in a booklet called Rules and Procedures for Higher School Certificate Candidates. Your school will give you a copy, and it is also on the Board’s website.

When you sign your HSC Confirmation of Entry form, you are telling the Board of Studies that you have read, understood and agreed to follow the rules in the Rules and Procedures booklet.

In a subject with a submitted project or practical work, such as Design and Technology, Music 2 or English Extension 2, you will also have to certify that the work you submit to the Board for marking is your own, and acknowledge any assistance you received. Your teacher and Principal will also have to say whether they believe the work is authentically yours.
How can I best manage my assessment tasks?

- Be aware of due dates. Keep an up-to-date diary of all assessment tasks and other commitments.
- Use a wall calendar or small whiteboard in an area such as your family room or your kitchen to note due dates if you want others in your household to help you remember deadlines.
- Start tasks early so that you can ask for help if you need it.
- Break tasks into a series of smaller steps and set deadlines for completing each step.
- Record the sources of information you use as you find them so that acknowledgements do not become a major task at the end.
- Frequently save and back up any work completed on a computer. The failure of technology is generally not an acceptable excuse for submitting your work late.
- Keep all your earlier drafts and copies of your resources.
- Keep a copy of any work you submit for marking.

What is cheating in HSC assessment?

Cheating, or malpractice, is dishonest behaviour by a student that gives them an unfair advantage over others.

Here are some examples of behaviour considered to be cheating:

- copying, buying, stealing or borrowing part or all of someone else’s work, and presenting it as your own
- using material directly from books, journals, CDs or the internet without acknowledging the source
- submitting work that contains a large and unacknowledged contribution from another person, such as a parent, coach, tutor or author
- paying someone to write or prepare material that is associated with a task, such as drafts, process diaries, logs and journals.

The above are examples of plagiarism.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is when you pretend that you have written, created or developed a piece of work that someone else originated. It is cheating, it is dishonest and it will jeopardise your HSC results. The following are common questions about plagiarism.

Q Is it plagiarism if I copy someone else’s work exactly and claim it is my own work?
A Definitely yes!

Q Is it plagiarism if I change some of the words or the order of sentences in the passage I am copying?
A Yes. You are using someone else’s thoughts and words without acknowledgement.

Q Is it plagiarism if I memorise a story or essay written by someone else, and then reproduce all or parts of it in my English exam?
A Yes. This is plagiarism.

Q Is it plagiarism if someone else proofreads my written work and changes my final draft?
A It is not plagiarism to have someone correct your spelling and grammar. However, if a parent or tutor or anyone else makes major changes to the wording of your draft, the final version is no longer your own work.

Q Is it plagiarism if I get ideas from my reading and research and use them to support and develop my own ideas, but acknowledge the original source in the work I hand in?
A No, this is not plagiarism. You have acknowledged where your ideas came from. It is legitimate to build on ideas from others provided you don’t claim they are your own.

Q Is it plagiarism if I quote from a source and indicate this using quotation marks, footnotes or in other ways, and then acknowledge the source in my text and/or in my bibliography?
A This is not plagiarism. You have taken steps to show you are presenting someone else’s words or ideas.
How do I acknowledge sources?

Your teachers can tell you exactly how they would like to see you acknowledge sources. For written works this usually will be in a bibliography. You will need to check how the bibliography should be presented for each of your projects. For some projects, such as practical works for Industrial Technology or Design and Technology, you must keep a folio or journal. In it you can show your influences and any practical help you received (for example a professional welder to join pieces of your work together), ideas that inspired you, as well as a bibliography.

Remember that acknowledging your sources is also a good way to show your teacher the extent of the reading and research you have done. Acknowledgements prove that you have engaged with other people’s ideas in order to develop your own view.

Why does honesty matter in the HSC?

Honesty is very important in all aspects of life and is an essential part of academic research.

The Higher School Certificate is a well-respected and widely recognised educational credential. Many students use the HSC to enter employment and further education.

Cheating is absolutely unacceptable in the HSC as it undermines the integrity of the qualification.

You must take careful note of ‘Honesty in HSC Assessment – the Standard’, on page 4. It includes warnings about the consequences of cheating in the HSC.

Why do people cheat and what are the consequences?

Some people cheat because they are under pressure. They can be under pressure because they have not organised their time and feel they have to take shortcuts to meet the course requirements. Others are under pressure because they are trying to achieve unrealistic academic goals. It is important to speak to your parents and teachers if you feel this kind of pressure.

Some people cheat because they don’t understand the seriousness of what they are doing and tell themselves it doesn’t matter. Some people cheat accidentally because they do not understand plagiarism.

The Board of Studies treats cheating very seriously. It investigates allegations of cheating and penalises students caught cheating in HSC written examinations and in projects or practical works.

Detected malpractice will limit a student’s marks and jeopardise their HSC.

One or more of the following will apply:

- reduced marks for part or all of the examination
- zero marks for part or all of the examination
- an interview with a ‘malpractice’ panel at the Board of Studies
- loss of one or more courses towards the HSC award
- damage to your ability to apply for entry to TAFE or university courses or scholarships.

Cheating in school assessment tasks is dealt with at school. Your teachers must be satisfied that the work you are presenting is your own, particularly in tasks that require work to be done at home, and that any help that you have received has been acknowledged. Schools may use procedures similar to the Board’s rules, such as signed declarations of authenticity.

Cheating in school assessment tasks also has serious consequences. You may receive zero marks for the task, and depending on the task, you may lose that course from your HSC award. Your school may refuse to certify practical works or projects as ‘authentic work’ before sending them to the Board of Studies. Your school may take further disciplinary action. Apart from anything else, if you are caught cheating you are likely to lose the trust of your fellow students and your own self-respect.

It is important to have support from teachers, parents and friends when you are working on your assessments, but you must not let them do the work for you. Remember that doing your own work is not only about learning, it adds to your overall sense of achievement in completing the HSC.
Honesty in HSC Assessment – the Standard

This standard sets out the Board of Studies NSW requirements concerning students submitting their own work in HSC assessment. Candidates for the Higher School Certificate, as well as their teachers and others who may guide them, are required to comply with the standard.

The honesty of students in completing assessment tasks, examinations and submitted works, and of teachers and others in guiding students, underpins the integrity of the Higher School Certificate. Throughout the assessment process, the highest level of honesty is required.

Each student’s mark will be determined by the quality of the work produced by the student only. To demonstrate honesty, any component of a student’s work that has been written, created or developed by others must be acknowledged in accordance with the Board’s subject-specific documentation. Use or inclusion of material from other sources such as books, journals and electronic sources, including the internet, must be acknowledged. General teaching and learning do not require formal acknowledgement.

Dishonest behaviour carried out for the purpose of gaining unfair advantage in the assessment process constitutes malpractice, or cheating. Malpractice in any form, including plagiarism, is unacceptable. The Board of Studies NSW treats allegations of malpractice very seriously and detected malpractice will limit a student’s marks and jeopardise their HSC. Should malpractice be suspected, students will be required to demonstrate that all unacknowledged work is entirely their own. Serious and deliberate acts of malpractice amount to corrupt conduct and, where appropriate, the Board of Studies NSW will report matters to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

A summary of student rights and responsibilities in HSC assessment

You have the following rights:

• to be informed of the assessment policies of your school and the Board of Studies
• to receive clear guidelines relating to the requirements of each assessment task
• to be told in advance of the due date for each assessment task
• to receive feedback that assists you to review your work
• to query the mark for an individual task at the time it is returned to you
• to request a review of the calculation of the final assessment mark if you believe your final assessment rank is incorrect.

You have the following responsibilities:

• to become familiar with and follow the assessment requirements set by your school and the rules in the Rules and Procedures for Higher School Certificate Candidates booklet
• to complete all set tasks on time, or talk to your teacher about what is required if you can’t meet a deadline
• not to engage in behaviour which could be considered cheating or malpractice, including plagiarism.
• to ensure that all assessment work is your own or acknowledge the contribution of others
• to follow up any concerns you have with tasks at the time they are marked and returned.

Further help

If you are unsure about anything you have read in this guide ask a teacher or your Year Adviser for help.

All the Board of Studies rules and resources mentioned here are available on the Board’s website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

There are many internet sources of advice on how to avoid plagiarism and manage your studies. For example, university websites often have good general advice on these topics that can also apply to your HSC assessments, written examinations and practical works or projects.

Another good source is the HSC Online website run by Charles Sturt University and the Department of Education and Training. This site has special advice and resources for study skills and plagiarism.