



Independent Study Policy

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Rationale

Independent study is learning that is set to be done outside the timetabled curriculum and is not usually directly supervised by a teacher. Independent study enhances student learning, improves achievement and develops students' study skills and as such is an integral part of the curriculum. Independent study reflects our policies, our teachers' expectations and the academic emphasis in the school. It requires careful planning and integration into the scheme of work of each curriculum area.

Research shows that independent study has a positive impact on student progress. The EEF reports that research shows that the impact of homework, on average, is five months' additional progress. The Department for Education's Effective Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education Project Research Report further supports this, finding that the daily time spent on homework, as reported by students in Year 9 and Year 11, were strong predictors of better academic attainment and progress in both KS3 and KS4. In particular, the strongest effects were noted for those who reported spending 2-3 hours doing homework on a typical school night.

Retrieval Practice 'the testing effect'

Independent study at MEA is strongly focused on retrieval practice, as evidence shows that this approach facilitates improved retention of knowledge. This fits with our knowledge rich curriculum as outlined in the curriculum policy.

A substantial amount of research has been carried out on retrieval practice, since an initial study in 2006 by Roediger and Karpicke found that the method had positive effects for students in the lead up to tests. Some of this evidence shows that retrieval practice can be effective not only with simple facts but also with more complex knowledge and can help learners to apply their knowledge in other contexts. Overall, the current research seems to suggest that most teachers and learners in most learning situations would benefit from increasing the level of retrieval used, i.e. the amount that learners have to actively recall things from memory, and that this should be preferred to re-reading or re-teaching as a learning strategy.

Aims

Independent study enables students to:

- Embed crucial knowledge into their long-term memory.
- Build a greater knowledge base to which new learning can be anchored.
- Take ownership and responsibility for their learning.
- Enhance their study skills e.g. planning, time management and self-discipline.
- Engage parental co-operation and support.
- Create channels for home school dialogue.

This policy follows on from the academy's Curriculum Policy which is based on the following principles best expounded by Daniel T Willingham, namely:

- Factual knowledge precedes skill. Students need knowledge to provide context to their learning. Without knowledge, students will not be able to think critically.
- Memory is the residue of thought. By thinking about things, students are more likely to remember.
- Deep knowledge is our goal. However, in order to achieve this, students will need shallow knowledge first.
- Proficiency requires practice. To achieve deep knowledge, students must practice. Alongside this, we must also test how proficient students are becoming.
- Intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work. Successes and failures need to be discussed in terms of effort, not ability, meaning that all can achieve.

Setting of Independent Study

At KS3

- All independent study for Year 7 and 8 students should be set using knowledge organisers.
- Students will receive a booklet containing knowledge organisers for all subjects at the beginning of each half term. This is the knowledge that they need to learn and be able to recall.
- Each week/fortnight subject teachers set part of the knowledge organiser to learn using retrieval practice. This should be set on class charts.
- Students should complete their independent study on a paper template or in their independent study book.
- Students should use retrieval practice to complete their independent study and learn the knowledge set, at home. The retrieval practice techniques to do this should be modelled repeatedly in lessons by class teachers.
- This knowledge should then be tested in a pre-arranged follow up lesson using a short low-stakes test.
- Teachers must record on class charts whether students have completed their independent study or not.

At KS4 and KS5

- The process and nature of independent study is the same at KS4, however curriculum areas will replace knowledge organisers with more detailed knowledge resources for students to keep at home, for example, revision booklets.

Lost Learning – Catch up

- To ensure that students who have not attended lessons catch up with any lost learning, class teachers must upload lesson resources to Microsoft Teams at the end of the academy day.
- Class teachers must explain and show students how they access the work and catch up on any lost learning.

Incentives and Sanctions

Our aim is to create a positive culture around independent study, emphasising the benefits and rewards in terms of learning and progress to students.

Incentives

- High quality independent study and a good work ethos should be sensitively praised in class.
- To regularly allocate reward points on class charts for excellent completion of independent study.
- Department letter or postcard may be sent home for excellent completion of independent study.
- Students who consistently complete excellent independent study can be nominated for half termly 'Ready' reward badge.
- Students should be made aware that good or excellent completion of independent study will be reflected in their ATL score.

Sanctions

- Students' completion or non-completion of independent study will be regularly reported to parents through Class Charts and the MyED app.
- Students with persistent low levels of independent study should be identified by class teachers/curriculum leaders and specific interventions put in place. For example, phone calls home, conversations with students, independent study completed at break times.
- Non-completion of independent study must be reflected in students ATL score.
- Additionally, Year 11 teachers should ensure that if students are not completing sufficient independent study, in addition to contact home and specific interventions, they should provide time for students to catch up on this study.

Communication with parents

- Students' individual class charts profiles will show the independent study that they have been set and that they have completed each week. Students and parents will be able to view this.
- Parents will also receive communication on independent study completion through the MyED app.

Responsibilities

The role of the student

1. To listen to independent study instructions in class.
2. To ensure they know the instructions for the task and deadline date.
3. To ensure that independent study is completed and handed in to meet the deadline set.
4. To attempt all independent study and give their best.
5. To inform the class teacher of any difficulties.

The role of the Class Teacher

The class teacher controls the direction of independent study and the nature of tasks undertaken.
The teacher will:

1. Set independent study according to the timetable and record on ClassCharts.
2. Set independent study in line with the MEA Independent Study Policy.
3. Give full and comprehensive instructions and model the student process for independent study.
4. Set clear deadlines for completed work and ensure that they are met.
5. Carry out a follow up knowledge test in lesson time.
6. Record student completion on ClassCharts.
7. Provide help and support.
8. Inform the Curriculum Leader, Form Tutor, LCC as appropriate, when problems arise.

Independent Study Timetable

Please see below for recommended quantity and frequency of independent learning at KS3 – KS5.

KS3

Year 7	Frequency	Time
English	Weekly	30 mins
Maths	Weekly	30 mins
Science	Weekly	30 mins
History	Weekly	30 mins
Geography	Weekly	30 mins
Spanish	Fortnightly	30 mins
Art, Business, Computer Science, Food, Music, Performing Arts, Dance, DT, and Power and Belief	Fortnightly	30 mins

Year 8	Frequency	Time
English	Weekly	30 mins
Maths	Weekly	30 mins
Science	Weekly	30 mins
History	Weekly	30 mins
Geography	Weekly	30 mins
Spanish	Fortnightly	30 mins
Art, Business, Computer Science, Food, Music, Performing Arts, Dance, DT, and Power and Belief	Fortnightly	30 mins

Year 9	Frequency	Time
English	Weekly	30 mins
Maths	Weekly	30 mins
Science	Weekly	30 mins
History	Weekly	30 mins
Geography	Weekly	30 mins
Spanish	Fortnightly	30 mins
Art/Textiles, Computer Science, Food, Performing Arts, Business, DT, Music, PE, Dance	Fortnightly	30 mins

KS4

Year 10	Frequency	Time
English	Weekly	60 mins
Maths	Weekly	60 mins
Science	Weekly	60 mins
History / Geography	Weekly	60 mins
Spanish / Option C	Weekly	60 mins
Option A	Weekly	60 mins
Option B	Weekly	60 mins

Year 11	Frequency	Time
English	Weekly	60 mins (+booster)
Maths	Weekly	60 mins (+booster)
Science	Weekly	60 mins (+booster)
History / Geography	Weekly	60 mins
Spanish / Option C	Weekly	60 mins
Option A	Weekly	60 mins
Option B	Weekly	60 mins

KS5

Sixth Form	Frequency	Time
Enterprise	Weekly	60 mins
Sport	Weekly	60 mins
Business Marketing	Weekly	60 mins
Health and Social	Weekly	60 mins