

Teachers



HSC Assessments and Submitted Works

Best Practice Strategies for Preventing and Dealing with Malpractice

A Guide for Teachers

This document has been prepared to assist teachers of HSC students in advising and supervising students during the HSC assessment program. It provides advice on establishing sound processes for monitoring students' work, including measures to prevent cheating or malpractice. It also provides strategies for dealing with cases of suspected cheating.

The advice is relevant for both assessment activities undertaken as part of a school's HSC assessment program and those projects and works that are submitted as part of the HSC external examinations.

What is assessment?

Assessment is the process of gathering information and making judgements about student achievement for a variety of purposes. In the context of the HSC, these purposes include:

monitoring student progress, furthering student learning, reporting student achievements in relation to the standards established for each course and contributing to the calculation of the Universities Admission Index (UAI).

What is malpractice?

Cheating, or malpractice, is dishonest behaviour by a student that gives them an unfair advantage over others. Most students understand what cheating in an examination means, but there are other types of behaviour that are also considered cheating.

Here are some examples of behaviour considered to be cheating:

- copying, buying, stealing or borrowing someone else's work in part or in whole, and presenting it as their own

- using material directly from books, journals, CDs or the internet without acknowledging the source
- submitting work that contains a large contribution from another person, such as a parent, coach or subject expert, that is not acknowledged
- paying someone to write or prepare material that is associated with a task, such as process diaries, logs and journals.

The examples above are generally referred to as plagiarism.

The assessment policy developed and published by each school must contain a section that addresses malpractice and the consequences of such activities.

Schools must act on any form of malpractice that is brought to their attention.

Why is cheating an issue in relation to the HSC?

The Higher School Certificate is a well-respected and widely recognised educational credential. It is used by many students to help them gain employment and to access further education. Cheating undermines the integrity of the qualification.

Deliberate acts of cheating can occur in situations where a student feels that their own efforts may be viewed as inadequate, or where the student feels unable to cope with the consequences of poor performance. Students may cheat unintentionally if they are poorly



prepared, or unaware of appropriate procedures for the acknowledgement of the contributions made by others to their work.

As the HSC is the means by which many students in NSW gain entry to tertiary education, it is considered by many to be a pivotal point in their lives. The pressure students place upon themselves to succeed may be such that they consider engaging in acts they might not otherwise have contemplated.

Cheating in relation to the HSC is a serious offence as it distorts legitimate measures of a student's achievements. While cheating advantages the individual, it disadvantages other students by altering the order in which they are ranked within their class group and distorting the moderation process

that is applied to internal assessment marks.

Prevention of cheating

Prevention of malpractice is always preferable to dealing with its consequences. There are a number of actions schools can take to help students avoid cheating.

- Ensure that all students understand what malpractice is, and its consequences.
- Ensure students have read and understood the Board's *Rules and Procedures for Higher School Certificate Candidates* booklet. The Board requires schools to ensure that students sign a declaration to this effect on their Confirmation of Entry form. Schools can use this as an opportunity to reinforce key messages regarding malpractice.
- In the assessment policy developed and published by the school, include a section on what constitutes malpractice, and how the school will act should it become aware of any form of malpractice.
- Design tasks in such a way that opportunities for malpractice are minimised, including having a level of supervision sufficient to verify the authenticity of the students' work.
- Ensure the *HSC: All My Own Work* program (or equivalent) is used to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of good scholarship principles and practices.
- Assist students in learning how to document and record legitimate assistance they have obtained, such as correct referencing and acknowledgement of sources and acknowledgement of assistance with specific aspects of projects.

- Ensure teachers understand the nature of feedback that can legitimately be given during the development of projects, assignments etc, so that they can confidently assist students without contributing to inadvertent malpractice.
- Encourage an atmosphere of cooperative learning among students to maximise the achievement of everyone in the group, rather than an unhealthy level of competition that leads students to seek opportunities to advantage themselves over others.
- Ensure that assessment tasks across the school are scheduled carefully so the workload is manageable for students.

How can teachers assist students to be adequately prepared for assessment tasks?

Teachers should encourage students to:

- be aware of due dates, keep an up-to-date diary of all assessments, activities and commitments and allocate time effectively
- start tasks early so that clarification can be sought if needed
- break tasks into a series of smaller steps and set deadlines for the completion of each section
- save all drafts and support materials. If sources are noted as they are used, the bibliography does not become a major task at the end
- constantly save and back up any work completed on computer. The failure of technology is generally not an acceptable excuse for the late submission of work.

What strategies can schools use to prevent malpractice in relation to activities, projects and practical assessment tasks completed outside class time?

Schools may consider a range of strategies to help ensure the authenticity of student responses to research-based tasks. Ensuring students are adequately briefed and feel prepared for the challenges presented by an assessment task should mean they are less likely to engage in undesirable practices.

Strategies to prevent malpractice in relation to work completed outside class time are generally most effective when a consistent approach is established and applied across the whole school.

Wherever possible, class time should be allocated to the planning and drafting of an initial response to the task. Students may be required to prepare annotated references, maintain a process diary/journal, present work either orally or in writing at key stages of the development process and/or submit original drafts in addition to the final copy. Multiple submission dates may also be considered as a means of monitoring a student's progress.

Teachers must ensure students understand that practical and performance tasks that incorporate the words, ideas, designs or workmanship of others must clearly identify the original source.



Students responding to a practical or performance brief may be asked to develop an action plan with a specific time frame to be signed off when each task is completed. Students may be required to keep logbooks, journals or reflection statements throughout the development of their performance work. They may be asked to present for a viva voce or deliver a short talk or presentation on their progress. This could include submitting their log books and discussing the entries.

When preparing a brief for any assessment task being undertaken by parallel classes, teachers must develop a shared understanding of the nature and extent of the support they are prepared to provide. The degree of teacher involvement in the development/rehearsal or execution of a work should be clearly communicated to students at the outset.

In group situations, students may be asked to report orally or in writing on their contribution and progress at various stages during the developmental process. At critical points students may be asked to present their work in progress.

Strategies for dealing with malpractice

It is strongly recommended that schools establish an Assessment Review Panel as part of their assessment procedures. A suggested composition of this panel would be the Deputy Principal, the Assessment Coordinator and a Head Teacher not from the faculty in which the issue has arisen. The panel should present its recommendations to the Principal of the school.

In cases where malpractice is **suspected** or has been **proven** the following procedures should be applied.

- Procedural fairness must be accorded to the student at all times.
- All claims **must** be substantiated.
- Teachers should refrain from making any accusations until the facts have been established.
- The source(s) of the information should be investigated thoroughly.
- Any evidence collected should be preserved in its original state.
- Confidentiality should be maintained at all times by all parties.
- Parents must be informed if the student is under 18.
- Notes should be taken during any interviews. These notes should be kept as part of the official record of a case.
- A counselling strategy should be initiated to support the student during the process.
- Whenever the student is being interviewed they should be given access to a parent or other appropriate support person.
- The student should be provided with the opportunity to present any mitigating circumstances. These should be taken into consideration when penalties are being determined.
- Each case should be reviewed by the school's Assessment Review Panel.
- This panel should consider all of the issues and deal with each case on its merits.
- The student should be advised of the findings of the panel and the basis for their decision.
- The student should also be informed of their avenues of appeal.
- The panel should also notify the Principal of any procedures that require revision or improvement.

Consequences of malpractice

The consequences of proven malpractice can be quite serious. Depending on the circumstances of the case, zero marks may be awarded for the task, the task may not be certified by the school when submitted to the Board of Studies for external marking or the student may be deemed ineligible for the award of the HSC in that course.

Student rights and responsibilities regarding assessment

Teachers can assist by ensuring their students are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding assessment tasks. Students have the right to:

- be informed of the policies of the school and Board of Studies in relation to assessment

- be informed on the nature and purpose of HSC assessment
- receive clear guidelines relating to the requirements of each assessment task
- receive meaningful feedback that assists them to review their work
- expect a consistent interpretation and application of the school's policy on assessment
- query the mark awarded for an individual task at the time of its return
- request a review of the calculation of the final assessment mark if they believe their final assessment rank is incorrect.
- complete all set tasks
- understand what malpractice is and avoid all acts which could be considered as malpractice
- seek assistance from appropriate sources when additional skills or information are required
- notify a teacher if a group member is not contributing fairly to the development of group work
- ensure that all sources of information are appropriately acknowledged
- follow up any issues with individual tasks at the time they are marked and returned.

Students have the responsibility to:

- become familiar with and comply with the assessment policies of the school and the Board of Studies



Further information

The *Rules and Procedures for Higher School Certificate Candidates* booklet is available on the Board of Studies website at <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/#hscrules>

The *HSC: All My Own Work* program provides an excellent guide to HSC students on the principles and practices of good scholarship. The program's modules and interactive quizzes reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of issues such as plagiarism, copyright, acknowledging sources, working with others and malpractice. The program is available in online and printable formats at <http://amow.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>

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 links on study skills and plagiarism as well as an HSC study planner that can be downloaded from <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/study/index.htm>

For further information about school-based assessment for the HSC, go to the Assessment Resource Centre at arc.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au