

NATIONAL HOME WORK POLICY 2026

Advancing Educational Transformation in Malta

**Empowering Learners,
Enabling Educators, and
Engaging Families**



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION

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NATIONAL
EDUCATION
STRATEGY
2024 - 2030

Advancing Educational Transformation in Malta

***Empowering Learners,
Enabling Educators, and
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	FOREWORD BY HON. MINISTER DR CLIFTON GRIMA
2	FOREWORD BY PERMANENT SECRETARY MR MATTHEW VELLA
3	FOREWORD BY DIRECTOR GENERAL MR JUDE ZAMMIT
5	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
7	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
9	VISION STATEMENT
10	MISSION STATEMENT
11	BACKGROUND, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
15	DEFINING HOMEWORK FOR LEARNING, EQUITY AND WELLBEING
17	NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL VISION
19	EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY APPROACHES TO HOMEWORK
21	CONSULTATION
23	STRATEGIC PILLARS
24	INTRODUCTION
25	FRAMEWORK FOR HOMEWORK DESIGN
29	PILLAR 1: Empowering the Learner: The Learner as an Active Agent
31	MEASURE 1.1: Strengthen learner independence, responsibility, and self- management
33	MEASURE 1.2: Ensure homework provides meaningful, varied, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences

35	MEASURE 1.3: Safeguard learner wellbeing, balance, and equity in homework practices
37	PILLAR 2: Enabling the Educator: The Educator as Leader and Designer of Meaningful Learning
39	MEASURE 2.1: Strengthen homework planning and coordination
41	MEASURE 2.2: Strengthen formative assessment and feedback practices related to homework
42	MEASURE 2.3: Strengthen inclusive, differentiated, and developmentally appropriate homework practices
45	PILLAR 3: Engaging the Family: The Family as Learning Partner
47	MEASURE 3.1: Strengthen school-family communication and shared understanding of homework expectations
49	MEASURE 3.2: Promote supportive parental engagement that fosters learner independence
51	MEASURE 3.3: Support balance, wellbeing, and fairness in the home learning environment
53	MONITORING AND EVALUATION
54	CONCLUSION: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE
55	REFERENCES



**FOREWORD BY
HON. MINISTER**

**DR CLIFTON
GRIMA**

Education in Malta continues to evolve in response to the needs of our students and the aspirations of our society. As we move forward with the reforms outlined in Malta Vision 2050 and the National Education Strategy 2024–2030, it is essential that every aspect of the learning experience reflects our commitment to quality, inclusion, and wellbeing. The National Homework Policy represents an important step in this direction.

Homework has long been a familiar part of educational practice. However, research and experience have shown that the value of homework is not the quantity assigned, but in the quality and purpose behind it. This policy therefore seeks to transform homework from a routine task into a meaningful extension of classroom learning – one that supports curiosity, reinforces understanding, and encourages students to take greater ownership of their learning journey.

At the heart of this policy are three guiding pillars: Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family. Together, these pillars recognise that learning does not happen in isolation. Students must be supported to develop independence and self-regulation; educators must be trusted and enabled to design purposeful learning experiences; and families must be engaged as valued partners within a balanced and supportive learning environment.

The policy also introduces a clear and developmentally appropriate framework for homework across different educational stages, from the early years through to secondary education. By aligning expectations with students’ developmental needs and by promoting varied forms of homework – such as practice, exploration, application, and integration – we aim to ensure that learning beyond the classroom remains engaging, relevant, and equitable.

This approach respects the broader lives of our students. Time for rest, family life, creativity, sport, and community engagement is essential to healthy development and wellbeing. A balanced homework culture must therefore support learning while safeguarding these vital dimensions of childhood and adolescence.

This policy is the result of extensive dialogue with educators, students, parents, and stakeholders. It reflects our shared commitment to building an education system that nurtures capable, confident, and resilient individuals prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to the development of this policy and look forward to its successful implementation across our educational community.

DR CLIFTON GRIMA

Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation



**FOREWORD BY
PERMANENT SECRETARY**

**MR MATTHEW
VELLA**

The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) remains committed to ensuring that Malta's education system continues to evolve in ways that place learners, educators, and families at the centre of meaningful and equitable learning experiences. The National Homework Policy represents an important step in this ongoing transformation, providing a coherent and evidence-informed framework that repositions homework as a purposeful extension of learning rather than a routine or compliance-driven practice.

This policy, aligned with the National Education Strategy 2024–2030, reflects our national commitment to providing quality education, ensuring learners' wellbeing, and creating inclusive opportunities for all. It promotes a shift from quantity-driven approaches to a stronger focus on the educational value of homework, ensuring that tasks are purposeful, balanced, and developmentally appropriate across all stages of schooling.

The policy is structured around three interdependent pillars: Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family. Together, these pillars recognise that effective learning beyond the classroom depends on shared responsibility. Learners are encouraged to develop independence, responsibility, and positive learning habits. Educators are supported as professional creators of meaningful learning experiences. Families are engaged as constructive partners in creating supportive home learning environments.

Through this framework, the policy aims to strengthen learner agency, support high-quality teaching and formative feedback, and safeguard balance and wellbeing in learners' daily lives. Ultimately, it seeks to ensure that homework contributes positively to educational excellence, equity, and the development of lifelong learning dispositions that will serve Malta's learners and society well into the future.

MR MATTHEW VELLA

Permanent Secretary

Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR)



**FOREWORD BY
DIRECTOR GENERAL**

**MR JUDE
ZAMMIT**

Homework continues to hold an important place in education, but in today's world its purpose must be carefully reconsidered. This National Homework Policy responds to that need. It recognises that homework should no longer be understood simply as a routine extension of classroom work, but as a meaningful part of a learner's wider educational experience. One that supports progress, responsibility, and personal development without compromising wellbeing.

We are living in an age in which children and young people are growing up surrounded by technology. Digital tools have brought significant opportunities for learning, access to information, creativity, and communication. At the same time, however, they have also transformed the way students engage with knowledge, attention, effort, and time. The rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence adds another layer of complexity. While such tools can support learning when used ethically and wisely, they also risk encouraging over-reliance, reducing opportunities for genuine thinking, reflection, and independent practice if homework is not designed with clear purpose and care.

For this reason, a modern homework policy must do more than regulate quantity. It must define quality. It must promote homework that is relevant, manageable, developmentally appropriate, and capable of fostering authentic learning. It must also protect space for reading, rest, family life, play, creativity, physical activity, and participation in co-curricular experiences, all of which are essential to the healthy development of the child.

This policy is therefore grounded in the principle that homework should reinforce learning, cultivate responsibility, and encourage independence, while avoiding unnecessary pressure and excessive burden. It reflects our commitment to an education system that values both excellence and wellbeing.

Ultimately, homework should serve learning, not dominate it. It should help students grow in confidence, discipline, and curiosity, while respecting the realities of contemporary childhood and adolescence. It is in this spirit that this policy has been developed: to ensure that homework remains purposeful, balanced, and aligned with the educational needs of our time.

MR JUDE ZAMMIT

Director General

Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning, and Employability





LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
DQSE	DIRECTORATE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
EACEA	EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY
ELET	EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
GEM	GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING (REPORT)
MEYR	MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
NCF	NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK
OECD	ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PISA	PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Homework Policy sets out a coherent, evidence-informed, and learner-centred framework for the design, assignment, and support of homework across all educational stages in Malta. Situated within the national transformation plan articulated in Malta Vision 2050 and the National Education Strategy 2024–2030, the policy repositions homework as a meaningful extension of classroom learning rather than a routine or compliance-driven activity. It responds to extensive consultation with educators, learners, families, and stakeholders, and to growing evidence highlighting the importance of quality, balance, inclusion, and learner wellbeing in educational practice.

The policy is structured around three interdependent pillars: Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family. Together, these pillars reflect a shared responsibility for learning that recognises learners as active agents, educators as professional designers of meaningful learning experiences, and families as supportive partners in a balanced learning ecosystem. The policy promotes a shift from quantity-driven to quality-driven homework, emphasising purposeful task design, formative feedback, coordination across subjects, and respect for learners' time for rest, family life, and co-curricular engagement.

To support coherent and developmentally appropriate practice, the policy adopts both an age-phase model and a pedagogical framework for homework design. Expectations are differentiated across Kindergarten, Early Years, Junior Years, Middle Years, and Secondary Years, ensuring a progressive development of learner independence. Complementing this, homework shall be structured around four broad and complementary types of tasks, namely practice, exploration, application, and integration, ensuring variety, depth, and relevance in learning beyond the classroom. Such work shall be guided by the professional expertise of educators.

Through this framework, the policy aims to strengthen learner agency and self-regulation, support educators' professional evaluation and planning, and foster constructive and realistic family engagement, while safeguarding equity and wellbeing for all learners and their families. In doing so, it positions homework as a strategic tool for educational quality, social inclusion, and long-term national resilience.

VISION STATEMENT

To cultivate a national homework culture that empowers learners, supports professional teaching practice, and engages families in ways that promote meaningful learning, equity, and wellbeing, enabling every learner in Malta to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

MISSION STATEMENT

The National Homework Policy seeks to provide a coherent national framework that transforms homework into a purposeful, balanced, and inclusive extension of learning. Through the three pillars of Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family, and through the use of an age-phase approach and a pedagogical framework based on practice, exploration, application, and integration, the policy aims to strengthen learner agency, support high-quality teaching and formative feedback, promote equity and wellbeing, and ensure that homework contributes positively to educational excellence and lifelong learning for all.

BACKGROUND, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The National Homework Policy is situated within Malta’s broader commitment to building an inclusive, high-quality and future-ready education system, as articulated in Malta Vision 2050¹ and the National Education Strategy 2024–2030². Both frameworks emphasise human capital development, wellbeing, equity, and lifelong learning as central to Malta’s social and economic sustainability. Within this context, homework is not viewed as an end in itself, but as a strategic lever to extend learning beyond the classroom in ways that are meaningful, balanced, and developmentally appropriate. The policy responds to extensive consultation with educators, learners, families, and stakeholders, as well as to evolving evidence on effective teaching and learning, learner wellbeing, and the need to move away from overly burdensome, repetitive, and inequitable homework practices.^{3,4,5}

The policy is built around three interdependent pillars: Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator and Engaging the Family. Together, these pillars reflect a shared responsibility for learning that recognises learners as active participants in their own development, educators as professional leaders and designers of purposeful, inclusive learning experiences, and families as essential partners in supporting balanced and holistic growth. This approach aligns with the National Education Strategy’s emphasis on learner agency, professional trust in educators, and stronger school–family–community partnerships², while also supporting Malta Vision 2050’s focus on social cohesion, wellbeing, and skills for an uncertain and rapidly changing future.¹

1 Government of Malta. (2026). Malta Vision 2050: A safe and resilient nation, inspired by heritage and driven by progress, fostering a healthy quality of life for all.

2 Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation. (2024). National Education Strategy 2024–2030: Visioning the future by transforming education. Government of Malta

3 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025). Finite Time to Learn and Play: Whole Student Development and Students’ Digital Leisure Outside of School. OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 130. OECD Publishing.

4 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2022). UNESCO strategy on education for health and wellbeing. UNESCO.


5 World Health Organization & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2025). Making every school a healthpromoting school: Implementation guidance for school health services. WHO

The primary aim of the policy is to ensure that homework contributes positively to learners' academic progress, personal development, and wellbeing by promoting purposeful, relevant, and varied learning experiences beyond the classroom. It seeks to shift the focus from homework as a routine or compliance-driven task to homework as a meaningful extension of learning that reinforces understanding, nurtures curiosity, develops independence, and supports the acquisition of 21st-century skills.^{3,4} In doing so, the policy promotes quality over quantity, encourages formative feedback rather than summative pressure, emphasises the responsible role of the learner, and safeguards learners' wellbeing through a balanced life that includes rest, family time, play, cultural engagement, and co-curricular activities.⁵

The objectives of the policy are therefore to:

- I. provide clear national guidance on the design, assignment, coordination, and review of homework across all educational stages;
- II. support educators in planning inclusive, flexible, and developmentally appropriate tasks;
- III. strengthen learners' capacity for responsibility, self-regulation, and independent learning; and
- IV. foster constructive and realistic family engagement in learning.^{2,4}

In line with both Malta Vision 2050 and the National Education Strategy, the policy also aims to promote equity and social justice by ensuring that homework practices do not disadvantage learners with differing home circumstances, while encouraging schools to adopt supportive structures and coordinated approaches.^{3,5} Through these objectives, the policy positions homework as a tool for educational excellence, wellbeing, and long-term societal resilience.^{1,2}



DEFINING HOMEWORK FOR

LEARNING, EQUITY AND WELLBEING

The National Homework Policy defines homework as structured learning tasks assigned outside the classroom that are directly supportive of school learning, but not limited to written work. It includes age-appropriate opportunities for reading, play, cultural and creative activities, and real-world application of learning, and is designed so that learners can complete tasks with increasing independence and minimal reliance on parents or guardians. This definition intentionally broadens homework from a narrow focus on written exercises to a set of purposeful learning opportunities that support the development of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and positive learning habits, in line with the policy's pillars of Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family.

The policy recognises that the relationship between homework and measured attainment is not uniform and varies by age, subject, and how homework is designed and evaluated.⁶ Evidence from major research syntheses indicates that, for younger learners, average measured effects tend to be small or negligible, while in secondary

⁶ Council of the European Union. (2022). Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (2022/C 469/01). Official Journal of the European Union.

education effects are more often positive⁷ but remain sensitive to task quality, purpose, and the way homework is measured (for example, time spent versus quality, frequency, or completion).⁸ Where causal relationships cannot be clearly established, this policy avoids treating “more time” as a proxy for “more learning”^{4,9} and instead prioritises purposeful, feasible tasks supported by feedback and classroom follow-up.¹⁰

In view of this, equity and learner wellbeing are central to this definition¹¹. International analysis highlights that homework can place a disproportionate burden on learners due to constraints related to space, time, and the availability of adult support³, with the potential to widen performance gaps if not carefully designed.¹² At the same time, research on heavy homework loads, particularly in high-performing systems, links excessive workload with increased stress and reduced balance in learners’ lives, reinforcing the need for coordination across subjects, task variety, and explicit safeguards for rest, family time, and co-curricular participation.¹³

In light of this evidence, and recognising that findings vary across ages and contexts, the policy adopts a quality-over-quantity approach to homework. The focus is placed on learning value, equity, and the learner experience, rather than on volume or time spent, with ongoing monitoring to ensure that homework remains a supportive extension of learning and wellbeing, rather than a source of unnecessary pressure or inequity.¹⁴

7 Council of the European Union. (2021). Council Recommendation of 29 November 2021 on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education (2021/C 504/03). Official Journal of the European Union.

8 European School Education Platform. (2022). Toolkit for School Success. Chapter 3: Support to learners. European Commission.

9 Eurydice. (2018). Homework: What is it good for? European Commission.

10 World Health Organization & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2021). Making every school a health-promoting school: Implementation guidance.

11 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2014). Does Homework Perpetuate Inequities in Education? PISA in Focus, No. 46. OECD Publishing.

12 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). Future of Education and Skills 2030. OECD Publishing.

13 Ozyildirim, G. (2022). Time Spent on Homework and Academic Achievement: A Meta-analysis Study Related to Results of TIMSS. *Psicología Educativa*, 28(1), 13–21.

14 Yang, Z., Yu, Y., & Chen, R. (2026). The effect of E-homework on K-12 students' academic achievements: a meta-analysis study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17 (1758739).

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL VISION



The National Homework Policy is embedded within Malta's wider education transformation agenda as set out in the National Education Strategy 2024–2030 and the long-term vision articulated in Malta Vision 2050.^{1,2} These position education as a central driver of social cohesion, economic resilience, and individual wellbeing, and call for learning experiences that are future-oriented, inclusive and focused on the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning dispositions. Within this context, homework is understood not as an isolated practice, but as part of a coherent learning ecosystem that connects curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and learner support across and beyond the school day.

The policy also aligns with the ongoing curriculum transformation process supported through an OECD collaboration, which emphasises competency-based learning, coherence across learning areas, and a stronger focus on learner agency, relevance, and depth of learning. This shift requires learning tasks (both in and out of school) to move away from excessive emphasis on rote practice and towards purposeful, well-designed activities that consolidate understanding, support application, and encourage reflection. Homework, in this sense, becomes one of the tools through which curriculum intentions are realised in practice, rather than a parallel or disconnected requirement.

Furthermore, the policy supports and is informed by key national strategies, including the Digital Education Strategy, the Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Strategy, and the National Frameworks for Standards and Quality Assurance.² The Digital Education Strategy reinforces the importance of using technology to enhance learning quality, accessibility, and engagement, which has implications for the design of homework tasks that may include digital, research-based, and creative components.¹³ The ELET Strategy, in turn, highlights the need to reduce disengagement and remove barriers to participation in learning, an objective that requires homework practices to be inclusive, realistic, and sensitive to learners' home circumstances.

In this light, homework is positioned as a supportive and enabling component of Malta's broader education transformational process: one that contributes to raising standards, promoting equity, and fostering lifelong learning habits, while also safeguarding learner wellbeing and balanced development.² The policy therefore provides national guidance to ensure that homework practices across schools are coherent with strategic priorities, professionally grounded, and aligned with the evolving curriculum and quality assurance frameworks.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY

APPROACHES TO HOMEWORK

At European level, there is increasing recognition that learning beyond the classroom must be purposeful, balanced, and equitable, and that excessive or poorly designed out-of-school workload can undermine both learning and wellbeing.⁴ While there is no single EU homework policy, European education monitoring and policy guidance consistently emphasise learner wellbeing, inclusive education, and the quality of learning processes rather than the quantity of tasks assigned. The EU's school success framework and Council guidance⁶ highlight whole-school approaches and partnerships with families and explicitly reference structured supports such as reading clubs, libraries, and after-school programmes. This approach aligns strongly with the policy pillar Engaging the Family: The Family as Learning Partner, but signals a key distinction: families are partners in enabling learning, while systems remain responsible for providing equitable supports where home resources differ.

In parallel, EU guidance on blended learning formalises a wider notion of learning environments, the home and community spaces and explicitly positions learner wellbeing, autonomy, and personalised learning as design priorities, while also acknowledging the digital divide and the need to avoid shifting burdens onto families.⁸ For homework policy, this supports practical guidance such as: designing tasks that work both offline and online; coordinating across subjects; ensuring accessibility via common platforms; and treating feedback as formative learning support rather than simple grading.

Similarly, OECD analyses, particularly those drawing on PISA data, have highlighted that homework practices vary widely across countries and that time spent on homework is not a reliable proxy for learning quality or outcomes. The OECD has also cautioned that homework can perpetuate or exacerbate educational inequalities when learners' ability to complete tasks depends heavily on home resources, space, time, or adult support.^{3,11} These findings reinforce the importance of national policies that focus on task design, coordination, and fairness, rather than on increasing workload, and that provide compensatory measures and school-based supports where needed.

International organisations such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) have further stressed the centrality of learner wellbeing, mental health, and balanced development as integral to educational quality and learner success.^{5,4} UNESCO's work on education for health and wellbeing underscores the need for education systems to ensure that learning demands do not undermine learners' physical, social, and emotional development, while WHO's health-promoting schools framework highlights the role of school policies in creating environments that support healthy routines, manageable workloads, and positive learning experiences.^{5,4} These perspectives are directly relevant to homework as a daily interface between school expectations and learners' lives beyond school.

This broader policy direction provides an important context for national approaches to homework that prioritise coherence, proportionality, and educational value. Taken together, EU and international evidence support a shift from quantity-driven to quality-driven homework policies, grounded in wellbeing, equity, and educational purpose. The National Homework Policy reflects that direction by framing homework as a meaningful extension of learning, by embedding safeguards for balance and fairness, and by aligning national practice with widely recognised international principles on quality education, equity, and wellbeing.

CONSULTATION

The development of the National Homework Policy followed a structured, multi-phase consultation process to ensure broad stakeholder engagement, professional scrutiny, and evidence-informed refinement. Between April and June 2023, the draft was developed through ongoing discussions and a presentation to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) Board. From July to October 2023, the working groups reviewed the NCF Board's feedback, updated the policy, and prepared it for preliminary consultation. Further targeted stakeholder engagement took place between October 2023 and October 2024.

A comprehensive public consultation was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025 through multiple channels, including focus groups and discussions held within the Malta Education Foresight Forum as an integral part of the Educators as Policy Makers initiative, as well as online questionnaires distributed to educators, parents, and learners in both primary and secondary schools. In parallel, the policy continued to be informed by expert feedback, including recommendations from the NCF Review Board, particularly on homework scheduling and task diversity. Across all phases, almost 1,500 responses were received. A thorough analysis of the feedback was carried out in February 2025, after which the policy was refined and presented to the NCF Board.

The consultation resulted in significant refinements to the policy, all of which are now structured around the three strategic pillars of Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family. Three major changes were introduced: revised guidance on homework workload, including the removal of rigid time limits and adjustments to support, better balance and learner wellbeing; the introduction of a clear pedagogical framework for homework, organised around four types of tasks 'Practice, Exploration, Application, and Integration' to support purposeful design rather than routine assignment; and greater flexibility for learners with learning needs, alongside strengthened guidance on parental engagement aimed at promoting independence rather than dependency.

Overall, the consultation confirmed strong stakeholder support for more engaging, diverse, purposeful, and balanced homework practices and directly shaped the final policy's focus on practicality, flexibility, reading, parental engagement, balanced workload, inclusivity, and equity.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

INTRODUCTION

The National Homework Policy is structured around three interdependent pillars: Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family. Together, these pillars define the shared responsibilities of learners, educators, and families in ensuring that homework supports meaningful learning, equity, and wellbeing. The pillars are underpinned by a focus on quality over quantity, formative feedback over summative grading, and purposeful task design over routine or compliance-driven practices. They provide the strategic framework through which homework is planned, assigned, supported, and reviewed across all schools and educational levels.

Within this structure, the policy adopts both an age-phase model and a pedagogical framework for homework design. The age-phase model differentiates expectations across Kindergarten, Early Years, Junior Years, Middle Years, and Secondary Years, ensuring that homework is developmentally appropriate and progressively builds learner independence. Complementing this, the pedagogical framework organises homework into four broad and complementary types, namely practice, exploration, application, and integration, in order to support variety, depth, and relevance in learning beyond the classroom. Together, these elements ensure coherence between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, while safeguarding balance, inclusion, and learner wellbeing.

FRAMEWORK FOR HOMEWORK DESIGN

The policy establishes a common pedagogical framework to guide the design of homework across all subjects and year groups. The four complementary types of homework are not intended to function as a checklist or quota, but as a planning lens to support purposeful, varied, and developmentally appropriate homework that aligns with curriculum goals and classroom learning.

Practice homework focuses on consolidating and reinforcing skills, concepts, dispositions, and values already introduced in class. Exploration homework supports learners in engaging with new ideas or deepening their understanding through activities such as reading, viewing, listening, inquiry, or research, which may be teacher-guided or learner-initiated. Application homework encourages learners to transfer what they have learned to real-life or authentic contexts, strengthening relevance and understanding. Integration homework supports interdisciplinary and cross-curricular learning by requiring learners to connect knowledge and skills from different subjects or areas of learning within a single task. When used flexibly and in combination, these four types promote a balanced, meaningful, and learner-centred approach to homework, moving beyond repetitive written exercises toward richer, more engaging learning experiences.

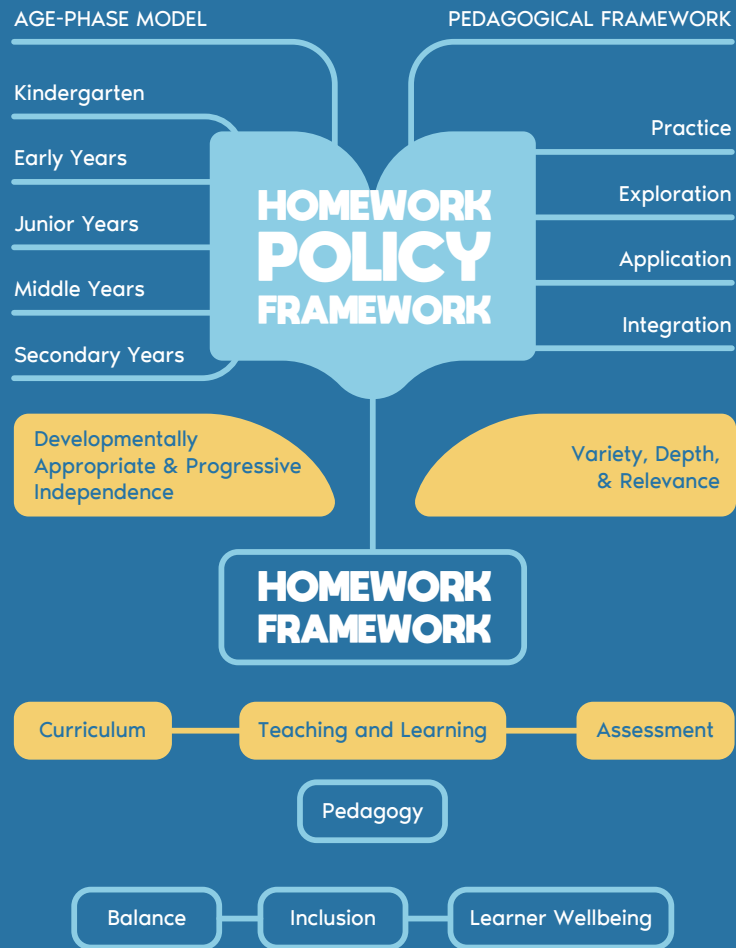


Figure 1 – Pedagogical framework to guide the design of homework

PILLAR 1:

EMPOWERING THE LEARNER- THE LEARNER AS AN ACTIVE AGENT

This pillar places learners at the centre of homework, recognising them as active participants in their own learning rather than passive recipients of tasks. Under this pillar, homework supports the development of responsibility, self-regulation, independence, and positive learning dispositions, in line with the policy's emphasis on quality, balance, and wellbeing. Tasks are designed to be meaningful, age-appropriate, and increasingly self-managed, enabling learners to consolidate learning, apply knowledge in real-life contexts, and develop lifelong learning habits without excessive reliance on adult support.

PILLAR 2:

ENABLING THE EDUCATOR- THE EDUCATOR AS LEADER AND DESIGNER OF MEANINGFUL LEARNING

This pillar recognises educators as policy makers, professional leaders and designers of high-quality learning experiences, including homework. It highlights the importance of purposeful planning, coordination across subjects, differentiation, and the use of varied task types to meet diverse learner needs. Within this policy, homework is not treated as routine or compliance-driven, but as a deliberate extension of classroom learning, supported by formative feedback and aligned with curriculum goals. This pillar also reflects the policy's commitment to professional evaluation, inclusive practice, and the shift from quantity-driven to quality-driven homework.

PILLAR 3:

ENGAGING THE FAMILY – THE FAMILY AS LEARNING PARTNER

This pillar acknowledges the essential role of families in supporting learners, while clearly affirming that homework should foster learner independence rather than dependency. It promotes a constructive partnership between schools and families, based on clear communication, shared understanding of expectations, and support for a balanced approach to learning. Within this framework, families are encouraged to provide a supportive environment and positive encouragement, while homework tasks are designed to be accessible, fair, and manageable for all learners, regardless of home circumstances, in line with the policy's commitment to equity and wellbeing.

PILLAR 1:

EMPOWERING THE LEARNER

**THE LEARNER
AS AN ACTIVE
AGENT**

This pillar is grounded in a substantial body of international research and policy guidance that emphasises the importance of learner agency, self-regulation, and active engagement in learning. Evidence from large-scale research syntheses and international organisations indicates that learning outcomes are more strongly associated with the quality, purpose, and design of learning tasks than with the amount of time spent on them. Learners benefit most when they are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning processes.¹⁵ In the context of homework, this underscores the importance of tasks that promote reflection, independence, and meaningful engagement, rather than compliance or routine completion.¹⁶

Furthermore, international evidence highlights the need to balance academic demands with learners' wellbeing and developmental needs, particularly in relation to workload, stress, and equity. OECD and UNESCO analyses caution that excessive or poorly designed homework can exacerbate inequalities and negatively affect learner motivation and wellbeing¹⁷, especially for younger learners and those with limited support at home.⁴ At the same time, research shows that when homework is purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and supported by formative feedback, it can contribute to the development of self-regulation, positive learning dispositions, and long-term learning habits.¹⁷ Within this evidence-informed perspective, this pillar frames homework as a strategic tool for strengthening learner agency and independence while safeguarding balance, inclusion, and wellbeing.

Measures

- *Measure 1.1: Strengthen learner independence, responsibility, and self-management through homework*
- *Measure 1.2: Ensure homework provides meaningful, varied, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences*
- *Measure 1.3: Safeguard learner wellbeing, balance, and equity in homework practices*

15 Hattie, J. (2008). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Routledge.

16 Cooper, H., Robinson, J. C., & Patall, E. A. (2006). Does homework improve academic achievement? A synthesis of research, 1987–2003. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(1), 1–62.

17 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2014). Does homework perpetuate inequities in education? OECD Publishing.

Measure 1.1

Strengthen learner independence, responsibility, and self-management

Homework will progressively build learners' capacity to organise their work, manage time, seek clarification, act on feedback, and take responsibility for completing and submitting tasks, in line with age and developmental stage.

Short-Term Actions

- 1.1.1 In Kindergarten, no written homework shall be assigned; activities shall focus on play-based and experiential learning that reinforces classroom learning and supports positive learning dispositions.
- 1.1.2 Written homework in Year 1 is generally discouraged, except where educators deem it pedagogically necessary; in Year 2, homework shall be introduced gradually through multi-sensory, developmentally appropriate and reading-based activities.
- 1.1.3 In Years 3 to 6, learners shall be supported to record tasks, manage simple deadlines, and follow instructions independently through varied and age-appropriate tasks.
- 1.1.4 In Years 7 to 11, learners shall be expected to plan, organise, and complete homework tasks with increasing independence.
- 1.1.5 Across all year groups, learners shall seek clarification when tasks are not understood and shall act on feedback provided.
- 1.1.6 Clear procedures shall apply for homework during short and extended absences, including reasonable timelines for the completion and submission of missed work.

Medium-Term Actions

- 1.1.7 Schools shall establish a coherent progression in expectations for learner responsibility, with particular attention to transition years.
- 1.1.8 Learners shall be systematically supported to develop skills in organisation, time management, self-regulation, and reflection.
- 1.1.9 Schools may provide optional enrichment or revision tasks for learners who wish to extend their learning, provided these do not increase compulsory workload.

Long-Term Actions

- 1.1.10 Learner agency and responsibility in relation to homework shall be embedded as a consistent feature of schooling across all stages.
- 1.1.11 Schools shall integrate learner independence and responsibility for homework within self-evaluation and review processes.

Measure 1.2

Ensure homework provides meaningful, varied, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences

Homework will reflect the proposed framework of the four complementary types of tasks (practice, exploration, application, and integration) and include reading, creative, cultural, play-based, and real-world learning activities, moving beyond repetitive written work. This balanced range of tasks should aim to reinforce learning, encourage exploration, support the application of learning in real-life contexts, and promote the integration of knowledge across subjects. Tasks should include reading, creative, cultural, digital, play-based, and real-world learning activities.

Short-Term Actions

- 1.2.1 In Kindergarten and the Early Years, homework-related activities shall prioritise play, reading, creative, and experiential learning rather than written tasks.
- 1.2.2 In the Junior Years, homework shall include a varied mix of practice, exploratory, creative, and simple research or investigation tasks.
- 1.2.3 In the Middle and Secondary Years, homework shall be planned to consolidate, extend, and apply classroom learning in purposeful ways.
- 1.2.4 Homework across all stages shall regularly include reading and opportunities for creative, cultural, physical, digital and real-world learning, appropriate to learners' age and development.



Medium-Term Actions

- 1.2.5 | Schools shall use a balanced combination of tasks that reinforce learning, encourage exploration, support real-world application, and integrate learning across subjects.
- 1.2.6 | Homework shall be aligned systematically with classroom learning so that tasks consistently reinforce, extend, or apply what is taught.
- 1.2.7 | Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular homework initiatives shall be promoted, particularly in the Upper Primary, Middle and Secondary Years.

Long-Term Actions

- 1.2.8 | Homework shall consistently reflect curriculum goals, competency development, and real-life application of learning across all stages.
- 1.2.9 | Homework design shall be reviewed and refined in line with curriculum development and evidence on effective teaching and learning.

Measure 1.3

Safeguard learner wellbeing, balance, and equity in homework practices

Homework shall support the overall wellbeing of the learner, protect time for rest, family life, and co-curricular activities, ensure fairness for learners with different home circumstances, and shall not be used for summative assessment purposes.

Short-Term Actions

- 1.3.1 Homework load shall be balanced across subjects and shall not be increased during weekends or school holidays.
- 1.3.2 Homework shall not be used for summative assessment or to calculate continuous assessment or global marks. Feedback shall be formative and focused on learning.
- 1.3.3 In the Middle and Secondary Years, teachers shall coordinate homework across subjects to avoid clustering of deadlines and excessive workload.
- 1.3.4 Homework shall be planned so as not to interfere with learners' participation in co-curricular activities, family time, rest, and play.
- 1.3.5 Learners with different needs and home circumstances shall be supported through differentiated homework practices and, where necessary, school-based support measures.

Medium-Term Actions

- 1.3.6 Schools shall monitor learner experience of homework to identify issues related to workload, stress, or inequity and adjust practices accordingly.
- 1.3.7 Inclusive and equitable homework practices shall be strengthened to ensure fair access to learning opportunities for all learners.
- 1.3.8 Coordinated approaches to homework planning shall be consolidated at school level, particularly in the Middle and Secondary Years.

Long-Term Actions

- 1.3.9 Learner wellbeing, balance, and equity shall be embedded as core criteria in school self-evaluation and national reviews of homework practice.
- 1.3.10 The education system shall sustain a quality-driven, balanced, and inclusive approach to homework that supports learning without creating unnecessary stress or disadvantage.

PILLAR 2

ENABLING THE EDUCATOR

**THE EDUCATOR
AS LEADER AND
DESIGNER OF
MEANINGFUL
LEARNING**

This pillar is informed by a strong international evidence base highlighting the central role of teacher professional evaluation, instructional design, and formative assessment in improving learning outcomes. Research syntheses consistently show that the impact of learning activities, including homework, depends less on frequency or volume¹⁵ and more on clarity of purpose, alignment with curriculum goals, task quality, and feedback¹⁸. International policy guidance further emphasises the importance of a coherent curriculum, pedagogy, assessment alignment and of teacher collaboration in planning learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and responsive to learner needs¹⁹.

In the context of homework, this evidence underscores the importance of purposeful task design, coordination across subjects, and formative use of learner work, rather than routine or compliance-driven assignment. Studies on formative assessment and feedback demonstrate that timely, specific, and learning-focused feedback is among the most powerful influences on learner progress, particularly when it supports learners in understanding next steps and improving their work.^{18,20} At the same time, international analyses caution that uncoordinated or poorly designed workload can undermine both learning quality and learner wellbeing, reinforcing the need for professional planning, coherence, and moderation at school level.¹⁹ Within this evidence-informed perspective, this pillar positions educators as key agents in ensuring that homework contributes meaningfully to learning, equity, and balanced development.

Measures

- *Measure 2.1: Strengthen homework planning and coordination*
- *Measure 2.2: Strengthen formative assessment and feedback practices related to homework*
- *Measure 2.3: Strengthen inclusive, differentiated, and developmentally appropriate homework practices*

18 Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education*, 5(1), 7–74.

19 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2018). *Teaching for the Future: Effective Classroom Practices to Transform Education*. OECD Publishing.

20 Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on formative feedback. *Review of educational research*, 78(1), 153–189.

Measure 2.1

Strengthen homework planning and coordination

Homework shall be planned and coordinated as a purposeful extension of classroom learning, aligned with curriculum objectives, learner needs, and developmental stages. It will also be coordinated across subjects to ensure coherence and balanced workload.

Short-Term Actions

- 2.1.1 Homework tasks shall have a clear learning purpose and be aligned with classroom teaching and curriculum objectives.
- 2.1.2 In the Middle and Secondary Years, it is encouraged that homework shall be coordinated across subjects to avoid clustering of deadlines and excessive workload for learners.
- 2.1.3 Homework shall be planned using a balanced range of tasks that reinforce learning, encourage exploration, support real-world application, and integrate learning across subjects.

Medium-Term Actions

- 2.1.4 | Shared planning and coordination mechanisms shall be established, such as common homework calendars or schedules, particularly in the Middle and Secondary Years.
- 2.1.5 | Alignment between homework, classroom instruction, and curriculum priorities shall be strengthened to ensure coherence and continuity of learning.
- 2.1.6 | Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular homework initiatives shall be promoted where appropriate, particularly in the Upper Primary, Middle and Secondary Years.

Long-Term Actions

- 2.1.7 | Homework planning and coordination shall be embedded as a core element of school quality assurance and professional practice.

Measure 2.2

Strengthen formative assessment and feedback practices related to homework

Homework will be used primarily to support learning through timely, meaningful, and formative feedback, rather than as a basis for summative assessment or grading.

Short-Term Actions

- 2.2.1 | Meaningful and timely formative feedback shall be provided on homework so that it supports improvement and learning progression.

Medium-Term Actions

- 2.2.2 | Shared approaches and criteria for formative feedback shall be developed on homework to ensure consistency and clarity for learners.
- 2.2.3 | The use of feedback shall be strengthened to support learner reflection, self-regulation, and improvement.
- 2.2.4 | Formative use of homework shall be embedded as a standard pedagogical practice across schools and subjects.

Measure 2.3

Strengthen inclusive, differentiated, and developmentally appropriate homework practices

Homework shall be designed and adapted to reflect learners' diverse abilities, needs, and contexts, ensuring accessibility, equity, and meaningful participation for all learners.

Short-Term Actions

- 2.3.1 | Homework tasks shall be differentiated where necessary to reflect learners' abilities, needs, and attainment levels.
- 2.3.2 | Homework tasks shall be designed to be achievable independently, providing clear instructions and appropriate support.

Medium-Term Actions

- 2.3.3 Inclusive planning approaches shall be strengthened so that homework does not disadvantage learners with limited home support or resources.
- 2.3.4 Effective practices shall be shared for differentiated and inclusive homework design within and across schools.

Long-Term Actions

- 2.3.5 Inclusive and equitable homework practices shall be embedded as a core feature of school policy, planning, and evaluation.
- 2.3.6 The education system shall sustain a consistent approach to ensuring that homework supports equity, access, and meaningful participation for all learners.



PILLAR 3

ENGAGING THE FAMILY

**THE FAMILY
AS LEARNING
PARTNER**

This pillar draws on international research on home–school partnerships and parental engagement, which indicates that supportive, well-structured family engagement can positively influence learners’ motivation, attitudes to learning, and educational engagement²¹, while overly directive or controlling involvement may have neutral or even negative effects²². The literature consistently distinguishes between forms of parental engagement that foster autonomy, encouragement, and learning routines, and those that inadvertently undermine learner independence or increase pressure and stress²³.

International organisations, including UNESCO, WHO, and the OECD^{17,5,3}, further emphasise that educational policies and practices must take account of family contexts, learner wellbeing, and equity, particularly where home resources, time, and space for learning vary significantly. Evidence shows that excessive or poorly coordinated academic demands at home can contribute to stress, reduced wellbeing, and widening inequalities, while clear communication, realistic expectations, and balanced workloads support healthier and more sustainable learning environments.^{3,5} Within this evidence base, this pillar frames family engagement not as task completion on behalf of learners, but as creating supportive conditions for learning, reinforcing independence, balance, and positive learning habits in partnership with schools.

Measures

- *Measure 3.1: Strengthen school–family communication and shared understanding of homework expectations*
- *Measure 3.2: Promote supportive parental engagement that fosters learner independence*
- *Measure 3.3: Support balance, wellbeing, and fairness in the home learning environment*

21 Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

22 Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740–763.

23 Patall, E. A., Cooper, H., & Robinson, J. C. (2008). Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 1039–1101.

Measure 3.1

Strengthen school–family communication and shared understanding of homework expectations

Schools shall ensure that parents and guardians are clearly informed about the purpose, expectations, and procedures related to homework, and about their role in supporting learners' independence.

Short-Term Actions

- 3.1.1 | Parents/guardians shall be provided with access to school and national homework policies through digital platforms or school communication channels.

Medium-Term Actions

- 3.1.2 | Information sessions shall be organised for parents/guardians to explain homework practices and expectations.
- 3.1.3 | Strengthen regular communication channels to address questions, concerns, or difficulties related to homework.

Long-Term Actions

- 3.1.4 | A shared and consistent understanding of homework purposes and expectations shall be embedded within school–family partnerships.
- 3.1.5 | Homework-related communication within broader family engagement strategies.

Measure 3.2

Promote supportive parental engagement that fosters learner independence

Families shall be encouraged to provide guidance, encouragement, and appropriate learning environments, while avoiding over-reliance or completing tasks on behalf of learners.

Short-Term Actions

- 3.2.1 Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to provide a suitable environment and time for learners to complete homework.
- 3.2.2 Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to support learners through guidance and encouragement rather than completing tasks for them.
- 3.2.3 Schools shall promote learning activities at home, such as reading, discussion, and cultural or creative activities, especially in the Early Years.

Medium-Term Actions

- 3.2.4 | Schools shall support parents/guardians in understanding how to encourage independence, responsibility, and positive study habits.
- 3.2.5 | Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to communicate with schools regarding challenges related to homework workload or understanding.

Long-Term Actions

- 3.2.6 | A sustained culture of constructive parental engagement shall be established, supporting learner independence and confidence.
- 3.2.7 | Family engagement in homework shall be embedded within wider school strategies for partnership and learner support.

Measure 3.3

Support balance, wellbeing, and fairness in the home learning environment

Schools and families shall work together to ensure that homework supports learning without undermining wellbeing, family life, or equitable access to learning opportunities.

Short-Term Actions

- 3.3.1 | Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to support learners in balancing homework with rest, family time, and co-curricular activities.
- 3.3.2 | Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to communicate with schools regarding difficulties related to homework.

Medium-Term Actions

- 3.3.3 | Strengthen support mechanisms for families who face challenges in supporting homework due to time, space, or resource constraints.

Long-Term Actions

- 3.3.4 Schools shall consider family feedback when reviewing homework practices and workload balance.
- 3.3.5 Collaboration between schools and families on homework shall foster a sustained culture of balance, wellbeing, and fairness.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The implementation of the National Homework Policy will be monitored and evaluated through a structured and continuous process led by The Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, in collaboration with the Department for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability considering the ongoing curriculum transformation process, and with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education through its school review processes. Progress will be reviewed through school self-evaluation, national quality assurance mechanisms, and periodic policy reviews, with particular attention to learner experience, workload balance, equity, and the impact of homework on learning and wellbeing. Evidence from schools, along with feedback from learners, educators, and families, and relevant system-level data will inform the ongoing refinement of both policy and practice. This approach will ensure that the policy remains aligned with curriculum development and national education priorities, and that it continues to support an inclusive, balanced and quality-driven approach to homework across all educational stages.

CONCLUSION: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

The National Homework Policy establishes a coherent, learner-centred, and evidence-informed framework that repositions homework as a meaningful extension of learning rather than a routine or compliance-driven activity. Grounded in the three pillars of Empowering the Learner, Enabling the Educator, and Engaging the Family, and supported by an age-phase approach and a clear pedagogical framework for task design, the policy provides a shared national direction for more purposeful, balanced, and inclusive homework practices across all educational stages.

Its successful implementation depends on sustained collaboration among schools, educators, learners, families, and the wider education system. Through consistent application, professional evaluation, ongoing monitoring, and continuous refinement in the context of curriculum transformation, the policy aims to strengthen learner agency, support high-quality teaching and formative feedback, promote equity, and safeguard wellbeing. In doing so, it affirms homework's role as a strategic tool for quality education, social inclusion, and lifelong learning, contributing to Malta's broader vision for a future-ready, resilient, and inclusive education system.

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