# **Assessment at Homeward Academy**

This section provides guidelines for the assessment and record-keeping system used at ‘HOMEWARD ACADEMY’; however, the same principles could be used by independent home-educators who are not enrolled in this service. It provides a guide for new schools using Charlotte Mason methods or based on a Liberal Arts Tradition.

## ***1*** ***Assessment:***

‘HOMEWARD’ is an alternate education provider, so thinking outside ‘the box’, we do not adhere to the Qld OP system, or the ATAR system, or offer QCAA Authority subjects. However, our students may qualify for an alternate graduation award, and past students who have graduated from Homeward (and its predecessor Eastgate College) have gained successful entry to university through a range of alternate pathways including …

* alternate qualifications (Certificate III, IV and Diplomas),
* the presentation of a Portfolio of a ‘Work of Excellence’ based on practical internships with professional mentors, and work-experience in a field of interest and passion,
* along with a custom-designed rigorous academic program that integrates all subjects into the student’s area of passionate interest.

***1. How Do We Assess Children’s Progress?***

There are various ways of assessing achievement & competency within an individualised home-education program. Every home-educator will have a slightly different emphasis in terms of what is regarded as most important for your child’s education. The following are some suggested types of ‘learning objectives’, which the student should learn & be assessed on:

• knowledge: key information (topic content/facts); the vocabulary/terminology of a subject; and key understandings about relevant issues within that subject area

• skills: being competent at skills or abilities that are

1. general academic (such as spelling, grammar, logic, critical thinking processes, writing, oral or creative communication) or
2. specific to a certain subject area (e.g. programming a computer; multiplying fractions; charcoal sketching; discerning between styles of art; playing a musical instrument; measuring, marking & sawing wood accurately; safe laboratory procedure; correct use of the diaphragm in singing; etc.

• teachability (has the child displayed an attitude of being willing to learn);

• inquisitiveness (learning to ask how & why questions);

• diligence (setting goals and sticking at the job even when you don't feel like it);

• thoroughness (following a topic through to a completed presentation);

• neatness (keeping a tidy work area or developing a neat writing style)

• cooperation (ability to work with team-mates in a shared activity)

Competency-Based Assessment: In regard to how well a student has ***'progressed'*** in a certain area of learning, we usually only need to record one of three progress indicators (‘Needs Improvement’, ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘Excellent’). By the end of a term or period of learning, the student has either …

1. 'not reached your set learning goals' or you ‘are not happy with their effort’ = (***'needs improvement'*** ); …or
2. the student has 'satisfactorily reached your stated objective' or you ‘are happy with their achievement’ = (***'satisfactory' )***; …or
3. the student has 'far exceeded all expectations' meaning you are ‘over the moon’ about what they have achieved = (***'excellent'***).

Homeward’s **‘Parent/Supervisor Assessment Form’** and the **‘Student Progress Report’** have been designed to assist parents to effectively evaluate their children’s progress of achievements, while allowing the parent to plan ahead so that their home-education journey is ‘in line’ with the attaining of their family’s vision and short-term goals.

***2. Results that Reflect Your Long-Term Priorities***

We believe that ***every*** child is a potential genius at something. So, every child should be encouraged to master & excel at one thing at least. A wise parent (like a sports coach) will always be seeking to provide opportunities for the child to move ahead in a special talent or area of interest; while also encouraging some practice and improvement in an area of weakness. We must also be reminded of one of the great mysteries of God… *“In my weakness He is strong.”* Sometimes, the area of our greatest weakness becomes the area in which God uses us most powerfully, because we must rely on Him so much, just to get us through the situation. So, if I never attempt to improve an area of non-talent, I might be hindering the work of God in my life.

***3. Recommended Guidelines for Assessment***

The following constitutes our recommended guidelines for assessment. These assessment requirements are comprehensive enough for accountability, yet quite minimal so as not to place undue burden on parents, and through the diverse methods of presentation, provide a thorough overview of the child's overall academic progress.

We encourage parents to be actively involved in the assessment process by doing self-analysis of their children’s work. The Scriptures say that, for the Christian, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, so it is quite legitimate for you to trust the Holy Spirit to be in control of your learning program. It is also legitimate for us to trust that you, as the parents, are better placed to assess your children’s progress because you have insights and knowledge of your own children through living and working with them on a daily basis. We simply require that you show us evidence for your evaluation by presenting the student’s assessment items & writing brief comments about why you gave these particular scores. To help you in this task, please refer to the attached ‘Assessment Criteria’.

***4. Assessment Items (a brief overview)***

• A **written essay** about a topic of interest within your curriculum; This may be a fictional or factual work for the purpose of showing the student’s written expression.

• A **short oral presentation** on an audio-file about a topic of interest within the child’s studies; This may involve a recitation of a poem, prose, song, lecturette or a discussion between parent & younger child. The purpose is to show confidence in oral expression.

• A **creative project** to do with a topic of study. This is a culminating activity, ‘wrapping up’ a period of learning, including presenting findings in a project that shows the student’s creativity.

• A **book log** is a short list of books, journals, newspaper articles, etc. that the student has read during the term (and which not only has some relevance to topics studied during the term, but also may involve leisure time reading). This could be maintained by the child, depending on the child’s ability.

• Any **completed test papers**, end of chapter review questions, etc.; (Not all resources will have tests and questions. Don't worry if this does not apply to you.) Make sure any such tests are marked by the parents.

• A **brief journal** or list of practical learning experiences and activities conducted during the term, as well as work experience and any other sports, hobbies or extra-curricular learning activities;

• A **‘Parent/Supervisors Assessment Form’** (to be completed by the tutor/parent). As the day-to-day supervisor of your children, your comments not only give invaluable insight into their progress, but these comments will ensure that the focus of the assessment is in keeping with your overall family vision and goals. The emphasis that you, as parent/s, want highlighted in each Student Progress Report may vary with each item, or periodically from term to term. You may, for example, want:

\* the student's efforts encouraged;

\* the report card to reinforce a parental stand on an issue;

\* to have technical or critical analysis of certain assessment items; and/or

\* suggestions and strategies for fine tuning a subject or overcoming a problem.

***5. Why Should the Student Do the Assessment Items?***

By having the student complete the assessment items, you achieve the following aims of:

• providing a definite goal for the student to aim at and to work towards (i.e. a presentation of samples of their work at the end of each quarterly term);

• rounding off a topic or period of learning; There is a danger in spending so much time in the process of ‘discover, discover, discover’, that the student does not have adequate opportunity to absorb, analyse, contemplate and form a personal opinion about what they are studying; and then to express or present their conclusions.

• building up a portfolio of quality exhibits of the child’s work, showing progress term-by-term, year-by-year; This portfolio should be filed at the family home for 3 years (allowing for quick access and reference; building up self-esteem, with the child being able to display creative projects to friends or relatives).

• providing the parent/tutor with an organisational focus (i.e. a blueprint to help you keep on track, rather than merely drifting from day to day)

***6. Record Keeping***

Assessment records can be used in advocacy cases to show that the children are receiving a regular and appropriate education. A portfolio of records can also be used as evidence for granting graduation awards and qualifications. While attending to these requirements, the staff at ‘Homeward Education Support’ want to make record keeping as stress-free as possible for our parents.

We understand that education at home is an all-of-life phenomenon, and that many valuable learning activities do not immediately fit into the normal standardised checklists. Therefore, while you will need to complete the following record-keeping procedures, your allocated learning advisor can help you to include, and gain credit for, a range of alternate learning activities. Basic requirements for record-keeping include three types of items:

i) Complete an **Attendance Register**: this is attached as a paper copy to scan and email to the Homeward Reception; or as an online log-in submission.   
(Due end of each term.)

ii) Each ½ yearly Semester – Submit **one work-sample from each subject**. More detail about options for work samples is attached.

iii) Each ½ yearly Semester – Complete a **Learning Activities Log**. This easy-to-use form is where you record significant learning activities to show engagement in required subjects. It is also a record of extra enrichment activities. The information on the Learning Activities Log is also used by teaching staff for reporting and provides a way to give credit for diverse aspects of your education at home. If you have any difficulty completing this form, then speak with one of our staff. They are there to help you.

The Learning Activities Log will soon be available online so you will be able to submit responses online or as a simple sheet that is posted to the Homeward Reception. Some parents find it useful for record keeping to use a day-to-a-page diary. Divide the page into columns for each of your children. As you progress through the day jot down a quick note of topics, or activities or pages completed or sections studied. Either do it as you go during the day, or spend a few minutes at the end of the day; but it shouldn’t be a burden with too much detail. No-one is going to check up on your diary of learning. The reason for making these entries in a diary, is so that you can easily check back over the term to record those alternate learning activities you may not otherwise have thought of.

We recognise that some families do not have reliable internet access or are not ready to use an internet reporting system for other reasons. So, you can manually fill in the activity log and post it to the Homeward Reception.

**What work samples should I send in to the Academy?**

Work samples from your child’s education, are collected to show that education has been taking place, or to show engagement with the course materials that we have negotiated together for the student to study. As home education parents in our college are using a broad range of curriculum resources, there is not one standard test paper for all children doing a subject, so there are a variety of ways of showing what your child has been learning or what they have accomplished.

Some subject resources have end-of-chapter tests/exams, so send these in to the office whenever they are completed or at the end of each term. If you are sending in test-papers and the parent has access to the 'Teacher's Text with Answers', then parents can you please score the test papers first before sending them in. One of our ‘Learning Advisors’ will check them, but this makes it more time-efficient for us, and we can then check the scoring and quality of the student’s work.

For other areas of study that do not have associated test papers, there are a variety of ways to show that the student has truly engaged with the material. Remember: We are not so concerned for the student to have memorised all the facts and figures and dates etc; but rather that the student has engaged with the topic and asked themselves questions or thought deeply about the material. So, although test papers are useful and acceptable, a journal of personal reflections or creative application of the concepts will be appropriate.

HELPFUL HINT: If you feel a little overwhelmed by having to send a sample of work for every subject, then think ‘Integrated Themes’ – For example, your child has done a History study on the Renaissance Era, so get all your samples from this unit. Here is an example of a way to assess several subjects from the one activity:

History = A summary of main events, or a retelling of the story of a famous person such as Leonardo da Vinci (in list/point form).

English = Take the list/notes from the retelling of the story and work on it (edit the structure to make it flow, and turn it into a five-paragraph essay; edit punctuation and grammar; record sources of information in a Bibliography of References used in your research). Submit the Draft as well as the Final presentation.

Science = Make a presentation about the inventions of Leonardo da Vinci

Art = Collect photos of Leonardo’s paintings and write any notes about the paintings. Try tracing/sketching one of his paintings

Geography = Draw a map of the Mediterranean countries involved in the Renaissance

Technology = Turn it all into a Power Point Presentation (Information Technology), dress up as Leonardo and give a presentation in front of family and friends. Cook an Italian Meal for your presentation (Food Technology). And if you made a costume for Leonardo then that is (Textiles Technology). Prepare Italian Music in the background and take photos or a video of the presentation. (Multi-media Technology).

Evidence samples can include but are not limited to:

* A reflective journal of ideas and concepts that stood out to the student as interesting, noteworthy, inspiring, worthy of further investigation, etc.
* A research essay;
* Scientific report;
* Creative project;
* Photographic evidence;
* Lap-books;
* Multi-media presentations;
* Third-party reports and references;
* Published or unpublished journal articles.

Prep to Year 9: The minimum would be for each student to submit **one formative work sample** from each subject area each semester. (Think Integrated Units).

Year 10 to 12: The minimum (for students working towards graduation awards) would be for each student to submit **one culminating piece of quality work** from each subject (per semester) and which demonstrates engagement with the subject.

Collection of work samples becomes easy to achieve if parents set aside a time at the end of each week for the student to write about what they have been learning (twenty minutes for a child in year 3; 30-45minutes for yr 12.) While a younger child may write a paragraph; an older student (Year 10-12) could write a three-paragraph essay with Introduction and Conclusion (ie. 5 paragraphs total), and also citing any references. Now- don’t get overwhelmed. We are not saying you have to do this every week, but try to make it a goal to do some writing each week as a habit. If your child is not up to this ability, then you might do an essay over a few weeks. Just make it a habit to write a little each week, and send in what you have accomplished each semester. The minimum is one sample per subject each six months. There are, of course, also other ways to show what your child has been learning.

Although once a semester is the minimum, students of any age and year level can submit work samples more regularly (each month) if they wish. Whatever you have been working on during the month or during the term, these samples can be submitted for record keeping and/or feedback. Remember you can also send in photographs of learning activities or audio or video files. We will try to acknowledge receipt of your evidence, but please add a special note if you need specific feedback.

**[ NOTE: Also refer to ‘Edu-speak’*: What to Call the Things That You Are Naturally Doing Already! from Section 6.2.2 of the Home-Education Guidebook].***

**How to submit work samples:**

At present the best way is to send work is via email, however it is OK to send hard copies if you need to. Eventually, there will be an online portal to upload word-files, scans or photos, or video files, etc. However, for those parents who have difficulties with poor internet service, the work samples can be posted, and we will enter them into the online portal.

Each student should submit at least one sample (i.e. either a written essay; or oral presentation; or creative project; or test papers with results) for each subject, each semester. (The length of these assessment items is not as important as whether the student is doing their personal best work.)

Then also send a ‘Parent/Supervisor Comments Form’ which includes a list of achievements and future goals, a summary list of Learning Activities’ and a ‘Reading List showing books read during the term.

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES LOG**

This record of ‘Learning Activities’ should include both academic subjects and enrichment activities, and include any alternate methods of exploring a subject including hands-on and creative learning and/or bookwork …  
i) Normal academic subjects: Maths, English, History, Science, Arts, Languages, Health & Phys Ed, Technology (including IT, manual arts, home-economics, home & vehicle maintenance)

ii) Enrichment Activities: excursions, music performances, visits to art gallery & museum, experiments, videos, work experience, dramatizations and creative presentations, sports, hobbies, special interest groups/clubs etc.

SAMPLE:

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| **DATE** | **SUBJECT** | **LEARNING ACTIVITY** |
|  | Physical & Outdoor Ed. | Swimming training ‘Miami’, Nippers. |
|  |  | Tennis coaching & tennis competition, |
|  |  | Soccer competition |
|  |  | Snow trip |
|  |  | Fishing in Moreton Bay |
|  | History / SOSE | Visit to Gingal Head, learning about Captain Cook, early settlers. |
|  |  | Traveled through NSW, snowy mountains; studied Maps & geographical features |
|  |  | Visited various Churches along the way |
|  |  | Completed activities from ‘Australian Book Traveler’ and read up to page 20 in ‘Our Sunburnt Country’ |
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|  | English | Worked through ‘Learning Language Arts through Literature’ (Orange Book Year 4-5) |
|  |  | Read seven historical novels & regularly retold the story from each chapter |
|  |  | 2 X Oral presentations of a ‘Book Talk’ promoting the books |
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|  | Maths | Lessons 1-15 in Math-U-See (Epsilon) |
|  |  | Calculation activities & problem solving with household budgeting, grocery shopping, and cooking. |
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|  | Technology -Woodwork | Built a table from timber. |
|  |  | Learnt safe use of tools |
|  | Science | Started a vegetable garden. Discussed needs of plants and the ecosystem |
|  |  | Built a frog pond |
|  |  | Made a sundial. |
|  |  | Many Science experiments from his science book |
|  |  |  |
|  | Life skills | Cooked dinners |
|  |  | Shopped for groceries |
|  |  | Paper run for 6 months. |
|  |  | Started a soup business with his sisters, marketing to office buildings. Invested own money, bought ingredients, packaging, cooking utensils, made brochures. Made soup & delivered hot to local businesses. |

**Learning Activities Log**

Student …………………………. Year………….. Semester 1 or 2

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| **DATE** | **SUBJECT** | **LEARNING ACTIVITY** |
|  | Physical Ed. |  |
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**Reading List**

Student …………………………. Year………….. Semester 1 or 2

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***7. Homeward Academy- Year K-6: Description of Possible Work Samples***

Each semester (ie. 6 months or 2 X 10 week terms), students will submit at least one sample of work from each subject, for review and feedback by a learning advisor. The work samples may include any of the following…:

***i) One piece of WRITTEN WORK:***

This can be an essay or a short story or a piece of prose, poetry or lyrics about a topic of interest within your curriculum. This may be a fictional (creative writing) or non-fictional work for the purpose of showing the student's written expression. The length will vary according to the age and ability level of the child. There is no pressure to complete a certain number of words. Each child should be encouraged to do the very best that they can do. One child might only be capable of two paragraphs, while another might achieve two pages or may even produce several written works (due to their love of writing or the specific topic of study). That is quite acceptable. The aim is to show a progression over a number of months and years.

***ii) An Oral Presentation on audio file:***

This can be any of the following: a reading or recitation of a poem, story, or lecturette; the singing of a song; or a recording of a learning activity involving the spontaneous interactions between the parent/tutor and a shy or younger child during a learning session. The purpose of this aspect of assessment is to show that the child is confident in oral expression and presentation. An excellent idea, to develop this confidence, is to have a regular presentation night in front of Dad or a friend of the family. Give lots of encouragement, and praise along with loving correction.

***iii) A Creative Project*:**

This may include graphs, charts, audio, video or photographic documentation; artwork or a three-dimensional constructed model and some written explanations of what was learnt.

The purpose of the creative project is two-fold:

Firstly, we are teaching our children to bring each period of learning to a culminating activity. This ‘wrapping-up’ process is a vital skill in our daily life as adults, because we are continually confronting situations, analysing, problem-solving, implementing solutions and quite often, having to present or explain our solution to others.

Secondly, we are allowing the student to creatively express themselves in relation to all that they have been learning. As you are aware, some children are more comfortable with taking tests, while others enjoy writing, yet others prefer to talk or express themselves artistically. However, by utilising a variety of creative methods of presentation the student is encouraged to develop as an all-round communicator.

***8. Homeward Academy – Years 7-12: Description of Possible Work Samples***

At the secondary education level, students work to the highest level of presentation that they are capable of. They should show evidence of more mature thinking, questioning, analysing, and original thought in their evaluations and conclusions. Students will complete at least one of the following assessment items, every semester:

***i) A piece of WRITTEN WORK:***

Written Work can include a written essay, report or research paper. The number of words will vary with the age and ability of the child. However, a general guide would be roughly 500 to 1000 words for lower high school and about 2000 words for senior students. The length of the written work is not as important as whether the student is doing their very best work. You may choose either one of the following two options:

a) Academic Research Paper:

Such a paper should display evidence of wide reading, and a thorough understanding of the topic. The student should back up and verify statements made, by referring to authoritative primary and secondary sources (‘primary = information that comes from original research; ‘secondary’ = information that is derived from other sources, where one person builds upon or accepts the work of another). The paper should show evidence of an enquiring mind, leading to original thoughts evaluations and conclusions....OR...

b) Creative Essay:

This may be either completely fictional (being totally from your imagination) or partly based on truth and information from your study, research and practical experience in relation to the topic of interest (e.g. an imaginative story about horses incorporating knowledge about horsemanship, care and grooming, gained during the course of your studies.)

***ii) A Creative Project:***

The aim of the Creative Project is two-fold:

Firstly, the aim is to learn to present information in a creative medium that is not merely written. This might involve a visually interesting presentation including graphs, charts, audio, video or photographic documentation; artwork or a three-dimensional constructed model and some written explanations of what was learnt.

The second aim is to allow the student an opportunity to be involved in discovery-learning that is practical or 'hands-on' learning. At the senior high-school level, examples of creative projects that have a practical, hands-on nature could even include the following:

- make a 3-D model; renovate a vehicle; produce a teaching video about a research topic of interest; plan and build a playground, nursery or greenhouse; create a piece of music with sections for different instruments and vocalists. A large project such as these could be taken over a number of terms, as long as a presentation is made each term which shows the progressive stages of development, perhaps in photographs, etc.

(NOTE: A Creative Projectcan be large, complex or small.)

***iii) An Oral Presentation on audio-file:***

This can be either:

a) a recitation or reading of some poetry, narration of a story, composition and performance of a song, speech or lecture telling about the subject of research; or

b) a recording of an interview involving the student interviewing a person who is an expert in a certain field of interest; or

c) a recording of the student being interviewed by someone else. The topic of the interview would be related to studies done during the term. An excellent idea is to have a regular presentation night in front of Dad, once each week. This could involve practice interviews, speeches, a debate or oral report.