



PP204 ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, students and parents of St Thomas Aquinas College (STAC).

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure aims to ensure that St Thomas Aquinas College meets legislative requirements for the establishment and maintenance of full and accurate records of students enrolled in the College.

- 1.1. St Thomas Aquinas College's (STAC) aim is to "form in each youth, the true and perfect Catholic". A high level of student attendance is considered vital to the achievement of the College's mission.
- 1.2. Students at STAC are encouraged to strive to perform to the best of their God-given ability. Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."
- 1.3. This policy has been developed to:
 - (1) encourage students to maximise learning opportunities and to strive for excellence;
 - (2) promote a commitment to education;
 - (3) facilitate effective partnership with families;
 - (4) provide direction to staff members, students and parents/guardians in relation to expectations; and
 - (5) satisfy legal and registration requirements.
- 1.4. The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requires parents/guardians of children of compulsory school age (6 to 17 years) to enrol their children at a registered school and to ensure attendance at all times when the school is open for instruction (or to register their children for home schooling). Parents/guardians must not without reasonable excuse fail to comply with this duty.
- 1.5. The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides that the Principal of, or a teacher at, a registered school at which a child of compulsory school age is enrolled may ask a parent or guardian for an explanation of the reason for the absence of a student, and the Principal must ensure that record in writing is made of the reason (if any) given by the parent. Additionally, the Principal must ensure that student attendance is recorded in an attendance register.
- 1.6. The Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requires that "a school has policies and procedures to monitor students' attendance and to follow up unexplained or unacceptable absences" and that "students' attendance is recorded systematically and that a school has adequate records to follow up absences."
- 1.7. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) indicates that all VCE units require 50 hours of class time and that a student needs to attend sufficient class time to complete work. Individual schools are required to set minimum class time and attendance rules. Where a student has completed work but there has been a substantial breach of attendance rules, the school may assign an N for one or more outcomes and thus the unit.

DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Reasonable excuse, as it relates to the absence of students from school, is defined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and includes:
- (1) illness, accident, an unforeseen event or an unavoidable cause;
 - (2) a requirement to comply with another law;
 - (3) absence from Victoria;
 - (4) registration in a distance education program;
 - (5) participation in education, training or employment;
 - (6) suspension or expulsion;
 - (7) child disobedience; and
 - (8) attendance at, or observation of, a religious event or obligation as a result of a genuinely held belief of the child or parent.
- 2.2. Acceptable absences refer to instances of student absence from school for reasons deemed by the school to be acceptable. Such absences are not reported as days of absence on student semester reports and therefore do not negatively impact upon the attendance records of students. The list of acceptable absences may be reviewed from time-to-time but shall generally include: approved leave of absence; school excursion or camp; exchange student program; exit from the school; approved home study; in-school appointment; orientation; production rehearsal; approved mission; special enrolment; school sport; approved course of study; suspension; temporary home learning; and work or work experience.
- 2.3. Validated absences refer to instances of student absence from school that are not deemed to be acceptable absences (see definition above) but where a reasonable excuse (see definition above) has been provided and supported by medical certificates or written notes of explanation from parents or other relevant authorities.
- 2.4. Parent or parental, for the purposes of this policy, should also be taken to refer to legal guardians where applicable.

POLICY STATEMENT

St Thomas Aquinas College will create, manage and record attendance records and attendance protocols in keeping with the regulatory and other requirements imposed on it by VRQA, legislation, child safety requirements, VCE and other instruments or bodies.

PROCEDURE

3.1. General

- 3.1.1 Students are generally expected to arrive at school in time for the commencement of the school day at 8.30 am and to depart following the conclusion of the school day at 3.10 pm. The College is not able to guarantee supervision of students before 8.15am and after 3.30pm other than by special arrangement or where school activities require student attendance outside these hours.
- 3.1.2 Students should not arrive at school before 8.15am or still be present at school after 3.30pm, other than by special arrangement or where school activities require student attendance at such time. Parents are to actively be discouraged, and directed, not to allow their children to be present outside of these times, and to acknowledge in writing that they understand supervision may be limited or not present outside of these times. In cases where students are present at the school outside of these times, within a reasonable variation, students are to report to the campus library, or other nominated space as decided by the Principal, for supervised study. Charges to parents may apply and directions will be given to parents to ensure that this is not a regular occurrence.
- 3.1.3 Attendance rolls shall be kept in accordance with legal and registration requirements, and may be in hard copy and/or electronic format as determined by the school. Such rolls shall be marked in the morning and afternoon of each school day, or more often as directed by the Principal, with all absences (and reasons where known) being duly noted.
- 3.1.4 In the case of school-related activities involving travel away from school premises (including camps, excursions, sporting events, etc.), attendance rolls should be marked prior to departure and again upon return.
- 3.1.5 The school shall follow up unexplained/non-validated absences, notify parents of unsatisfactory attendance, record details of unsatisfactory attendance in student files, and report full and part days of absence (other than acceptable absences) on semester reports for all students (see Appendix below).
- 3.1.6 If a student is absent from school, a parent is expected to contact the school (preferably by 8:30am on the day of absence) and to promptly provide a written note of explanation to the appropriate classroom or homeroom teacher, or to Reception, upon the student's return to school. Medical certificates may also be required; especially in the case of VCE students (refer items 2.3, 3.2.3 & 3.2.7).
- 3.1.7 Notes of explanation for student absences and other supporting information or evidence (e.g. medical certificates) shall be retained and filed securely in relevant campus administration offices.
- 3.1.8 The school shall send SMS messages to parents of students who are marked absent without reason on the morning attendance roll.
- 3.1.9 As far as possible, parents and students are encouraged to make appointments (for doctors, dentists, driving lessons and tests, etc.) outside of normal school hours.
- 3.1.10 Students who arrive late for school must report to Reception where their arrival will be recorded and a late pass issued. Wherever possible, students arriving late should bring a written note of explanation from parents.
- 3.1.11 The College owes a duty of care to all students. Such duty of care does not diminish when students attain the age of 18 years. Therefore, parental responsibilities as outlined in this policy continue for the duration of a student's enrolment at the College. The only exception shall be where a student aged 18 years or older is not a dependent of his/her parents and is responsible for the enrolment contract and payment of tuition fees.

PROCEDURE (Cont...)

- 3.1.12 Students shall only be permitted to leave the College premises during normal school hours where the consent of a parent, whether verbal or written, has been provided. Other than in cases of participation in approved school-related activities, students must report to Student Reception prior to departure from school premises during normal school hours and again, where applicable, upon their return to College premises.
- 3.1.13 Further to item 3.1.12 above, any student leaving the school premises during normal school hours may only do so in the company of his/her parent or nominated emergency contact other than with express parental permission by hard copy notice or voice communication.
- 3.1.14 As a general rule, families are discouraged from organising holidays during the school term. However, it is accepted that circumstances may arise which require parents to request leave for their children during the school term. Such leave request shall be in writing and set out details of reasons and proposed dates of absence.

PROCEDURE (Cont...)

3.2 VCE students

- 3.2.1 All policy details above apply equally to all students at STAC. In addition, specific requirements relate to VCE students.
- 3.2.2 Class rolls shall be marked by all subject teachers during each VCE lesson.
- 3.2.3 Where a VCE student is absent for two or more consecutive school days due to a medical condition and there has been a visit to a doctor or hospital, a medical certificate must be provided as validation to the VCE Coordinator/Deputy Principal. In cases not involving a visit to a doctor or hospital, a note of explanation from a parent must be provided as validation to the VCE Coordinator/Deputy Principal.
- 3.2.4 Where a VCE student is absent for reasons other than a medical condition, a note of explanation from a parent and/or another authority of relevance to such absence must be provided as validation to the VCE Coordinator/Deputy Principal.
- 3.2.5 Where a VCE student is absent from 10% or more of classes for one or more units of study during a semester, excluding instances of acceptable absences (see definition), such student may be awarded an N for such unit/s of study at the discretion of the Principal/Deputy Principal having regard to all circumstances, including reasons provided for validated absences.
- 3.2.6 Where a VCE student will be, or proposes to be, absent from school for any reason on a day that an assessment task is due to be submitted or undertaken, or for any reason wishes to seek permission to submit or undertake an assessment task at a time other than as scheduled, an Alternative SAC Request Form must be completed and submitted to the subject teacher at least three days prior to the scheduled date.
- 3.2.7 Where a VCE student is absent from school without prior notice (see item 3.2.6 above) on a day that an assessment task is due to be submitted or undertaken, a note to the VCE Coordinator from a parent detailing the reason for the absence (together with a medical certificate in the case of Unit 3 or 4 subjects, where relevant) must be provided as validation upon the student's return to the College. The student will need to promptly complete an Alternative SAC Request Form in order that possible alternative arrangements can be considered.
- 3.2.8 Further to items 3.2.6 and 3.2.7 above, each request for alternative assessment task arrangements shall be considered on its merits, having regard to a range of factors. Approval of such request and alternative arrangements shall be at the discretion of the subject teacher in consultation with the VCE Coordinator and Deputy Principal.
- 3.2.9 Further to item 3.1.14 above, in the case of VCE students, any request for leave during the school term should be made on the understanding that such absence may compromise satisfactory course completion.

PROCEDURE (Cont...)

Appendix

Following 3.1.5 above, the Principal/Deputy Principal will take necessary steps (similar to the following) to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure every student absence is monitored and managed effectively:

- Class rolls will be marked each class (VCE).
- Once per week, a staff member (delegated by the Principal) will review a list of explained and unexplained absences as well as late attendances for the previous week.
- An email will be sent by a staff member (delegated by the Principal) to the parents of students with any unexplained and/or unacceptable absences, as well as parents of students with a pattern of unexplained or unacceptable lateness, asking them to provide an explanation.
- If no reply is received by the end of that week, details will be provided to Dean of sub-School to make further phone or face-to-face contact with parents.
- If no response is received within two days, the matter will be escalated in discussion with the Dean of sub-School.
- If a student has been absent on four occasions during a term (explained or unexplained), details will be provided to the Dean of sub-School for pastoral follow up as appropriate/needed.
- Details of any contact by a Dean of sub-School will be kept on TASS student notes.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- VCE Policy documents particularly the VCE Admin Handbook
- Student Records Policies

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The following legislation applies:

- Accident Compensation (OHS) Act 1996
- Crimes Act 1958
- Crimes (Document Destruction) Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995
- Evidence Act 2008
- Financial Management Act 1994
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Health Records Act 2001
- Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Cwlth)/Related Victorian Legislation
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Public Records Act 1973

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal must:

- Implement this policy and procedure
- Monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure

The Business Manager must:

- Monitor the implementation of this policy and procedure
- Monitor the security of Student Records and Archives

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Principal (and delegates) will be responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is monitored and evaluated throughout the College.

VERSION

Authorised by	STAC College Board
Effective date	February 2019
Version	2.1
Review date	February 2021