



## HUME CENTRAL SECONDARY COLLEGE

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure students, staff and parents/carers/guardians at Hume Central secondary College have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents/carers/guardians the key practices and procedures Hume Central Secondary College has in place to:
  - o support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - o record, monitor and follow up student absences.

#### 2. RATIONALE

Schools must record and monitor attendance and absences in order to meet the duty of care owed to students, as well as the requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic). Hume Central Secondary College requires that Year 7-12 **students attend 100%** of the College program. Not meeting this requirement may impact on a student's ability to successfully complete units of study.

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted. Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school, disruptive and delinquent behaviour and may lead to a cycle of rebellion against authority. These outcomes have later implications for employment, a range of health risk behaviours (drug and alcohol abuse), homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system.

#### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of parents/carers/guardians, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents/carers/guardians, students, the school and the wider community. Both schools and parents/carers/guardians have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day. Hume Central Secondary College will:

- Ensure that attendance is marked online for every period of instruction
- Communicate with students and parents/carers/guardians in a timely manner where concerns exist regarding student attendance and engagement
- Identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

#### EXPECTATIONS OF PRINCIPAL CLASS

- Provide leadership and direction to the Leadership Team in regard to student engagement and wellbeing issues.
- Provide leadership and support to Team Leaders, Team Co-ordinators and Student Services Teams to develop, implement and evaluate programs and policies that contribute to the academic and social development of students
- Monitor attendance through collection, analysis and evaluation of data against set goals and targets.
- Ensure a process is implemented to send daily SMS informing Parent/Carers/Guardian of any absences.

#### EXPECTATIONS OF TEAM LEADERS AND CO-ORDINATORS

- Work with Principal Class to implement strategies to address concerns regarding attendance
- Monitor daily attendance and support Mentor Teachers and all staff, through the construction and communications of the Engagement Register, to engage students, parent/guardians about attendance concerns
- Establish goals and strategies to support improved student attendance via discussions at Student Engagement Committee meetings
- Conduct SSGs with parents/carers/guardians to discuss engagement at school
- Refer students to internal and external support services when needed.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF MENTOR TEACHERS**

- Work with Team Leaders and Co-ordinators to implement strategies to address concerns regarding attendance
- Monitor attendance, via Compass and the Engagement Register and support students to understand their attendance data and expectations
- Engage parents/carers/guardians to discuss concerns regarding their child's attendance at school, including ascertaining the reasons behind absence from learning e.g mentor phone calls.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS**

- Mark the roll promptly and accurately each lesson
- Monitor attendance, via Compass and the Engagement Register and support students to discuss their attendance data and expectations
- All class work/learning tasks to be placed on Compass to support students to remain connected to learning when absent
- Help students to understand the impact of non-attendance on student learning.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF EDUCATION SUPPORT CLASS**

- Ensure that class rolls are accurate and up to date
- Ensure that attendance data is recorded accurately on a period by period basis
- Facilitate the communication within each Campus and between home and school in regard to student absences
- Provide daily reports to staff regarding student absences
- Support the recording of student movements to and from school (ie: late arrival/early leavers).

### **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS**

- Demonstrate commitment to attending school every day, arriving on time and being prepared to learn
- Approach a staff member to seek assistance regarding any issues that are affecting their attendance
- Arrive on time to school and to every class ready to learn
- Provide a written note from parents/carers/guardians to explain student absence
- Provide a statutory declaration or a medical certificate to approve student absence
- Remain on school premises during school time unless permission has been given by a parent/carer/guardian and approved by the school
- Work cooperatively with the College to develop personal attendance improvement goals and strategies when attendance has been inconsistent
- Access Compass to view and complete work set when absent from school.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS/CARERS/GUARDIANS**

- Ensure their child attends school at all times (see *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, Section 2.1.1)
- Ensure that their child is on time for school each day
- Notify the College of their child's absence as soon as possible on the first day of the child's absence
- Notify the College in advance if an absence is planned
- Support their child's learning during continued or prolonged absences through the implementation of an agreed student Absence Learning Plan where appropriate
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with the College and their child to develop and implement improvement strategies when attendance has been inconsistent due to reasons deemed unsatisfactory by the College
- Work cooperatively with the College in supporting their child to return to school
- Ensure that contact details for their child are correct and up-to-date.

**The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 describes a reasonable excuse for a student not attending school as being due to:**

- Illness, accident, an unforeseen event or an unavoidable cause
- There is no Government school within a prescribed distance of the child's residence and the child is receiving a distance education program through a registered school
- The child is undertaking an educational program provided by a registered education and training organisation
- The child has been suspended or expelled and is undertaking other educational programs provided by the Department or another registered school
- The absence from school or instruction was because of the child's disobedience and was not due to any fault of the parent/carer/guardian
- The child is attending or observing a religious event or obligation as a result of a genuinely held belief of the child or a parent/carer/guardian of the child
- The child is exempted from attendance at school by the Minister of Education.

*NB - absences for the above reasons are not necessarily approved absences as deemed by the College.*

#### 4. GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

##### A. APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

An absence from any class is considered to be an “unapproved absence”, except for the following circumstances that allow for an “approved absence”:

- A medical certificate that complies with the guidelines of the Australian Medical Association regarding the period of illness accompanied by a note or phone call from a parent/guardian is provided. In order for the College to accept the medical certificate the document must state that, according to the judgement of the physician, the student was unfit to attend classes at the College. This judgement will only be accepted if the student has visited the licensed physician in person.

**N.B.** The College reserves the right to authenticate all Medical Certificates with the issuing practitioner.

Any Medical Certificates found to be fraudulent will result in the student and their parent/guardian being required to meet with the Principal to discuss their future enrolment.

- A statutory declaration made by parents/carers is provided. This may be used only to approve an absence due to illness for a single day and only if it is provided to the College on the school day following the absence. A statutory declaration will not be accepted to approve absences where a School Assessed Coursework task (SAC) is scheduled.
- Campus Principals and Assistant Principals may approve absences where the parent/guardian has discussed with Team Leader or Coordinator the exceptional circumstances that prevent attendance (e.g. family crisis / tragedy).
- Students who attend other school related activities such as excursions; participate in College sports teams or attend an overnight camp for College purposes.

**College approved activities may also include:**

• Sport	• Camps and excursions	• Music lessons or performance	• Specialist numeracy/literacy support	• Speech Therapy
• School Production	• Student Wellbeing support	• Student Leadership activities	• Work experience or work placement	• Other approved activities arranged by teaching staff

An absence due to participation in a College approved activity must be verified prior to the activity by completing appropriate permission forms. The Principal class member will grant final approval for any student to participate in a College activity where there is a need to clarify their participation. The student is permitted to participate in the activity so long as the class work set during the absence is completed to a level deemed satisfactory by the classroom teacher, and that there are no other concerns regarding work completion/attendance.

Students, after an absence, may need to seek information from their class teachers on what needs to be done to catch up on missed lessons and access learning on Compass. The classroom teacher should notify the relevant Team Leader and Coordinators if this is a concern. Should the student not complete the set work as required, that student may not be permitted to participate in any further College approved activity until the outstanding work is redeemed.

##### B. COMPLETION OF UNITS OF STUDY AND PROMOTION

- For Year 7 - 12 students **unapproved absences must not exceed more than 5 classes for each specific subject within a semester of study.**
  - Students who exceed this limit and do not meet attendance requirements will be at risk of receiving an ‘N’ (Not Satisfactory) result for the relevant unit.
- **Students must be marked as “present” for a minimum of 80%** of all scheduled classes. The 80% attendance requirement allows for a combined total of 20% approved and unapproved absences. (Students with ongoing medical conditions may meet the criteria for Special Provision and may be exempt from this expectation at the discretion of the Principal). Special considerations will be applied to students that identify as Indigenous or International students.
- In order to be promoted to the next year level, VCE and VCE-VM/VPC **students must receive a Satisfactory (S) overall result in a minimum of 75% of VCE/VCE-VM/VPC/VET units undertaken** in a calendar year. Students must pass at least one unit of the selected English study.
- Students who have not been able to complete units of study due to prolonged periods of absence due to factors such as chronic illness may be referred to alternative educational settings (e.g. distance education) to continue their education.

##### C. PUNCTUALITY AND LATENESS

Students are required to be punctual to all classes. If students arrive late to school, they are required to “sign in” at the campus administrative office. Likewise, when leaving early, students are required to “sign out” at the campus administrative office. Students must present a note to the office staff signed by parents and countersigned by the relevant team leader if they are leaving early. Ongoing punctuality concerns may result in further consequences and interventions.

##### D. ATTENDANCE RECORDING PROCEDURES

At Hume Central Secondary College, the Compass program (electronic roll marking system) will be used to record student attendance and absences session by session. All student absences are then aggregated on our CASES21 database from Compass and communicated to the DET (Department of Education & Training).

#### **E. PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN EXPLAINED ABSENCES**

Absence due to illness /family issue/bereavement must be verified by a note/telephone call from parent/guardian.

#### **F. CONSEQUENCES FOR ABSENCES**

For Year 7 - 12 students, unapproved absences must not exceed more than 5 classes for each specific subject within a semester of study. If students exceed this limit, they will be at risk of receiving an 'N' (Not Satisfactory) result for the relevant unit. The College, through regular Student Engagement Committee (SEC) meetings, will examine student attendance patterns, implement Student Support Group (SSG) meetings with parents and make final decisions related to Semester/Unit S and N results.

#### **Attendance for School Assessed Coursework (SAC) Tasks and Common Assessment Task (CAT)**

If a student is absent and misses a SAC/CAT, a medical certificate is required to be eligible to reschedule the task to receive a score for the assessment.

#### **G. SPECIAL PROVISION**

A student whose attendance is affected by periods of prolonged illness or other circumstances related to their personal situation/environment may apply to the Campus Principal / Assistant Principal for special provision. The student will be required to provide supporting documentation in the form of a letter from a registered medical specialist. (refer to Special provision document).

#### **H. PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATION OF AN ABSENCE TO THE COLLEGE**

Parents are required to provide an explanation of the absence once the student returns to school. Alternatively, parents may make a telephone call on the day of the absence. Parents are asked to telephone the school prior to 8.45am if the student is going to be absent from the school on that day.

#### **I. NOTIFICATION FROM COLLEGE TO PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN OF A STUDENT ABSENCE**

##### **Years 7-9:**

Team Leaders and Coordinators will examine daily attendance records. The College will attempt to make contact with the parent of any student (Years 7-9) who has been away for more than one consecutive day unless the reason for the absence has been notified. Where possible, parents will be contacted on the first day of absence. In addition, where there is a need to query a reason for absence or lateness to school, parents/carers/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible.

##### **Years 10-12:**

Team Leaders and Coordinators will examine daily attendance records. The emphasis on attendance monitoring at these levels will be towards students at risk of not satisfactorily completing a subject due to poor attendance. In addition, where there is a need to query a reason for absence or lateness to school, parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

#### **J. PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN ACCESS TO ATTENDANCE DATA**

Parents/carers/guardians may access a copy of their child's attendance data on Compass.

#### **K. EXTENDED TRAVEL**

Family holidays are not approved absences. Families should not plan a holiday during school time where students will miss classes. Students receive 12 weeks per year of non-tuition time where holidays can be taken. Holidays during school time jeopardise a students' opportunity for success and as such the College will not sanction such time out of class.

In exceptional circumstances, students may be granted special authority by the Principal/Campus Principal to be absent from school to undertake activities which, although not part of the school program, are considered by the school to represent worthwhile educational or personal development opportunities for the student. The following procedures apply:

- Parents make a request to the Principal in writing for the extended absence to be classed as "approved"
- Where the period of absence and circumstances are deemed to have a detrimental effect on the student's educational progress, the student may be required to complete the unit/year level the following year
- The dates of such absences will be relayed to classroom teachers, who may put a learning plan in place over the duration of the absence.

#### **J. STUDENT SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS TO DISCUSS ATTENDANCE ISSUES**

If the reason for a student's absence remains unresolved after an initial attempt at contact, or in the case where a student's attendance falls below the 5 periods of unapproved absence the Team Leader or Coordinator should convene a meeting with the parents/carers and student (if appropriate). The invitation to attend the meeting should be documented on Compass as a means of indicating its importance. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- ensure that the parents/carers are aware of the absence and fully appreciate the impact on learning progress
- examine the reasons for non-attendance
- establish attendance goals and develop strategies to improve attendance patterns
- identify whether further assistance will be needed to re-establish attendance.

The outcome of the meeting should lead to the implementation of strategies to improve the student's attendance.

**K. RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN (OR ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN) TO SUPPORT ATTENDANCE**

If communication with parents/carers/guardians has not been possible or a meeting does not sufficiently resolve the attendance problem, a return to school plan needs to be developed to support the student’s attendance.

Normally this will involve a formal meeting convened by the Principal or nominee and attended by the parents/carers/guardians, student (if appropriate) and a Team Leader or Coordinator.

The school may also seek support from regional student service support staff and community or other government agencies. The return to school plan should result in the establishment of an ongoing attendance support process to develop and monitor an appropriate program of assistance and support for the student, drawing upon any special skills and resources needed, for example from external support personnel. The plan could involve such action as:

- Modification of the learning program
- Increased supervision of the student
- Personal support and counselling for the student
- Referral to other support agencies.

It is important that wherever possible, the plan is developed in consultation with the parents/ carers and the student to ensure their active cooperation. The plan should be documented to confirm arrangements to assist the student.

Where the action taken through the return to school plan does not lead to a resumption of satisfactory attendance, the Principal/Campus Principal should determine if it is necessary to convene an attendance conference in the interest of the education of the student and make a referral to the Regional Office if required.

**L. ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

*Clarification of Guardianship*

Where a student is under a special guardianship arrangement the Principal/Campus Principal should ascertain who has the legal responsibility for the student when considering action to be taken in relation to attendance issues.

*Students who live Independently*

Students who live independently are generally able to give consent to formalities normally approved by parents/carers/guardians. Attendance concerns should also be negotiated directly with the student. This circumstance does not prevent the Principal seeking assistance through the Department of Human Services or other community agencies where he/she feels that the educational well-being of the student aged less than seventeen years is in jeopardy through attendance irregularities.

**REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed as required or due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Date Reviewed	To Be Reviewed	Endorsed at College Council
May 2024	Annually	18th May 2024