

Policy – Identification and Recording

Policy Information

Policy Name:	Parent Payment Policy
Policy Number:	7.2
Current Version:	4.2 – 16/11/2022
Sub-Program/Area:	Finance
Scope:	School Programs

Revision History & Ratification

This policy needs to be reviewed by College Council **annually**, and ratified at the College Council meetings when **changes are necessary**. This policy will be published for distribution to staff and parents on Compass and to College Councilors each February.

Revision Date:	Council Ratification Date:	Summary of Changes	Prepared/Approved By:
12/08/2013	22/08/2013	Policy Creation	Sharyn Wilson
13/02/2015	19/02/2015	Revision	Sharyn Wilson
20/03/2016	23/03/2016	Revision	Sharyn Wilson
10/02/2017	15/02/2017	Revision	Sharyn Wilson
20/02/2018	21/02/2018	Revision	Sharyn Wilson
22/08/2018	17/10/2018	New DET policy introduction	Sharyn Wilson
20/02/2019	20/02/2019	Revision	Sharyn Wilson
03/02/2020	20/02/2020	Review	Sharyn Wilson
17/11/2021	17/11/2021	New DET policy amendment	Sharyn Wilson
16/11/2022	16/11/2022	Review	Sharyn Wilson

PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

2. RATIONALE

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions excellence and ensures that every child and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Colleges are best placed to make local decisions which ensure that all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities that support their expectations and promote their aspirations as they move through the education system. Parent contribution, in all forms, assists colleges to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by college communities.

Learning and teaching programs vary across colleges based on local needs and circumstances and reflect each college's priorities, decisions and resources. This, in turn, informs the parent payment charges approved by college councils that may vary from one college to the next.

3. WHAT CAN COLLEGES CHARGE FOR?

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in government colleges. College councils are responsible for developing and approving college-level parent financial contributions and can request payments from parents¹ under three categories only- Curriculum Contributions, Other Contributions, and Extra-Curricular Items and Activities.

Curriculum Contributions - Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum.

Other Contributions - Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities - Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

In implementing this policy, colleges must adhere to the following principles:

- **Educational value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when colleges determine their parent payments practices
- **Access, equity and inclusion:** All students have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full college program is facilitated
- **Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the college ensure parents are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship
- **Respect and Confidentiality:** Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement and the identity and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent contributions.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** College parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by college councils

4. COST AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS

When college councils consider the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the college.

College principals must ensure that:

¹ Parent^{*} in the policy has the same meaning as in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, which is: '**parent**', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

- items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category
- parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning Items themselves, in consultation with the college
- information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood to all parents so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access
- parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for college fees (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous college year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the college year-ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought
- the status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant college personnel
- parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding college fees from one year to the next
- use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding college funds owed to the college from parents is not permitted
- there will be only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by parents are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the college.

5. SUPPORT TO PARENTS

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Principals and college councils exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents. These can be accessed through ["Cost support for families."](#)

Consideration to hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis. All colleges have written hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty.

All parents are provided the name and contact details of a nominated parent payment contact person at the college who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

6. ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

In respect to each college's development of its parent payments, college councils will engage in effective communication with the college community and have strategies in place to ensure they are aware of and understand the needs and views of parents.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Colleges will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy at least annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the college community.

The full Parent Payment Policy is available from the Department's [College Policy and Advisory Guide](#).

Answers to the most commonly asked questions about college costs for parents see:

[Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#)

8. PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND METHODS

Payments can be made in full or by instalments using the following methods:

- Cash/cheque/EFTPOS at college administration
- BPAY
- Monthly Credit Card Direct debits
- Centrepay

9. FAMILY SUPPORT OPTIONS

- CSEF
- State School Relief
- Smith Family Scholarships
- Various humanitarian organisations eg: AMES, Red Cross, DHHS

PARENT PAYMENTS POLICY

ONE PAGE OVERVIEW



FREE INSTRUCTION

- Schools provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the standard curriculum requirements in Victorian Curriculum F-10, VCE and VCAL.
- Schools may invite parents to make a financial contribution to support the school.



PARENT PAYMENT REQUESTS

Schools can request contributions from parents under three categories:

Curriculum Contributions	Other Contributions	Extra-Curricular Items and Activities
Voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum.	Voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.	Items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are above and beyond what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum. These are provided on a user-pays basis.

- Schools may also invite parents to supply or purchase educational items to use and own (e.g. textbooks, stationery, digital devices).

FINANCIAL HELP FOR FAMILIES

- Schools put in place financial hardship arrangements to support families who cannot pay for items or activities so that their child doesn't miss out.
- Schools have a nominated parent payment contact person(s) that parents can have a confidential discussion with regarding financial hardship arrangements.



SCHOOL PROCESSES

- Schools must obtain school council approval for their parent payment arrangements and publish all requests and communications for each year level on their school website for transparency.