



Rationale

The Teaching and Learning Policy reflects and instils the College vision and motto, "*Confidence To Achieve*". The key priorities aim at enhancing student culture, growing pride and achievement, valuing staff and building teachers capacity, and increasing positive parental and community involvement.

This policy is developed to enrich the College Educational Philosophy at Sunbury Downs College through the establishment of a *welcoming, safe, and orderly learning environment. We believe outstanding teaching produces high quality learning outcomes.*

The positive learning environment fosters collaboration and cooperation with shared expectations of educational success. Students develop responsibility for their own learning, progress and behaviour. This occurs when all learners are engaged with differentiated and challenging learning tasks. We create confident, resilient and reflective independent life learners. Sunbury Downs College fosters authentic respectful relationships so learning is enjoyed and students achieve their full potential."

The approach followed in developing this policy is student-centred and as such, particular emphasis is placed on building teachers' capacity to engage students. Through this approach, students are enabled to develop the meaning and attitude for learning. The teaching component is informed by evidence-based data, reflection and best practice. This is facilitated through a shared moral purpose among staff, relevant and contextualised curriculum delivery, continued reflection of teaching practices, analysis of student data and evidence based collaboration.

The College acknowledges that students learn best when they are offered a broad and differentiated curriculum and pathways, catering for abilities, preferred learning styles and varying social capabilities.

Guiding Principles

The Teaching and Learning Policy reflects the College's commitment to be identified as a High Performing School. Accordingly, Sunbury Downs College is committed to:

- Supportive and effective leadership
- Clear and shared focus
- An orderly learning environment
- High standards and learning expectations
- Use of data to drive improvement
- Alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment with College guidelines and standards
- Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning
- Focused professional development
- Accountability
- High levels of parents and community involvement

Furthermore, this policy is guided by DET Principles of Learning and Teaching (POLT) that suggest students learn best when:

- The learning environment is supportive and productive
- The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation
- Students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program
- Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application
- Assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning
- Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom



Aim

Sunbury Downs College aims to develop and implement a focused, coherent and collaborative approach to improving student outcomes. The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistency across the College in the design, documentation and implementation of the curriculum and pedagogical practices.

As this policy sets out the principles and expectations that underpin the teaching and learning environment, it should be read in conjunction with other policies to teaching and learning.

Objectives

The Sunbury Downs College Teaching and Learning Policy outlines the key directions and guidelines required to demonstrate the following:

- **Quality Curriculum:** Planning, documentation and implementation of school-wide curriculum
- **Pedagogy:** Development and documentation of evidence-based instructional model and measurement indicators of consistent use of the model
- **Assessment:** Measurement indicators for teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes
- **Inside-Outside:** Establishment of partnerships with schools/ educational settings, and community organisations to support student outcomes, strengthen transitions and increase student choice and customisation of offerings in the local area
- **Professional Learning:** Providing a collaborative approach to teaching where high performing teachers support other staff through peer observation, mentoring and coaching, develop best practice models, and lead professional development with In-House PD Programs.

Curriculum

At Sunbury Downs College students are supported to grow into young adults ready to make their mark on the world. The College prides itself on the provision of a relevant, rigorous and engaging curriculum that addresses and exceeds the needs of all our students and leads to the sequential development of skills that promote and enhance life-long learning.

The College offers a guaranteed and viable curriculum, which provides students with a strong foundation for further learning. This includes a broad selection of electives through which students are empowered to choose the pathways that best suits their interests, skills and abilities.

All Domain Areas are offered, including English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities, Performing and Visual Arts, Technology and Languages. The College ensures a review of the curriculum and aligns its scope and sequence documentation of all Domain Areas with DET directions and the Victorian Curriculum. Staff are encouraged to work collaboratively in teams to improve the way the curriculum is developed, experienced and evaluated.

The scope and sequence of the content knowledge and skills at each year level is Domain based. These align with the Victorian Curriculum, VCE and VCAL and VETiS. The quality assurance of this alignment is attained through the communication protocol between the Heads of Domains, Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) and the Curriculum Executive Committee (CE). Staff are informed of these committees through the College Strategic Plan and the Annual Implementation Plan.

To ensure consistency of curriculum documentation and implementation, the consultation and support processes are facilitated through TLC and Domains in addition to teachers' Professional Development (PD) by participating in ongoing professional learning opportunities within the College or sourced externally. The curriculum ensures:

- Implementation of Victorian Curriculum, VCE, VETiS and VCAL standards/achievement benchmarks/frameworks
- Delivery of a whole College curriculum plan
- Delivery of a whole College assessment schedule to support students achievement
- Each student is provided with a challenging, appropriate and relevant curriculum
- A literacy focus in classrooms
- Explicit teaching of specific vocabulary and writing genres



- Creative and regular use of ICT skills
- Students have access to learning beyond the classroom.

A consistent College-wide curriculum is measured through the following documentation. These are developed for each subject offered. The relevant accountability and timelines assigned for the completion of such documentation is outlined in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP).

The College curriculum documentation consists of:

- Unit Templates
- Teaching and Learning Lesson Plan
- Assessment Templates
- Assessment Schedules
- Assessments Criteria/Rubrics

It is envisaged that the implementation of the curriculum also aligns with the contextualised DET North Metropolitan Region (NMR) 'Powerful Learning Strategy':

- Establishing protocols for teaching and learning
- High order questioning
- Inquiry-based teaching
- Quality feedback and assessment

The College is committed to catering for individual differences, and as such, the implementation of the curriculum emphasises meeting the diverse needs of students in ways that enhance their sense of personal worth and challenges them to realise their full potential. We provide all students with individualised learning opportunities by providing differentiated learning environments. Learning experiences are constructed so that there is equity and accessibility for all students, including those with particular needs. Standardised tests employed in Years 7-9 (NAPLAN, On Demand) in addition to the VCE Practice GAT are analysed on a yearly basis to derive strategies aimed at further improving student outcomes.

The College recognises that some students have talents in particular areas at an early age, while others may develop later; the former may also lose interest, or their talent may dissipate naturally as new complexities emerge. The College therefore identifies initial talent, but also monitors progress to ensure that all students have appropriate challenges at the various stages of their schooling and development.

High ability students are extended through the Sunbury Downs College Accelerated Curriculum and Enrichment (ACE) Program. This provides a more challenging environment for students and gives them the opportunity to engage in a 6 year program, but with a much broader VCE experience than is traditionally possible. Students are selected for the program on the basis of testing and an interview process at the College. The interviews are conducted in June and July in liaison with the students' Grade 6 teacher and families.

The College extends its support to all students including those demonstrating lower ability in the literacy continuum. In such circumstances, students are offered additional support through their participation in the Literacy Achievement Certificate Program.

Literacy initiatives are embedded in a range of contexts where students are required to demonstrate their abilities to listen, read, view, speak, write and create multi modal texts for different purposes in a range of contexts. Similarly, numeracy is used in a wide range of situations where teaching and assessment are supported using traditional methods of learning as well as ICT. Four specific key priorities are outlined to enhance literacy and numeracy at the College:

- Effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy
- Strong leadership and whole College engagement with literacy and numeracy
- Implementation of the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning initiative to improve digital literacy



- Monitoring student and College literacy and numeracy performance, identification of students at risk and implementation of support initiatives in classrooms.

Parents are informed of their child's progress via regular correspondence with staff, Progress Information Meetings and regular reporting. High-risk students are identified by their teachers at the conclusion of each term. This allows a timely response to risk and time for planning and implementation of individualised intervention. Teachers refer students at risk of failing to Year Level Coordinators of the relevant Mini-School.

Overall, teachers need to convey the key message of high expectations and encourage students to seek support with their learning. As such, the College has initiated a STAR program, which is promoted within the school community in a manner that encourages engagement with learning as well as providing an additional opportunity for students to overcome any potential learning barriers with classroom teachers outside of scheduled class times.

Pedagogy

Learning at Sunbury Downs College challenges students to reflect on their world, engage with authentic learning experiences and seek to contextualise their learning through engagement with a range of experiences. Teachers are required to cater for different learning styles through:

- Providing a structured lesson combined teacher-directed learning and independent application of skills
- Use of identified teaching strategies to support literacy improvement
- Purposeful groupings of students for different activities and varying seating plans
- Explicit teaching of both content knowledge and skills in each subject area through use of world life examples
- Constructive, purposeful, individualised and on-going feedback
- Teachers and support staff working collaboratively to plan curriculum and teaching
- Teachers incorporating high quality instructional strategies into their lessons

The College prepares students to be responsible and active citizens in the rapidly changing world. The teaching environment is built on the relational nature of learning by designing activities and tasks that hold relevance to students and their community. The College is committed to the development of effective teaching through:

- A well embedded professional development culture
- Pedagogical content knowledge
- Use of data to inform teaching
- Collaborative planning/moderation
- Peer observation/reflection
- Assisting students with low literacy, numeracy and ICT skills

Sunbury Downs College uses a consistent instructional model across the two Mini Schools. The key elements of the instructional model (HOIST) are as follows:

- **Hook and engage:** The teacher establishes clear learning intentions and success criteria
- **Outline:** The teacher provides adequate explanation and ensure students are able to understand the concept/task being taught
- **Investigate:** Students explore the concepts and enhance understanding through guided practice
- **Synthesise:** The teacher allows for independent application of the skill or concept learnt in a range of activities. The teacher identifies students who needed additional support
- **Transform:** The teacher evaluates their own teaching by reflecting to ensure that learning intentions are met and measurable.



This policy provides the guiding principles to ensure consistent implementation of the HOIST model and its use would be regarded as an evidence-based teaching strategy towards Dimension 3 of the Performance and Development Cycle for teachers, in accordance with AITSL standards and DET Dimensions:

- **Dimension 1:** Student Outcomes: Improvement in areas of student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student transitions and pathways, as evidence by a range of qualitative and quantitative data.
- **Dimension 2:** Professional Knowledge: Teachers draw on a body of professional knowledge and research to respond to the needs of their students within their educational contexts.
- **Dimension 3:** Professional Practice: Teachers make learning engaging, creating positive learning environments and use of different teaching strategies to develop students' knowledge and skills
- **Dimension 4:** Professional Engagement: Teachers model effective learning where they can identify own learning needs and expand their professional learning both collegially and individually. Teachers demonstrate respect and professionalism in their interactions with students, colleagues, parents/carers and the broader community.

DEECD¹ (2014) proposed a default weighting of 25% on each of the above dimensions to enable teachers and principal class employees to place the greatest emphasis on areas they see as most important in meeting the learning needs of students. Teachers need to discuss the relative weighting during their goal setting stage with their reviewers. Other evidence-based documentation that can be used in satisfying the above dimensions may include analysis of the following (DEECD, 2014, p.13):

- Self-reflection
- Peer, student and parent feedback
- Classroom observation
- Collaborative professional learning
- Collaborative curriculum planning, team teaching and moderation of student work and assessment
- Classroom artefacts and assessment against standards (e.g. VicCurr, VCE, etc.)

Students' learning needs are optimised through the recognition of individuals' personal and social needs, increased engagement in college life, improved student attendance, and a developed culture of participation and excellence based on mutual respect. At Sunbury Downs College we work with teachers so they understand that students learn best when the following conditions are observed:

- Attendance is consistent
- High expectations are embedded in the teaching and learning
- There is a clear understanding of the purpose and quality of tasks/work undertaken
- Differentiated tasks are given to meet the needs of all students
- A safe and supportive learning environment is established to make meaningful contributions to the college and the wider community
- Positive behaviours that support optimal learning are explicitly taught, clearly expected and affirmed in all learning contexts
- Learning is authentic and has purpose and meaning which is relevant and transferable to everyday life
- Students receive quality feedback and have opportunities for reflection on how to use feedback for improvement
- Students identify and build strengths and set challenging goals for themselves.

Students are encouraged to engage in the College's life through their representation on Student Representative Council (SRC) and in House and Student Leadership Program as this provides them with opportunities for shared understandings and personal growth. The connectedness is also facilitated through the Homegroup structure.

¹ DEECD (2014). Performance and Development Guidelines for Teachers, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria, May.



Assessment

Assessment enables staff to recognise and reward student performance, allows students to realise their strengths and areas for improvement, and understand their own learning. Assessment is the on-going process of gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence to make informed and frequent judgement to improve student outcomes. It enables staff to accurately determine where a student is placed within the learning continuum.

Effective assessment, focused on both a measure of the learning outcomes and promotion of learning, should be:

- based on an understanding of how students learn
- designed to improve student performance
- an integral component of course design
- valid, reliable and consistent
- inclusive of feedback and reflection
- purposeful, goals, standards and criteria-oriented.

To improve students' learning and develop deep understanding, teachers need to utilise a range of assessment practices with the following overarching purposes:

- **Assessment FOR learning:** A formative assessment strategy that enable teachers to assess the current content knowledge of their students in relation to the topic. It is essential that teachers exercise this as an ongoing process. This provides the teachers and students with valuable knowledge about what the students have learnt and what knowledge and skills students still need to develop.
- **Assessment AS Learning:** A formative assessment that empowers students to reflect and monitor their own progress to inform their future goals and attitude to learning. Students should engage in self and peer assessment which promotes their understanding of how they learn. At the same time, staff and students also engage in the Assessment FOR Learning process in order to inform the next section of Unit and lesson planning.
- **Assessment OF Learning:** This a summative assessment strategy. It provides students and parents a measure of the student's progress at a point in time. This provides guidance for future student improvement.
- **Assessment FOR Teaching:** Teachers effect on the student.

To ensure a consistent approach to assessment, teachers need to adhere to the following approach in their assessment practice:

- Use of common assessment requirements in all learning areas at each year level
- Use of formative assessment strategies to support learning
- All assessment tasks align to the relevant standards/outcomes in each course of study
- Teachers need to have gone through the assessment tasks themselves first. This would provide teachers with a greater insight into what to teach, identify what skills gaps exist, and design instructions to match different learning styles
- Teachers need to be proactive by providing pre-assessment strategies (pre-tests of content knowledge skills checks, concept maps and KWL charts: what they know, what they want to know and what they learned)
- Students are enabled to monitor and reflect on their own learning
- High order thinking integrated in all assessment tasks
- Expectations for student work is clearly communicated through the use of assessment criteria sheets, rubrics and grade descriptors of achievement
- Student learning data and surveys inform teaching practice
- Moderation is used to improve consistency in teacher judgement
- VCE Unit 3 and 4 assessment practice and links to VCAA Assessment Handbooks for individual subjects.



Community Engagement

At Sunbury Downs, we take a pro-active measure to increase the percentage of students entering tertiary educations by creating partnerships with a wide range of educational school settings and community organisations. Whilst this is aimed at improving teacher practice and student learning outcomes, we believe that by providing contextualised-learning experiences students will subsequently be able to make informed pathway choices. The College facilitates a robust pastoral care, managed-individual pathways process that is supported through these partnerships.

Secondary schools' increased participation with higher education is a well-acknowledged strategy in the education literature². Through such partnerships, we take every opportunity to identify and evaluate new improvement strategies appropriate to the needs of our students. This will lead to the implementation of the Victorian Curriculum, realisation of extended strategic partnerships with industry, higher education and specialist facilities, and attainment of contextualised life-long learning experiences.

The College is also committed to the further expansion of our partnerships programs. This includes, but is not limited to, the future establishment of an International Student Program, the introduction of Sister School and membership with Beacon Foundation (Intermediary between school and industry). These partnerships further provide opportunities for teaching staff to develop and enhance their capabilities.

The above approach focuses on helping teachers to improve instruction, create awareness of the teaching practice and provide opportunities for constructive feedback with a precise knowledge of best practice. It also motivates teachers to make the necessary improvements in their teaching.

In addition to our Pre-Service Teacher project partnership with Victoria University, the College also has student teachers from a range of tertiary providers including La Trobe, Monash and Deakin. The partnerships extend to the Teach for Australia Program and Melbourne University Internship Program.

Through the Teach for Australia, Melbourne University Internship, Pre-Service teachers are supported in their practicum, to explore inquiry-based learning, try and test new ideas within supportive environments and to engage in professional conversations about teaching and learning. Pre-Service teachers are specifically empowered through:

- Extended connected clinical experiences
- Delivery of classroom-based teaching practice and performance
- Establishment of strong relationships, common knowledge and share beliefs among school and their university-based faculty
- Extensive use of case study methods, teacher research, performance assessments and portfolio evaluation.

Coaching

Coaching at Sunbury Downs College aims at improving students' learning outcomes. It focuses on developing teachers as effective independent practitioners by providing them a suite of professional development opportunities guided by the following principles:

- Teachers' decisions on what they need to learn
- Contextualised learning
- Collaborative problem solving
- Ongoing and personalised support
- Evidenced based, researched and updated information
- Opportunities to develop theoretical understanding, and
- Training that is a part of a comprehensive reform process

Coaching may include one or a combination of the following:

- Teachers' theoretical understanding of alternative teaching approaches

² Victorian Auditor – General Report (2012): Science and Mathematics Participation Rates and Initiatives (VAGO, 2012)



- Opportunity to observe teaching methods as demonstrated by a leading or highly accomplished teacher
- Low-risk practice opportunity (excludes VCE classes) with feedback
- Coaching in the authentic teaching context
- Long-term intensive training on identified skills set
- Content area focused, hands-on work and incorporating training and reflection into daily practice
- Collective participation and professional communication between teachers
- Exercise peer coaching (where teachers learn from each other)

Cognitive Coaching

Through the above approaches, coaching would not be in a formal evaluative role as the support is intended to encourage teachers to seek assistance whenever is required. Coaches will inspire teachers to try different instructional strategies and ultimately establish a collaborative working environment that is based on trust, with the mutual goal of positive change in teaching practice.

Coaching at Sunbury Downs College will be primarily of cognitive nature, consisting of a three-phase cycle:

- Pre-conference
- Observation
- Post-conference

The cycle/process is intended to improve teacher instructional effectiveness through reflection, as the intervention is not aimed at changing teacher's behaviour. The coach serves as a mediator who assists teachers reflect and self-determine to change their cognitive behaviours of instruction. Through this experience, coaches and teachers develop a powerful process in fostering collegiality, deepening reflective skills, and developing cognitive autonomy.

Teachers may opt to seek a coach from amongst their peers or preferably a highly accomplished or leading teacher. Although cognitive coaching is not focused on the technical expertise, leading teachers are more knowledgeable in teaching practice and are in a better position to empower people to improve.

Peer coaching provides an individualised professional development opportunity for teachers where practices are improved through experimentation, observation, reflection, exchange of professional ideas and shared problem solving. An overview of the types of activities in different studies of the workplace learning of teachers and teacher coaching, as shown in Table 1, could be used to guide both teachers and coaches on goal setting and extent of the collaboration.

Coaching for Learning

Coaching at Sunbury Downs extends its scope to all teachers as a bottom-up approach to the construction of knowledge and meaning for learning, when interacting with students. Through this approach, teachers are required to establish the identity of their learners, distinguish personal motivation, attitudes and dispositions that individual learners hold and then to engage in knowledge construction and sharing. Through this approach, teachers reinforce the elements of positive education in their classroom: resilience, pace and narrative and authentic relationships.

Table 1: Overview of categories of learning activities mentioned in different studies of the workplace learning of teachers and teacher coaching (Zwart et al., 2008, p985).



Studies of the workplace learning of teachers	Categories of learning activities			
Kwakman (1999)	Reading	Reflection	Doing/ experimenting ^a Doing	Collaboration
Van Eekelen et al. (2005)	Reading	Thinking		Learning in interaction
Lohman and Woolf (2001)	Environmental scanning			Knowledge exchange
Berings (2006)	Learning from theory or supervision	Learning from reflection	Learning from one's regular job	Learning from social interactions with colleagues
<i>Studies of teacher peer coaching</i>				
Engelen (2002)		Reflection		Experimentation
Bergen, Engelen, and Derksen (2006)		Analysis of situation Thinking together about the impact of one's behavior		Observation
Showers and Joyce (1996)		Thinking together about the impact of one's behavior on student learning		Experimentation
Garmston et al. (1993)		Exploration of the thinking underlying practice via reflection		Watching each other work with students Experimentation Observation
Kohler and Ezell (1999)		Exchange of feedback		Implementation and refinement of practices Observation

^aNot described as separate activities.

Adaptive Teaching Capacity

The use of same teaching methods may not be successful. In such circumstances, coaching needs to be focused on the development of Adaptive Teaching Capacity amongst staff. This can be achieved through a teacher's:

- Focus on interaction about learning and teaching for understanding
- Classroom management skills
- Content knowledge and motivation to improve that knowledge
- Interpersonal behaviour when interacting with students.

Fixation on teaching routine might have a negative impact on learning outcomes of students, and as such, teachers may be required to continue to develop their professional competency through further development of the four aspects of teacher competencies:

- Diagnosis of students learning, abilities and skills
- Curricular decision making with regards to learning objectives
- Selection of alternative teaching and learning arrangements to accommodate for pre-learning conditions
- Classroom management to support the above

There are four key indicators for success in teaching using high Adaptive Teaching Competency. These indicators form part of the evaluative process. They are:



- The demands of subject knowledge are met
- The diverse pre-conditions and learning processes of students are taken into account
- The benefits of diverse teaching methods are apparent
- Students and class are supported in the new learning process

Adaptive Teaching Competency at Sunbury Downs College will be nurtured through:

- **Reciprocal peer coaching:** This refers to working with peers with similar experiences. Staff will be mentoring each other through observation, feedback, reflective dialogue and classroom practice. This coaching is aimed at enhancing prospective teacher's ability to analyse and reflect. Successful peer coaching requires careful planning time, good observation and support by the College and leadership team. The observed activity should not be a random activity.
- **Expert coaching:** Occurs when teachers are supported by colleagues with more advanced expertise.
- **Content-focused coaching (one-to-one intervention):** The coach needs to be competent in teaching the particular subject. The teacher and coach meet before the lesson, discuss the planning, co-construct the lesson together, the teacher implements the lesson, and the coach may be also involved in teaching. Content-focused teaching needs to extend in time to at least ten sessions per year, for the intervention to be effective.

Reflective peer coaching

This may be achieved in four stages:

- **Learning basic concepts** related to reflection (teacher attitude and promotion of reflective thinking among teachers)
- **Reflective learning** (observing answers to questions, making sense of and understanding questions, meaning for learning, and how reflection contributes to the professional development of teachers)
- **Reflective practice** (reflection-to-teaching, reflection-on-teaching and reflection-for-teaching)
- **Sharing learning and experience** to improve student learning outcomes

The peer coaching described in this policy is also applicable to Student and Pre-Service teachers. Mentors of Pre-Service teachers are supported in the use of the reflective peer-coaching model.


Relevant Documents/Policies

- Assessment Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Curriculum handbook
- Gifted Children Policy
- Homework policy
- Instruction Model (HOIST)
- Integration policy
- Literacy Strategy
- Numeracy Strategy
- Performance & Development Plans
- Progression Policy
- E-Learning Policy
- Unit planner for each subject



Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated by the Curriculum Executive every 3 years from the ratification date.

 Sunbury Downs College 'Confidence to Achieve'	Quality Controlled		Teaching and Learning Policy			
	Document No. & Title		Teaching and Learning Policy			
	Version	V 3.0	Author	MK	Owner	MK
	Approval Date	4/8/16	Last Review	08/16	Next Review	08/19
	VRQA Minimum Standard	Curriculum and Student Learning				