



LEARNING & TEACHING POLICY

Definition

Curriculum is all the arrangements (formal and informal) the College makes for students' learning thinking and development. It includes the content of the courses, student activities, teaching approaches, and the ways in which teachers and classes are organised. It also includes decisions on the need for and use of facilities.

Rationale

Central to the development of curriculum at Mount Lilydale Mercy College is the transmission of the Catholic traditions and heritage by making the values of the Gospel the mainspring of everyday teaching and learning. Values such as justice, compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation are reflected in the formal content of the curriculum, the strategies for teaching and learning, the organisational structures, the quality of pastoral care and all of the relationships in the College.

The Mount Lilydale Mercy College Mission Statement values a curriculum that:

- recognises that the College's Catholicity permeates all learning experiences;
- offers a dynamic, challenging, rich and diverse range of learning experiences;
- stimulates each student to strive for personal excellence;
- caters to individual needs;
- encourages a high level of motivation, independent learning, perseverance, initiative and creativity;
- values a culture of excellence where personal responsibility and pride in performance will help students to reach their potential;
- prepares students for a changing and challenging world;
- embraces a formal pastoral care program and a wide range of co-curricular activities;
- recognises that the College's Catholicity permeates all learning experiences; and
- recognises the importance of enquiry based and creative thinking.

Principles

The curriculum will:

- give students access to the traditions of the Catholic community through an understanding of, and opportunities to celebrate, its beliefs and practices;
- create a College environment which responds creatively to the cultural and linguistic diversity within Australian society and which includes appropriate English language support;
- welcome and accept students' life experiences and assist them to interpret these in the light of the Gospel;
- build within students a sense of community encouraging parent and teacher interaction to support learning;
- acknowledge and cater for the diversity of ways in which people learn;
- be explicitly related to clearly articulated goals;
- value all students equally and respond to their needs equitably;
- foster a deep knowledge and understanding of Australian culture and an appreciation of its cultural diversity, which is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities;
- recognise Australia's unique relationship with cultures, values, languages and traditions of countries in the Asian region;
- teach respect of Australian society/cultures and responsibility;
- encourage independent thinking and the development of critical skills and the continuing search for truth;
- make use of available technology to enable students to be skilled and creative technicians, with an ability to reflect on and explore the social and cultural impacts of technology;
- consider the needs of students disadvantaged by social and or economic circumstances, by physical and/or intellectual impairment, or by unfamiliarity with the English language and Australian culture;
- be assessed by a wide range of valid and reliable indicators of student performance in relation to the desired outcomes;
- empower students through learning so that, having gained a fuller understanding of life and the human person, they can approach their future with confidence and an appreciation of their call to serve and be responsible for others;
- create a continuum from engagement, to knowledge, to skills, to support, to create within the student, the ability to action.

Effective Learning

Content and learning strategies of the curricular programs will:

- provide a broad, balanced and integrated approach to learning;

- be dynamic and relevant, providing imaginative scope and intellectual rigor;
- support a College climate which is characterised by a pride in the cultural heritage of the students, high rates of attendance and retention, and appropriate representation of parents in College decision-making structures and processes;
- foster within students a responsibility for, and identity with, their family, Church, Australia and global communities;
- provide students with a set of values with which to integrate their schooling with their life and their Catholic faith;
- give students access to a continuous process of schooling based on the recognised phase of human development and the key learning tasks associated with each phase;
- affirm students as persons of dignity and worth through an acknowledgment of their gifts, talents, and endeavours;
- provide students with opportunities for sustained intellectual development;
- provide students with equal access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful, comprehensive and designed to improve their educational achievements; and
- encourage students' involvement in planning for future learning and career options.

Effective Teaching

It is each teacher's responsibility to develop fulfilling and challenging programs within which justice is a primary concern, so that effective learning will occur.

In collaboration with the College community, teachers will:

- foster an appreciation of the principles and values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- engage in and promote quality interpersonal relationships;
- promote a sense of community and belonging among students;
- be sensitive to the differences, in particular where students are disadvantaged for the reasons of gender, race, language, culture or socio-economic circumstance; or physical impairment;
- respond to individual learning styles and pace of learning;
- use a wide repertoire of teaching strategies;
- ensure continuous and stimulating learning experiences for all students;
- support and encourage students to develop skills of cooperation and teamwork;
- seek to complement the formal curriculum with opportunities for creative learning in the wider community;
- monitor teaching programs and make appropriate changes based on critical reflection on the purpose and value of what is taught and how it is taught;
- use fair and consistent forms of reporting to students, parents and other appropriate audiences;
- develop their teaching performance as part of an ongoing systematic reflection on their teaching practice;
- keep up to date with education theory and practice generally and in specific learning areas; and
- ongoing professional learning for teachers.

Effective Organisation

Effective teaching and learning cannot take place without the support of the College. Leadership is crucial in establishing a positive environment where organisational arrangements are responsive to the needs of the staff and students. These structural decisions provide the framework which makes learning possible.

Mount Lilydale Mercy College will:

- provide a practical framework of support for all students and staff;
- foster the development of extensive networking linked both nationally and regionally;
- provide the flexibility to accommodate changes as the need arises;
- provide and welcome opportunities to develop personal competencies of all persons of the College community;
- promote an awareness of employment-related pathways for students through the offering of VCE, VCAL, VET and University enrichment;
- meet the range of development needs of all students within each phase of schooling;
- be respectful and inclusive with all issues connected with disability, gender, class, race and ethnicity; and
- be sensitive to the views and experiences of those outside any socially dominant viewpoint.

Processes for development of and changes to curriculum

Role of the Executive Team in Curriculum Development

The Executive Team has a significant role in curriculum development as a result of its administrative responsibilities and particular roles within the College. These responsibilities include:

- ensuring that any curriculum provision/developments are in accord with the Mission Statement;
- providing adequate resources and other support to enable developmental change to occur;
- implementing curriculum decisions through day-to-day arrangements of the College;
- encouraging all staff in their Professional Development in terms of personal and College priorities; and
- ensuring that the curriculum observes church and government requirements.

These responsibilities require the Executive to:

- be aware of finances, staffing and resource issues, including alternatives to the status quo;
- be informed about developments in the wider educational context as well as specific College issues; and
- evaluate and be open to alternative strategies for implementation.

Principal's Responsibility in Curriculum

The Principal is responsible for the educational, catechetical, pastoral and managerial policies, students and practices of the College. The Principal receives recommendations for curriculum development/change from a variety of forums, including Faculty Leaders, Curriculum Innovation and Management Team, Academic Progress Team, Learning Sphere Group of the School Improvement Framework, the Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group, Consultative Committee, College Advisory Council, Parents and Friends' Association as well as recommendations and directives from external bodies such as the CEOM and VCAA.

Deputy Principal - Director of Studies' Responsibilities

The Deputy Principal - Director of Studies oversees the College curriculum and leads both the Curriculum Innovation and Management Team and the Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group through the calling of meetings, collation of the agenda items, taking and distribution of minutes, collection and distribution of relevant information/concerns/proposals and chairing of meetings.

Curriculum Innovation and Management Team

The Curriculum Innovation and Management Team comprises the Deputy Principal – Director of Studies, Directors of Campus – Learning (Barak and McAuley), the Director of Learning and the Deputy Principal – Director of Mission. They oversee the initiation, development and implementation of the curriculum and help steer the agendas at the various curriculum forums in the College.

The main responsibility of the Curriculum Innovation and Management Team is to make recommendations to the Principal about the larger organisational and resourcing issues.

The Curriculum Innovation and Management Team is also a forum in which the designated educational leaders of the College can:

- share expertise, ideas and concerns relating to educational developments;
- offer assistance to each other in leading Faculty Leaders and the relevant staff to embrace various developments and/or changes; and
- evaluate, reflect, rethink and plan how we meet the educational needs of our students and respond to the external demands.

The Curriculum Innovation and Management Team members have an obligation to:

- be informed about curriculum developments, not only in their Learning Area but also in the wider National context;
- be willing to look at various developments from a wide variety of perspectives;
- be able to identify the implications and suggest appropriate implementation strategies for any curriculum development; and
- be prepared to make decisions in the best interests of our students in accordance with the College Mission Statement.

Learning Sphere Group (S.I.F.)

The Learning Sphere Group operates as part of the School Improvement Framework and is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that learning remains a focus of teachers' work, that the College remains able to respond appropriately to the changing demands of our students and to external demands made upon us. Its aim is to generally ensure that our curriculum is diverse, engaging and challenging.

Members of this Group will be appointed by nominations by staff.

The recommendations of the Learning Sphere Group will be forwarded to the Principal and the Executive, the Curriculum Innovation and Management Team and to the Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group.

Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group

The Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group is responsible for advising the Principal and the College Advisory Council on Policy associated with all learning experiences which impact upon the wellbeing of the students within the College, including the Pastoral Policies and the Courses of Study.

This group is chaired by the Deputy Principal – Director of Studies and is attended by one of the Senior Learning personnel and interested staff, parents and students. The Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group has been established to ensure all members of the Mount Lilydale Mercy College community have a voice in the area of curriculum development and implementation. They act as a consultative body to consider and advise on curriculum issues.

The Role of this Advisory Group is to evaluate and advise upon matters referred to it by the Council and /or Principal; to make recommendations through the Council to the Principal on new initiatives developed by the Group in relation to its area of operation; and to undertake such projects as may be referred to it by the Principal and/ or Council. The Group is made up of teachers, parents and students.

Faculty Leaders

Faculty Leaders oversee curriculum development, innovation and implementation in their faculties. Some Faculty Leaders will have Assistant Coordinators appointed to support them.

Faculty Leaders, as appointed, are responsible for the curriculum within each area (in conjunction with the Deputy Principal - Director of Studies and Senior Learning personnel).

Evaluation

Curriculum development is ongoing. Review processes will occur through Faculty Leader meetings, Policy and Curriculum Advisory Group and Curriculum Management Team in consultation with the whole staff (where necessary) on a regular basis. This includes regular evaluations of all subjects in all Learning Areas and various other curricular initiatives such as Careers, VET, VCAL, University enrichment courses, Educational Support and other relevant initiatives which may arise.

It is expected that formal review processes will take place every three to five years in all phases of curriculum offerings at Mount Lilydale Mercy College or as church or government demands change.

See Appendix 1 for Implementation of the Formal Curriculum

See Appendix 2 for Specific Education Programs

Policy Development and Review

This policy was written by the Director of Learning and was reviewed in July 2005, updated in January 2008 and September 2011. It will be reviewed as the need arises, or no later than June 2013.