



ATTENDANCE PROCESSES

Merici College adheres to the Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Attendance Policy.

Related Policies

Teacher Role Description and Responsibilities

Assessment

Appeals – Senior Assessment

Absences

Absences - Senior Illness and Misadventure

IB Diploma Programme Assessment Policy

IB Middle Years Programme Assessment Policy

Rationale/Purpose

Merici College encourages all students to attend all school days and events when they are able and recognises that attendance is a parental responsibility. As such, the College works with parents to support regular attendance. It is required that junior students attend from 8:45am – 3:07pm, and that senior students attend from 8:45am-3:26pm. Students are required to attend all scheduled lessons during the school day.

The College has a responsibility to assist parents with the regular attendance of their daughters and to assist parents with their compliance to the national legislation regarding students attending school until age 17. This policy ensures that appropriate documentation is provided to meet BSSS and IB requirements (for senior students).

Definitions

Short Term Absence

(Up to 1 week)

Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' might include, but not be limited to:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition. A medical certificate needs to be produced for absences **exceeding three consecutive days**.
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings

- participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school
- participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event or equivalent.

Long Term Absence

(Longer than one week but less than five weeks)

Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' might include those listed above for Short Term Absence reasons and

- approved family holidays or extended visits overseas (not available for BSSS students and strongly discouraged for IB DP students). DP students require written permission from the principal, with applications submitted prior to the absence and after consultation with the Head of IB. Permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families (not available for BSSS students)

Extended Absence

(Five school weeks or more)

Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' might include those listed for Short Term and Long-Term Absence with the exception that they are for a longer period of time. Extended absences must be approved through the College Principal, CECG and the ACT Education Directorate. Extended absences may not be approved for BSSS students in Years 11 and 12 or IB DP students.

Exemption from Attendance

(Approved absence over 25 school days (including 25 part-days) in 12 months for)

- Exceptional circumstances, including health considerations where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate.
- Short-term employment opportunities after which the student will return to school.
- Participation in elite arts or sporting events (e.g. at State, National or International level)
- The child is prevented from attending school under a direction of the Public Health Act 2010 (and sick leave would not be more appropriate).

Exemption from Enrolment temporary exemption over 25 days from the legal requirement to be enrolled in school, available for:

- Age: where a child turns six years on or after 1 October and the Principal is satisfied it is not in the student's interest to enrol in the year they turn six years old,
- Health or disability of a child that requires them to continue in an individual program supported by medical specialists not longer than six months after the child's sixth birthday, or
- Participation in approved alternate education or training before a student completes Year 10 (e.g. TAFE/CIT or other registered RTO or traineeship / apprenticeship).

For BSSS students:

Explained Absence

Explained Absences appear on a student's attendance record, but do not count towards a Void grade.

Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' to explain a student's absence might include:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings
- participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the College (evidence must be supplied)
- participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event, or equivalent (evidence must be supplied)
- alternative lesson arranged by the College.

Appropriate Documentation

- Handwritten or emailed note, within FIVE (5) school days of returning to College, detailing the reason for the absence and signed by a parent/guardian for absences of **THREE (3) consecutive days or less**.
- Medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, psychiatrist or other recognised health professional treating the student for absences of more than two consecutive days.

Unexplained absence

Absences that appear on a student's attendance record and count towards a Void grade. Examples of unacceptable excuses to explain a student's absence might include:

- Failing to provide documentation of an absence within 5 school days of the return to school
- Deliberately avoiding a lesson, which may be seen as a pattern of repeatedly missing lessons in one subject while attending all other lessons of the day
- Choosing to work on assessment rather than attending class
- Sleeping in
- Traffic congestion
- Driving lessons
- Preparation for formals
- Failure to notify the College before leaving the premises for any reason
- Family holidays or extended visits overseas **without Principal approval**.

Void grade

A Void grade is awarded when a student does not satisfy either the assessment and/or attendance requirements of a unit. When a unit is voided, the student is not awarded the value of the unit (1.0 for a semester unit; 0.5 for a term unit) and it does not contribute to the minimum 17 points for a Year 12 certificate or 20 points for a Tertiary package. The loss of a unit can break a Major and have potentially significant impact on a student's package.

IB DP students

All absences, whether 'explained' or 'unexplained' appear on students' attendance records. Any student who fails to attend classes for 90% or more of the Semester will be interviewed by the Head of IB and parents contacted. The loss of class content can have a major impact on a student's course content and a potentially significant impact on the end of DP examinations, that could result in failure to obtain the IB Diploma.

Explained Absence

Explained Absences are still considered an absence in line with acceptable reasons for absences for DP students. Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' to explain a student's absence might include:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings
- participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the College (evidence must be supplied)
- participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event, or equivalent (evidence must be supplied)
- alternative lesson arranged by the College

Appropriate Documentation

- Handwritten or emailed note, **within FIVE (5) school days** of returning to College, detailing the reason for the absence and signed by a parent/guardian for absences of **THREE (3) consecutive days** or less.
- Medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, psychiatrist or other recognised health professional treating the student for absences of more than two consecutive days.

Unexplained absence

These absences will be flagged for parental information, and if more than 5, will result in an interview by the Head of IB to ensure the student has a plan to ensure they get to classes and parents informed. Examples of unacceptable excuses to explain a student's absence might include:

- Failing to provide documentation of an absence within 5 school days of the return to school
- Deliberately avoiding a lesson, which may be seen as a pattern of repeatedly missing lessons in one subject while attending all other lessons of the day
- Choosing to work on assessment rather than attending class
- Sleeping in
- Traffic congestion
- Driving lessons
- Preparation for formals
- Failure to notify the College before leaving the premises for any reason
- Family holidays or extended visits overseas **without Principal approval.**

Consistent failure to attend classes, resulting in below 90% attendance may result in the student being withdrawn from the IB Diploma Programme.

Any absence during the day must be explained in writing from the student's legal guardian or parent. Phone notification of full day absences is not acceptable evidence of absence and must be followed up with either a note or email. Student Services notifies any parents who have elected to use an SMS service if their daughter is marked absent from Pastoral Care. Parents can reply to the SMS to confirm their daughter's absence, which will suffice as acceptable evidence of absence and requires no further action.

Acceptable evidence of Short-Term Absence

- Email (student.services@merici.act.edu.au)
- Replies to school SMS

These forms of communication must come from the student's legal guardian.

Acceptable evidence of Long-Term Absence

- Applications for approved leave must be made in writing to the principal, through the Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning at least two weeks prior to leave.

Acceptable evidence of Extended Absence

- Completion of Exemption Certificate

For exemptions over 25 days, parents/carers must apply to discuss the circumstances with their school principal initially, then apply to the ACT Education Directorate for formal approval via an ACT Government Exemption Application, which requires supporting documentation from the school. This form is then submitted by the parents/carers or the school to the ACT Government for approval. The ACT Education Directorate will notify both parents/carers and the school of the outcome of the application.

These forms of communication must come from the student's legal guardian.

http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z

For BSSS students

This document outlines the responsibilities of students regarding student attendance in scheduled classes.

It is expected that students will attend all scheduled classes / contact time / structured learning activities for the units in which they are enrolled, unless there is due cause and adequate documentary evidence is provided. It is the student's responsibility to provide this documentation in a timely manner. Any student whose attendance falls below 90% of scheduled classes / contact time / structured learning activities in a unit, without due cause and adequate documentary evidence, will be deemed to have voided the unit. The Principal has the right to exercise discretion in special circumstances, if satisfactory documentation is supplied.

Patterns of non-attendance will be monitored by the Academic Coordinator.

Procedures

The attendance roll is a legal document and is completed by the Pastoral Care Teacher, never by a student. As the roll is a legal document which may be subpoenaed and used in evidence in court teachers recognise the importance of accuracy in its completion.

Procedures for students Years 7-10:

- If students will be absent from school, parents/carers are requested to notify the College in advance, or on the day of the absence, by emailing student.services@merici.edu.au.
- If a student is absent, or late to school, and contact from a parent/carer has not been received, the College will send an SMS message to the parent/carer. Parents/carers are asked to respond to the SMS acknowledging receipt of the SMS and approving the absence.
- A medical certificate needs to be produced for absences **exceeding three consecutive days**.
- Applications for approved leave must be made in writing to the Principal, through the Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning prior to the leave being taken.
- Early Departure - Parent/Guardian are required to with notice email student.services@merici.act.edu.au advising student name, what time they will be collecting the student and the reason for early departure. Students are then required to come to Student Services and wait until their parent arrives to collect them.
- Late arrival – On arrival to school, students arriving late need to sign into Student Services kiosk. The kiosk will print them a late slip. The student is then required to give the late slip to their teacher. This late sign-in will mark their attendance as 'late to school'. After Student Services have received an email (student.services@merici.act.edu.au) from a parent/guardian explaining the late arrival, the student's attendance will be updated accordingly, stipulating the reason provided in the email.

Procedures for BSSS students

- A written note or email from a parent/guardian must explain all explained absences **within 5 school days of returning to the College**.
- A **medical certificate** needs to be produced for absences **exceeding three consecutive days**.
- It **will not** be acceptable to bring in a note at the end of a semester with explanations going back to absences accrued through that semester unless they fall within the previous 5 school day period. In other words, these absences will remain as "unexplained" and accumulate towards a Void grade.
- It is the student's responsibility to notify the College of any apparent errors in their attendance record, which will require verification from the classroom teacher. Absences (apart from data errors) can only be cleared if they still fall within the 5-day explanation period, regardless of the timing of the receipt of the attendance record.

- Excuses will not be accepted for absences during a school day, where the student has already attended classes, unless the student has provided Student Services **with a note or an email** detailing the reason (evidence of appointments or a note from parents detailing due cause) for departure prior to leaving the College. These absences will remain as “unexplained” and accumulate towards a Void grade.
- Excuses will not be accepted if the student arrives late to the College without documentation of due cause provided to Student Services. Absence excuses, such as “sleeping in” and “traffic”, advise the College of absences for recording keeping purposes, however, any missed classes will remain as “unexplained” and accumulate towards a Void.
- Driving lessons/tests are not to be made during a student’s scheduled classes and will remain as unexplained absences.
- All students leaving the College due to illness must report to Student Services to sign out.
- A holiday scheduled during semester time is **not a valid reason** for being absent from class. Absences in such cases will contribute to unexplained absences and could lead to students receiving a Void grade. Applications for approved leave must be made in writing to the Principal, through the Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning prior to the leave being taken. Approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

The College will advise parents when a student appears to have voided a subject and an interview will be arranged to discuss the situation.

Procedures for IB DP students

- A written note or email from a parent/guardian must explain all explained absences **within 5 school days of returning to the College**.
- A **medical certificate** needs to be produced for absences **exceeding three consecutive days**.
- It **will not** be acceptable to bring in a note at the end of a semester with explanations going back to absences accrued through that semester unless they fall within the previous 5 school day period. In other words, these absences will remain as “unexplained”.
- Excuses will not be accepted for absences during a school day, where the student has already attended classes, unless the student has provided Student Services **with a note or an email** detailing the reason (evidence of appointments or a note from parents detailing due cause) for departure prior to leaving the College. These absences will remain as “unexplained”.
- Excuses will not be accepted if the student arrives late to the College without documentation of due cause provided to Student Services. Absence excuses, such as “sleeping in” and “traffic”, advise the College of absences for recording keeping purposes, however, any missed classes will remain as “unexplained”.
- Driving lessons/tests are not to be made during a student’s scheduled classes and will remain as unexplained absences.
- All students leaving the College due to illness must report to Student Services to sign out.
- A holiday scheduled during semester time is **not a valid reason** for being absent from class. Absences in such cases will contribute to absences and could lead to students receiving an interview with the Head of IB and/or Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning. Applications for approved leave must be

made in writing to the Principal, through the Head of IB prior to the leave being taken. Approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Pre-arranged absences

In the event of a pre-arranged absence for Years 7-10, students are required to meet with the Academic Coordinator to negotiate work arrangements for their absence. Students in Years 11 and 12 should meet with either Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning (BSSS students) or Head of IB (IB Diploma students). Students should make every effort to complete and submit assessment prior to their departure. If this is not practicable, students can negotiate later submission dates prior to departure, via the extensions form on SEQTA. If all assessment can't be completed due to absence, estimates for tasks can be made for senior BSSS students, in keeping with the College Assessment Policy. For Years 7-10 and IB Diploma students, they may be made exempt from a Merici set task.

Notification of pre-arranged absence must be forwarded to Student Services to enable scheduling of the expected absence. No further written communication is required. Absences that are for co-curricular or sporting activities do require documentary evidence, supplied to approve the absence.

Following up unresolved absences

If a student has three days of unexplained absence in a row, on the third day the school must contact the student's nominated parent(s)/carer(s) to notify them of the absence to seek an explanation.

All Student absences can be accessible through the SEQTA engage dashboard. Parents and Students are encouraged to check this regularly and rectify any unresolved absences.

A further email is generated from SEQTA fortnightly to parents/carers of students who have unexplained absences requesting acknowledgment and explanation via reply email. If contact from a parent/carers is not received after the above measures, the absence is recorded as "Unexplained".

It is the student's responsibility to notify the College of any apparent errors in their attendance record, which will require verification from the classroom teacher. In the case where a student believes they have been marked as absent incorrectly, they need to speak to the teacher who has marked the roll for correction. This cannot be resolved by the parent.

References

BSSS – Policy and Procedures Manual (see 'Attendance for Senior Classes'),

https://www.bsss.act.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/511078/P_and_P_Manual_2023.pdf

ACT Education ACT Section 11, www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104/