



EXCELLENCE
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Fees Policy 2017

I AM MERCY

Fees Policy

Rationale

In the spirit of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy tradition, Mercy College endeavours to make Catholic education accessible to all those who desire it. Parental contribution is needed to enable the provision of quality education at Mercy College but should be held at a level which enables parents to exercise a real choice for Catholic education without undue hardship.

The College Advisory Board and the Association of Canonical Administrators, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, approves tuition fees in October each year. Tuition fees are combined with State and Commonwealth Grants and other income to form Mercy College's budgeted income.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Establish a process of fee setting and payment which is in accordance with justice to all families in the College community
- Ensure that fees generate sufficient revenue to maintain the educational programs and resources of the College
- Ensure that Mercy College remains competitive within the local education market
- Deal sensitively with parents who have difficulty meeting payments
- Ensure the College adheres to the Fee Guidelines set down by Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).

Guiding Principles

Fees are set on a global basis allowing families to budget for their fees with minimal difficulty. The fees are to be set consistently across all year levels, without variance amongst the year levels. Fee statements are to be all inclusive; students should not be required to bring additional money to school other than for top up of printing cards or charitable purposes.

Upon enrolment, it is expected that payment of fees will be seen as a priority by all families.

To confirm an enrolment, a family is required to pay an enrolment confirmation fee of \$300, irrespective of the year level enrolled. The enrolment confirmation fee will be credited to the family fee account once the student commences at the College.

If a student is withdrawn prior to entry, the enrolment confirmation fee is non-refundable. The Principal has the discretion to refund these monies should exceptional circumstances exist (i.e. severe financial distress).

Tuition charged to families may be amended to reflect changes in enrolment as follows:

- **Absence or Withdrawal of Student during the Year**
One term's notice must be given to the Principal in writing if a student is leaving the College, otherwise the usual next term's fees may be charged in lieu.
- **Absence through Illness**
If a student is absent through illness, there will be no reduction in fees. Every effort will be made to remain in close contact with the family and arrange for home study for the student where possible.
- **Long Term Absence/Holding Deposit**
For students who will be absent for a semester or more with an expected year of return, a place will be held over for a holding deposit equal to one term of annual tuition fees. The deposit will be credited against the tuition fees on re-commencement. The holding deposit is refundable should the student not return to the College and sufficient notice is provided.
- **Approved Part Time Students**
For students who have been approved* by the Principal to complete their year level studies over the course of two years, the annual tuition fee will be charged at the applicable pro-rata rate (i.e. completing three subjects out of a full-time total of five subjects equates to 60% fees). An additional levy (5% of total tuition fees) will be charged to the family for both years to recognise that a part-time student receives additional support from the College for academic, pastoral and administrative services.

(* denotes that the family must apply to the Principal or the Principal's nominee to undertake studies in a part-time capacity and provide appropriate reasons for the application - e.g. special needs, elite sports person or artist)

No student is refused enrolment at Mercy College on financial grounds. Families experiencing genuine hardship are supported financially by the College. These families meet with the Business Manager to discuss their financial situation. Arrangements will be included in the enrolment documentation and will be negotiated on an annual basis. Parish priests and primary school principals are requested to advise families of this practice as appropriate.

Generally speaking, it is not appropriate for students who are in receipt of fee reduction to participate in additional programs such as music tuition or optional overseas/interstate tours.

It is not appropriate for students whose fees are in arrears to participate in non-curricular activities.

Attendance at camps, retreats and excursions is compulsory, unless otherwise stated. In general, such activities are booked, budgeted and paid for in advance. Accordingly, no refund of fees is possible if the student does not attend.

As a matter of justice to the entirety of the College community, appropriate measures shall be taken to pursue payment of fees by parents who default, including legal action as a last resort. The child should not be disadvantaged by any action taken.

Implementation

Mercy College Finance Committee recommends a review of fees subject to the guiding principles as part of the annual budget. Special subject and extra curricula activities are commensurate with charges levied by external providers/suppliers and are set to cover the cost of the activity.

It is the responsibility of the College Principal to implement this policy and employ the guiding principles.

Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Guidelines for Implementation of Mercy College Fee Policy.

Guidelines for Implementation of Mercy College Fees Policy

Fee Setting Procedures

Fees are set on an annual basis following consultation with the College Board and the Association of Canonical Administrators on advice from the Finance Committee.

Fee Scheduling and Collection

Upon the setting of the annual fee schedule for the school year, the Business Manager administers the collection of fees on behalf of the Principal in accordance with the following guidelines.

The enrolment confirmation fee is payable on acceptance of an enrolment offer. The enrolment confirmation fee will be credited to the family fee account once the student commences at the College.

Tuition fees are charged on a per student basis with discounted rates applicable to families with more than one student attending the College. The fees are invoiced in January each year via the annual fee statement. It is compulsory for all students to participate in activities forming part of the curriculum, e.g. camps and retreats.

The fees include all tuition charges, compulsory camps, excursions and levies. The fees also cover the provision of one ID card, one student planner, one Year Book per student per year, a combination lock, VTAC Guide (Year 12 only) and celebration dinner at Year 12.

A family discount will apply – 20% second child, 50% third child and any subsequent child, attending the College at the same time. The discount only applies to tuition fees.

Fees for private music lessons are charged per semester and are payable in advance.

Payment Arrangements and Options

It is a College requirement that annual fees are paid by a Direct Debit payment plan. Parents/legal guardians will be asked to specify their preferred frequency from the choices offered by the College. There is no surcharge for payment by credit card.

Families are required to select one of two (2) payment options:-

1. Full payment – in full by the specified date (attracts a \$250 discount per student)
2. Ten equal instalments – ten (10) equal instalments from 10 February to 10 November in any given year

The parent/legal guardian's choice of payment will be recorded via the payment nomination form provided to families upon the enrolment of the student. This form needs to be completed in full, signed and returned to the College to enable processing of payments. The arrangement will remain in place unless otherwise advised in writing.

A late payment fee may be charged where a family fails to make a valid payment by the chosen payment plan due date and where no prior advice has been provided to the College. Any payments that are declined by the bank, for any reason, will attract a dishonour fee of \$30, which may be varied at the Principal's discretion.

Where special circumstances exist, alternative payment plans, including payment in advance and extensions of time, may be negotiated with the Business Manager.

Optional items such as private music lessons, library fines (late and lost charges), laptop repairs and overseas study tours will be issued separate to tuition fees. Payments of these charges are due within 30 days of receiving the tax invoice and must be paid separately to tuition instalment plans. Payment for music lessons and overseas tours must be in advance of the activity.

Withdrawing Students

A one term notice period must be given to the Principal in writing if a student is leaving the College, otherwise the usual next term's fees may be charged in lieu.

Fee Reductions – Special Circumstances

Fee reductions may be available in circumstances that include:

- Families experiencing financial difficulties
- Absence of a student due to extended illness – longer than a term
- Withdrawal of a student during the year without one term's notice
- Variations to fulltime enrolment
- Student enrolments commencing part way through the academic year

Applications are required to be in writing and subject to the discretion of the Principal, whose decision is final.

Where genuine financial hardship is encountered, parents are to contact the Business Manager. The rights and obligations attached to the concession process are outlined during a meeting with parents and the Business Manager. All parents on fee relief are required to commit to a direct debit payment plan.

Families can be assured their application will be considered with the highest level of confidentiality, sensitivity and care. The College's response to requests of this nature will be at the discretion of the Principal and the College's Finance Committee (where appropriate), on the understanding that the arrangements will be negotiated annually and the financial situation of the family updated at that time. It is expected that families will also respect the confidentiality of any such discussions and resulting arrangements.

Enrolment Contracts

At the time of accepting an offer of enrolment from the College, parents/legal guardians will be asked to sign the Enrolment Contract. The Enrolment Contract binds all parties jointly and severally for the payment of school fees.

Change of Parental and Family Status

A Family Court order does not change the contract arrangements of the Enrolment Contract, that is, all signatories to the Enrolment Contract remain jointly and severally liable unless a new contract is negotiated between the College and the parents.

Recovery of Outstanding Debts

Parents experiencing difficulty meeting their payment obligations are urged to contact the College Business Manager to discuss the options available. Failure to achieve a satisfactory negotiated outcome may result in legal action to recover monies owed upon completion of students' enrolment at Mercy College.

Student Enrolments during the School Year

Families who enrol during the school year will be charged tuition fees on a pro-rata basis. All other charges for uniforms and books are to be charged in full.

Status of Document	
Written by: Business Manager	Date: 27 July 2017
Approved by: Finance Committee	Date: 2 August 2017
Approved by: Advisory Board	Date: 10 August 2017
Review Date:	Date: July 2018