

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the Principal, Stewart Milner.

CONTEXT

The Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) is a co-educational, specific purpose, senior secondary school where high-achieving and high-ability (HA) students can extend their learning. CHES offers face to face learning at a state-of-the-art facility in South Yarra and hosts a high-quality virtual platform to enable students to access programs at CHES regardless of where they are located.

Students engage with CHES programs in the following ways:

- direct enrolment of students into select VCE subjects onsite and virtually, including access to Student Enrichment Programs - providing mentoring, workshops, and seminars
- direct enrolment of Higher Education Studies (HES) delivered by partner Universities, including access to Student Enrichment Programs - providing mentoring, workshops, and seminars.

Students participating in CHES programs remain enrolled at their chosen secondary school (base school) and are supported to undertake a course at CHES as part of their VCE program. Working in close partnership with students' base schools, students will be enrolled in a CHES course for a fraction of their timetable (generally 20 per cent), with the remainder of their enrolment and timetable reflecting the subjects being completed at their base school.

CHES shares a joint responsibility with students' base schools to ensure students' social and emotional wellbeing, and also partners with Universities and base schools to ensure students' academic needs are met.

Individual student study arrangements are considered and agreed between the student, parent/carer, base school, and CHES upon enrolment and induction. To formalise individual student study arrangements CHES develop an Individualised Achievement Plan (IAP) which will include:

- study arrangements (CHES program and delivery mode - face to face, virtual, or combination)
- timetable requirements
- travel arrangements (if applicable)
- agreed communication methods between base-school and CHES (who, what, when and how)
- agreed communication methods between partner Universities and CHES (who, what, when and how)
- reasonable adjustments (if required)

- student health care needs including asthma management, administration of medication and individual anaphylaxis management.

All CHES policies are designed to reflect its unique operating environment (physical and virtual), its program offerings, its partnerships with Universities and shared responsibility with students' base schools to ensure students' social and emotional wellbeing and academic needs are met.

CHES has a network of foundation schools and allows the member schools to deliver their own VCE classes within the CHES facility where not fully utilised for CHES programs. This policy does not consider CHES foundation school arrangements.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school, including their regular attendance in programs at the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES)
- explain to school staff, university staff, base school staff, and parents the key practices and procedures the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) has in place to:
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of CHES, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps students to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are normally enrolled at CHES for one subject and remain enrolled at their base school for the majority of their curriculum program. Students are expected to attend CHES in person or online

for each of their scheduled lessons, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student.

Schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day. CHES believes all students should attend every lesson and is committed to working with students, parents and guardians, and the school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

CHES identifies individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students, their parents, base schools and partner universities, to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports. CHES works closely with base schools to form a joint response to attendance issues that arise for individual students.

At CHES, students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time, and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to contact or approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

At CHES, parents are committed to ensuring their child attends school on time for each lesson when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school, and to providing valid explanations for any absence. Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at CHES about any issues affecting their child's attendance, participation in programs, and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents/guardians will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from CHES programs and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of the schedule of CHES programs, including Higher Education Studies (HES) programs that may be conducted outside school hours with university partners. The timing of HES programs and the associated time commitments are communicated with students and families prior to confirmation of enrolment. Parents/guardians can monitor attendance by accessing Compass using their designated password, and this includes attendance at Higher Education Studies programs.

CHES is a specific-purpose school to foster excellent outcomes for high-achieving and high-ability students across Victoria. CHES encourages students to achieve to the best of their abilities. Therefore, it is expected that all students take full advantage of their educational opportunities at CHES, including regular attendance, completion of all learning activities and assessments, and consistently working to their full potential. Good attendance and success go hand in hand. We know that students who have a good attendance record are more likely to achieve high results.

Full attendance and punctuality are expected of all students for their timetabled classes, assemblies, university programs (Higher Education Studies) and other compulsory CHES activities. Student engagement and participation is also highly recommended for the optional, complementary CHES Student Enrichment Series activities.

Supporting and promoting attendance

CHES's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and the *Individual Achievement Plan* supports student attendance.

CHES promotes student attendance through regular check-ins and follow up between CHES staff and the base school supervisors. CHES holds induction and training for base school supervisors so that they are empowered to promote participation by students enrolled in a CHES program whether that participation is online through the CHES virtual environment or in person at CHES. The CHES

Attendance Officer provides timely updates to base schools on the attendance of students in CHES programs, including Higher Education Studies.

CHES students are engaged in either VCE studies or Higher Education Studies (HES). Students must achieve a 90% attendance rate to satisfy course requirements at VCE and HES. No more than 10% unapproved absences is acceptable. For students to succeed in their VCE studies and HES, and to achieve their potential, research evidence points to the need for them to consistently attend their scheduled classes, to be punctual and to actively engage in their learning tasks and assessment tasks. 90% attendance must be seen as a minimum attendance rate. Of course, all students should strive for 100% attendance. In terms of the 90% approved attendance requirement, this rate is calculated as a percentage (the number of classes attended divided by the total number of classes). This will take into consideration the total number of approved absences. Therefore, only unapproved absences will affect a decrease in the overall rate.

Student attendance is tracked in real-time via Compass, allowing students, their parents/carers and base school staff to monitor. When an unexpected absence occurs, the student's parent/carer will receive a notification through Compass, which will require a response. Further, attendance is reported on each semester report, and where concerns are held, also through the Parent-Student-Teacher conferences.

Where CHES holds concerns about a student's attendance in any program, whether the CHES VCE studies or the Higher Education Studies programs run through CHES by university partners, the Learning Specialist will proactively contact the base school nominated teacher to understand whether known issues have arisen. Formal communication via a 'student at risk' alert to advise of the concern will also be provided to the student and their parent/carer. Where appropriate, a meeting will be scheduled with the students, their parents/carers and base school nominated teacher to understand the reasons for the absences and identify suitable supports (including a referral to the base school's Wellbeing staff) that can be put in place to remedy any issues. It is CHES' intention to intervene and support before student attendance drops to the point that obtaining an 'S' for the Outcome and therefore the Unit is jeopardised. Likewise, CHES works closely with university partners to support students to meet the attendance requirements of the Higher Education Studies programs through the Student Attendance Officer, Learning Specialist, university contacts and base school supervisors.

When a student is absent from CHES classes for prolonged periods or has been unable to complete all assessment tasks because of illness or other special circumstances, CHES may, upon application from the student, and in consultation with the base school, grant Special Provisions for School based Assessment. In this case, students should not be penalised for a lack of attendance when such circumstances are beyond their control. The student will be required to submit relevant evidence (i.e. medical certificate) in order to substantiate their claim.

Recording attendance

CHES teachers and HES university staff must record attendance in every lesson. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge CHES's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

CHES teaching staff will be required to maintain accurate attendance records and will be familiar with the attendance requirements in the CHES VCE Handbook. The VCE Teaching, Learning and Compliance Learning Specialist and CHES Principal will regularly monitor all attendance records.

Attendance will be recorded by the subject teacher at the start of each lesson using Compass and this is uploaded to CASES21.

University staff also record student attendance through Compass and these records are automatically uploaded to CASES21. Unexplained and unapproved absences at a scheduled university class will be followed by the Higher Education Studies Coordinator from CHES as soon as possible.

If students are in attendance at a CHES-approved off-site activity, the teacher in-charge of the activity will record them as being present, including university staff who are in-charge of an activity.

Types of absences

As per enrolment guidelines, students undertaking CHES programs remotely will need to ensure they have suitable camera and microphone technology so that the teacher can verify their attendance, and that they can engage throughout the classes. Students' parents or guardians will be required to respond to attendance notifications via Compass following any absence. This will enable the submission of supporting evidence (i.e., medical certificates) which can be stored and tracked securely.

Approved Absences

Absences will be approved at the discretion of the VCE Learning Specialist, where there is a valid reason for the absence and where appropriate documentation has been provided. Examples of situations where absences will be approved are:

- medical or health reasons (including mental health), where a medical certificate has been provided that covers the entire period of the absence
- funerals and/or grievance; providing written notice (by email or hard copy) is provided to the school in advance of the absence
- to attend extracurricular activities (including sports and music) that involve competition or performance at an elite level; this might include state or national championships, or to attend external AMEB examinations; providing written notice has been provided to the school in advance of the absence.

In all cases, the decision to approve an absence will be made at the discretion of CHES Principal.

All students are required to provide a medical certificate or Statutory Declaration if absent on the day of a SAC (for VCE Units 3 and 4 studies). This must be provided to the classroom teacher in person or electronically and passed on to the VCE Learning Specialist.

Unapproved Absences

If a reason is not provided for an absence, or the reason provided is not acceptable for it to be deemed an 'approved absence' then the absence will be considered an 'unapproved absence' and not a legitimate absence for meeting the VCE attendance requirement. This also applies to notes for lateness. The following absences are unapproved by CHES:

- absence recorded as generic "Parent choice" or "Truancy" on Compass
- a statement obtained from the medical practitioner after the day of the illness
- family holidays
- illness with a note from the parent/carer or parent phone call to the attendance officer
- appointments which should be made out of school hours, including driving lessons and job interviews
- family arrangements, such as helping at home or at parent's place of work

- part-time or casual work.

Absences and VCE SACs

If students miss a scheduled VCE SAC and an approved absence is granted, through consultation with the students' base school, an alternate opportunity will be provided for students to submit or complete the task without penalty.

Where students miss SACs without an approved absence, they will need to engage in CHES' redemption process. For VCE 3-4 Units this will mean receiving a score of 0 for the assigned task. It is therefore imperative that students seek approval as soon as they are aware of any absence that may cause them to miss a SAC or assessment.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify CHES of absences by contacting the CHES reception if it is an unplanned absence and informing the classroom teacher if it is a planned absence.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school (for VCE studies) or the partner university (for Higher Education Studies) has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, CHES will notify parents by SMS/push notification messages to listed phone parent contact numbers through Compass. CHES will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), CHES will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence. CHES ensures that base schools are promptly notified of unexplained student absences through the base school supervisors.

CHES keeps a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines. If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

Students not achieving the required attendance rate of 90% will be closely monitored through wellbeing and engagement support structures in the school, including liaison with students, teachers, parents, relevant university staff and base-school supervisors.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than three lessons in a row, CHES will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan

- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff at their base schools and arranging supports, as appropriate, through universities for students engaged in Higher Education Studies.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student, their family, and their base school supervisors, we provide this support.

A VCE student not achieving an attendance rate of 90% for a subject will receive an N for that unit. The outcome and communication of this result will be made in conjunction with the student, teacher, parent, VCE Learning Specialist and the base school supervisor.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If CHES decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in conjunction with the base school and in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the relevant regional office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to CHES, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from CHES lessons on at least five occasions in the previous 12 months where:
 - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
 - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- available through our Compass portal for students, parents, staff, university teachers, and base school supervisors
- included in staff induction processes, including induction for university staff and base school supervisors
- included in staff handbooks
- discussed at annual staff briefings, especially around VCE and HES requirements
- included in transition and enrolment packs for students and parents
- discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- hard copy available from school administration upon request.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)
- CHES VCE Handbook
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

- CHES Guidelines and Expectations for Base Schools

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	January 2022
Approved by	Principal, Stewart Milner
Next scheduled review date	February 2024