Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Mazenod College Student Acceleration and Retention Policy

MAZENOD
COLLEGE

Mazenod College is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

Purpose

This policy ensures that a consistent, evidence-based approach that is in the best interests of students is taken in decisions on whether students repeat or are accelerated a year of study at Mazenod College.

Scope

This policy applies to all students in Mazenod College who are identified as gifted or are being considered for year-level retention.

Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

- each student's uniqueness should be celebrated and all students embraced as respected and valued members of the learning community;
- all students are different and that for some students curriculum differentiation may require the repetition of a year of study or the application of acceleration to meet their individual needs
- decisions regarding the year-level retention or acceleration of students should be made in the best interests of each student
- local pastoral discretion is an important element of decision-making with regard to student acceleration.

Policy

All students, including those who are gifted or at risk, are to be provided access to a curriculum that encourages high expectations.

Retention should only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is strong evidence that it is in the best interests of the student. Students at risk require specific and targeted interventions based on a detailed diagnostic evaluation of their needs. A range of interventions responding to individual learning needs, strengths, talents, and interests should be considered to best meet the needs of each student. A student can only repeat a single year level, e.g., a student that repeats a four-year-old kindergarten year will be deemed to have already been retained.

Acceleration generally occurs on entry into school and across year groups from Foundation to Year 10. Decisions to accelerate a student must be based on the best interests of each student. Consideration should be given to distinctions in individual learning needs, strengths, talents, and interests and to differences in aptitudes across a variety of domains. Decisions to accelerate a student must be based on the best interests of each student.

Acceleration options may include but are not limited to one or a combination of the following:

- year level-based acceleration – for one or more curriculum areas
- subject-based acceleration – differentiation within one or more curriculum areas
- higher education studies in the VCE – offered by a university
- advanced placement (AP) courses – usually offered to a small group/class of students

- compacted curriculum – usually a whole-school decision
- education courses provided by an outside organisation
- mentorship/coaching – usually within school time and subject specific
- multi-year classes – usually two year levels together, allowing students to work at either year level.

Exemptions for year-level student acceleration or retention may be granted in exceptional circumstances to individual students following application from the principal to the MACS office

Procedures

1. **Establishment of review committee**
   1.1. Mazenod College establishes a committee to review all applications for all acceleration options and year- level retention, with reference to Student Acceleration and Retention Policy, Minimum Age Exemption criteria and Maximum Age Exemption criteria..
   1.2. This committee consists of Mazenod College
   1.3. Detailed minutes of all meetings will be kept ensuring transparency of process.
2. **Review of issues underpinning the request**
   2.1. A detailed review of the reasons surrounding the request for acceleration or year level retention must be undertaken by the school.
   2.2. Evidence is to be provided of a student's gifted ability or diverse learning needs in one or more curriculum areas.
   2.3. For students considered for acceleration, students must have been assessed as having a Full-Scale Intelligence Quotient of ≥130.
   2.4. Additional formal assessments are to be sought if appropriate.
   2.5. For early entry, students must meet the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration and complete the Minimum Age Exemption Application Form or Maximum Age Exemption Application form.
3. **School recommending or making decisions**
   3.1. Parents/guardians/carers' views should be considered during the process .
   3.2. Where appropriate, the student themselves should be involved in the decision-making process.
   3.3. Consideration must be given to any social or emotional effects and cultural needs that may transpire as an outcome of the decision.
   3.4. The principal, having considered fully the views of all stakeholders and the best interests of the student and school community, will make a recommendation for year level acceleration retention to the regional general manager only where retention is considered in the best interests of the student
   3.5. All year level acceleration and retention applications must be endorsed and submitted to the regional general manager on application for repeating a year level by the principal in partnership with the family and to be forwarded to the committee, chaired by Director, Learning and Regional Services
   3.6. For cases of students partaking in other acceleration options, the principal, having considered fully the views of all stakeholders and in the best interests of the student and school community.
   3.7. Parents/guardians/carers will be advised formally through a documented letter.
   3.8. Parents/guardians/carers are required to sign a consent form to confirm the proposed year-level acceleration, year-level retention, or acceleration option.
4. **Complaints regarding decision**
   4.1. The complaints resolution process should be followed as outlined in the Mazenod College Complaints Handling Policy.

Definitions

Acceleration

Refers to the progression through the regular curriculum at a faster pace than other students of the same chronological age.

Exception

There are some exceptions which allow students to enrol with agreement by the principal. A student who falls within an exception automatically meets the age eligibility requirements to apply to enrol at a MACS school.

Exemption

A student who does not fall within an exception is required to apply for special consideration. Exemptions from the minimum and maximum age requirements are rare, rather than being considered acceptable practice.

Gifted students

Refers to students who exhibit high ability, creativity and task commitment with an intelligent quotient ≥130.

Late entry

Late entry refers to commencing school one year later than expected, according to chronological age.

Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and / or its subsidiary, MACSS

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

Parent

Parent is used as a reference to a parent, guardian or carer.

Principal

Individual appointed as principal by MACS in a MACS school.

Student

Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends a MACS school.

Twice exceptionality

Refers to gifted students who also experience a learning difficulty in one or more areas.

Underachievement

Refers to gifted students who are achieving less than their potential.

Year level acceleration

Year level acceleration refers to the skipping of the last year of schooling in which a student was enrolled.

Year level repetition or retention

Year level repetition or retention refers to the repeating of the last year of schooling in which a student was enrolled.

Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Minimum Age Exemption Application Form – Template

Related MACS policies and documents

[insert school] Complaints Handling Policy

Complaints Handling Policy for MACS Schools
Enrolment Policy for MACS Schools
Mazenod College Enrolment Policy
Privacy Policy – Template for Schools
Recordkeeping Policy for MACS Schools

Legislation and Standards

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Cth)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Gifted and Talented Students: A Resource Guide for Teachers in Victorian Catholic Schools
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards for schools

Approval date	**10 May 2023**
Date of next review	May 2025