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# Policy

## Policy

This Parent Payments policy outlines the ways in which schools can request financial contributions from parents and ensures that parent payment practices in Victorian government schools are consistent, transparent and that all students have access to the Curriculum.

## Summary

- Schools must provide students with free instruction and ensure students have free access to all items, activities and services that are used by the school to fulfil the requirements of the Curriculum.
- Schools may request parents make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling under 2 categories: Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions.
- Schools may invite parents to purchase optional Extra-Curricular Items and Activities on a user-pays basis.
- Schools may invite parents to supply or purchase their own educational items for their child to use and to own.
- Schools must apply the [Financial Help for Families policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy) when implementing the Parent Payments policy.
- Schools must follow the requirements on finance and communications set out in the [Guidance tab](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/guidance).

## Details

### Free instruction

All students in Victorian government schools must have free access to instruction that is offered by a school to fulfil the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum F–10, Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (Curriculum).

Free instruction includes the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the Curriculum, including

reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

Schools must ensure that students have free access to items and activities as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's context and their approach to delivering the Curriculum.

Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration required to access the Curriculum.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage students on the basis of financial contributions and payments not being made. Schools cannot deny students access to the Curriculum by withholding enrolment or advancement to the next year level on the basis of payments and financial contributions not being made.

## **Principles of voluntary financial contributions**

Schools seeking a parent payment must adhere to the following principles of voluntary financial contributions:

- the school council should clearly explain how contributions will be spent when making a request for a contribution
- each contribution is to be voluntary and obtained without coercion or harassment
- a student at the school is not to be refused instruction in the Curriculum because their parents do not make a contribution
- a student is not to be approached, coerced or harassed for contributions
- any record of contributions is confidential, as is any decision by a parent not to make a financial contribution.

## **Parent payment categories**

School councils may request parents to make voluntary financial contributions and payments to the school under the following categories.

### **Curriculum Contributions**

Curriculum Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for curriculum items and activities which the school deems necessary for students to learn the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity is necessary for delivering the Curriculum. Schools must be able to justify why an item or activity is necessary to the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny student access to items or activities on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not

being made. Each student must have the same access to curriculum items or activities regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools must provide a clear description of the item or activity when requesting Curriculum Contributions so that parents are informed of what their contributions are going towards. However, schools do not need to itemise each individual item when requesting Curriculum Contributions. Schools must use funds raised from Curriculum Contributions for the purposes of which they were requested.

### **Other Contributions**

Other Contributions are voluntary financial contributions for non-curriculum items and activities that relate to the school's functions and objectives.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage them in any way on the basis of Other Contributions not being made.

Other Contributions can be requested for a broad area of school need or a specific, clearly described purpose that relates to the school's functions and objectives. Schools must use funds raised from Other Contributions for the purposes of which they were requested.

### **Extra-Curricular Items and Activities**

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity is extra-curricular.

An item or activity can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Items or activities provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning; however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities can include:

- optional alternative forms of instruction
- optional non-curriculum-based school events (graduation)
- optional non-curriculum items (school magazines, yearbooks)
- optional excursions and camps
- optional sporting programs
- optional music programs
- optional out of school hours care
- optional items and materials that are linked to the Curriculum but are additional to or outside what the school provides for free to deliver the Curriculum.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include:

- items, activities, and services that are required to fulfil the Curriculum
- educational items such as headphones, stationery packs, digital devices, textbooks (including digital textbooks), calculators
- general enrolment fees
- subject enrolment fees (including VET courses and subjects defined by the school as 'elective')
- the hire, lease, or lease-to-own, of school owned digital devices.

Schools should ensure the cost of Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families. Schools must apply the [Financial Help for Families policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy>> in relation to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities to support families experiencing financial hardship.

## **Educational items for students to own**

Schools can invite parents to bring from home, purchase, or lease educational items directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. Educational items for students to own include items that have a specific curriculum purpose and for which students take individual possession. When inviting parents to purchase or lease educational items to own directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended items or specifications.

Schools cannot communicate to families that parents must purchase educational items for students to own from third parties. If a parent does not provide or purchase educational items, the school must ensure that the student has free access to items as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant items for the duration required to access the Curriculum.

Educational items for students to own can include:

- textbooks (paper or digital versions)
- stationery
- calculators
- digital devices
- fitted safety equipment (safety boots, closed shoes).

Educational items for students to own must not include:

- items not directly related to curriculum-based learning
- classroom consumables (including class materials such as food ingredients or art supplies that contribute to finished products that students take home)
- items that students do not take individual possession of (for example, class sets of devices, sports equipment, whole-school subscriptions)
- items that are developed and produced by the school (for example, school-developed workbooks, school-developed exam papers)
- activities or services (for example, camps, excursions, events, device repair costs).

## **Financial help for families**

While all contributions are voluntary, schools must prepare for and support families experiencing financial hardship in order to facilitate student participation in the full school program (for example, purchasing Extra-Curricular Items and Activities and educational items for students to own).

Schools must:

- apply the Financial Help for Families policy to parent payment arrangements
- nominate a parent payment contact person(s) to support families with financial help arrangements and support programs.

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy>> for further information.

## **Implementing the policy in schools**

Schools develop their parent payment arrangements to suit the contextual needs and aspirations of their school community while ensuring their arrangements remain in alignment with this policy.

School's parent payment arrangements must:

- support the functions and objectives of the school, including the enhancement of student learning, access, equity, inclusion and wellbeing
- ensure costs to parents are kept to a minimum, affordable for families, and proportionate to the needs of the school
- follow the finance requirements set out in the guidance
- follow the communication requirements set out in the guidance

- use the templates provided by the Department to create and communicate their parent payment arrangements
- follow all monitoring and compliance requirements as directed by the Department.



School's must not:

- have parent payment arrangements that are inconsistent with the above requirements
- undertake debt recovery activities for any payments or contributions
- have a localised Parent Payments policy
- use terms, such as fees, charges or levies, that suggest or communicate that contributions are compulsory
- have parent payment arrangements that request payments for:
  - teacher professional learning
  - the provision of gifts, benefits or hospitality to school staff or school council members
  - items or activities that schools receive full funding for such as electricity, standard internet access and department provided administrative software
  - administrative costs such as merchant fees associated with electronic payment transactions, sending text messages or letters to parents.

## Related policies

- [Digital Learning in Schools](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy>
- [Finance Manual — Financial Management for Schools](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy>
- [Financial Help for Families](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy>
- [International Student Program](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy>
- [Outside School Hours Care — Decision Making Regarding the Provision of OSHC](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy>
- [School Council — Powers and Functions](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-powers-and-functions/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/school-council-powers-and-functions/policy>
- [Student Dress Code](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-dress-code/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-dress-code/policy>
- [Students with Disability](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy>
- [Vocational Education and Training \(VET\) Delivered to Secondary Students](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/vocational-education-and-training-vet-delivered-secondary-students/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/vocational-education-and-training-vet-delivered-secondary-students/policy>

## Relevant legislation

- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006)   
<<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006>>
- [Education Training and Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006)   
<<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006>>

## Contacts

### Schools

For support with the Parent Payments policy and your school's parent payment arrangements, you can contact the Parent Payments Team on [1800 955 913](tel:1800955913) or email [parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au)  
<<mailto:parent.payments@education.vic.gov.au>>

### Parents

For general queries about the Parent Payments policy you can contact the Department's general enquiries line on [1800 338 663](tel:1800338663) or email [enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@education.vic.gov.au)  
<<mailto:enquiries@education.vic.gov.au>>

If you have any queries in regards to your school's parent payment arrangements please speak with your school first.

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# Guidance

## Parent Payment Guidelines for Victorian Government Schools

These guidelines outline how schools must implement the Parent Payments policy. The guidelines are mandatory for Victorian government schools.

### Finance requirements

School budgeting and reporting for parent payments and financial contributions must follow the procedures outlined in the [Finance Manual for Victorian Government Schools](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy>> (Finance Manual) and the [Parent Payments policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/parent-payment/policy>> . These include, but are not limited to:

- school councils must approve, in a timely manner, any request for contributions or payments from parents that the school develops
- any contributions and payments must be recorded in CASES21
- receipts must be issued immediately to parents upon contribution or payment
- records of contributions and payments must be kept confidential
- schools must not raise invoices or enter voluntary financial contributions (including all Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions) into CASES21 until they have been received
- schools must not request late payment fees or offer 'pay-on-time discounts', for financial contributions or Extra-Curricular Items and Activities.

### Outstanding payments

#### Curriculum and Other Contributions

Schools cannot consider non-payment of a request for Curriculum Contributions or Other Contributions as an outstanding payment as parents are not obliged to make a contribution.

Schools can issue personalised reminder notices for Curriculum Contributions and Other Contributions no more than once per term. Contribution requests for a new school year should not include unpaid requests carried forward from the previous year.

#### Extra-Curricular Items and Activities

If a parent has agreed to purchase an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity, but has not made payment, schools may send invoices or statements only once per term for outstanding amounts.



Schools cannot deny students access to Extra-Curricular Items and Activities that parents have purchased while following up on other outstanding payments.

Schools cannot deny students access to an Extra-Curricular Item or Activity that has been purchased, regardless of whether parents have made a Curriculum or Other Contribution.

Schools must consider assistance to families experiencing financial hardship on a confidential and case-by-case basis. Schools should also exercise discretion prior to generating reminder notices for unpaid items for families experiencing hardship.

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy>> for further information regarding schools assisting parents experiencing financial hardship.

## **Refunds**

Schools have the discretion to provide refunds to families and should do so where it is reasonable and fair (for example, if the school has not incurred a cost).

If the school has incurred costs, the school should act reasonably and take into consideration the Financial Help for Families policy and relevant arrangements, including support for families experiencing hardship. For example, schools should refund families for unavoidable event cancellations if a family experiences a crisis or sudden serious illness and the student can no longer attend the event.

If the school decides to provide a refund, then parents need to agree and advise the school where the refund should be paid. If that agreement cannot be reached, the refund is usually paid into the account from which the money came. Where the payment was made in cash, the school should wait until the parents reach an agreement and advise the school.

## **Seeking payment for damage to school property**

In most cases, a parent/carer is not legally responsible for damage caused by a student at school. Refer to [Claims for Property Damage and Medical Expenses](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/claims-property-damage-and-medical-expenses) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/claims-property-damage-and-medical-expenses/policy>> for further information on this.

However, schools have the discretion to request that parents voluntarily contribute to the cost of damaged items owned by the school if their child was responsible for the damage.

Schools must continue to facilitate student access to the Curriculum regardless of whether payment for damages are made. Before requesting

payment for damaged goods, schools should consider factors including financial hardship and their [Student Engagement policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy>> .

Students and their parents are responsible for returning all items to the school in the same condition they were made available, subject to standard wear and tear.

Standard wear and tear refers to normal deterioration of items from typical everyday use (for example, ripped pages in a textbook, scratches or scuff marks on stationery items). Standard wear and tear can also be agreed upon between the school and parents.

If a student damages school infrastructure or buildings (for example, windows), schools should not request payments for damages. However, schools can invite all parents to make a contribution towards repair (for example, building fund).

## Tax deductions

Contributions to schools are only tax deductible if they are:





- donations which have been endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office and have a Deductible Gift Recipients status
- donations to special schools with a Deductible Gift Recipients status.

Refer to the [Finance Manual](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy>> for further information on this.

## Communication requirements

Schools may communicate parent payment arrangements using any communication tool that is suitable for their school context, provided that communication is consistent with the Parent Payments policy. This includes letters in the post, email, or using third party communication tools.

Schools must develop parent payment requests using one or more of the Department's parent payment arrangement templates:

- [parent payment arrangements template \(primary schools\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-primary.docx)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-primary.docx>> (staff login required)
- [parent payment arrangements template \(secondary schools\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-secondary.docx)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-secondary.docx>> (staff login required)
- [parent payment arrangements template \(senior secondary schools\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-senior-secondary.docx)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-senior-secondary.docx>> (staff login required)
- [parent payment arrangements template \(specialist schools\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-specialist-schools.docx)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-specialist-schools.docx>> (staff login required)

Schools must follow the following communication requirements when asking parents to make a financial contribution or payment to the school:

- all requests and communications covering each year level, where these are different from one another, must be published on the school website for transparency (for example, letters to parents requesting parent payments, booklists inviting parents to purchase educational items)
- school websites must include a link to the department's Parent Payments policy on the same page as the school's parent payments arrangements – this is also required to demonstrate compliance with the minimum standards for school registration
- communications regarding the following year's contributions and payments should begin at least 6 weeks prior to the end of the previous school year to enable parents to plan and budget accordingly
- all communications must use language that is easy to understand, is culturally appropriate and if required, translated into multiple languages. Schools can use funded [Interpreting and Translation Services](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy> for key school communications
- a school that has communicated parent payment arrangements that are not aligned with the policy should review their current arrangements and make the necessary modifications. The school should then notify and send an updated version of the arrangements to its school community.

## **Parent payment contact person**

The school must nominate suitable staff members to be school contacts for parent payments to respond to parent queries and facilitate financial help for families arrangements on behalf of the school.

This may be one or more staff members, including the principal, business manager or welfare officer, who will be responsible for working with parents to determine, negotiate and maintain appropriate responses on behalf of the school.

Refer to [Financial Help for Families](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy)

<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/financial-help-families/policy> for further information.

## **Applying the policy to specific examples**

### **Administrative software and communication tools**

Schools may request contributions for costs associated with third-party software and communication tools under Other Contributions.

Schools must not request contributions or payments for items or activities for which they receive full funding, such as department provided administrative software – for example, CASES21.

## **Alternative forms of instruction**

An alternative form of instruction is the delivery of the Curriculum through non-standard instructional methods, and/or the delivery of a parallel curriculum. An alternative form of instruction can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities provided the school also offers free access to the Curriculum using standard instructional methods.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to alternative forms of instruction if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the standard Curriculum if payment is not received.

Alternative forms of instruction must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

Alternative forms of instruction can include:

- the parallel instruction of the Curriculum using non-standard instruction methods, including the Montessori and Steiner frameworks
- the completion of a senior secondary qualification as an alternative to the VCE or VCAL (for example, the International Baccalaureate Diploma)
- language immersion and binational programs that are offered as an optional stream to the Curriculum.

Alternative forms of instruction do not include:

- bilingual programs that deliver the Curriculum to all students in the school
- flexible learning options (for example, school re-engagement programs)
- accelerated learning programs (for example, select entry programs)
- single subjects offered as an alternative to mainstream classes.

## **Camps and excursions**

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of camps and excursions that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether a camp or excursion is either necessary for delivering the Curriculum or provided to enhance and broaden the schooling experience of students.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny student access to a camp or excursion on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Schools cannot refuse students instruction in a subject, including any camps or excursions that are required to meet the subject's

Curriculum outcomes, on the basis of financial contributions or payments not being made.

Schools can invite parents to purchase camps and excursions that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum.

A camp or excursion can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Camps and excursions provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning; however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to camps or excursions categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Camps or excursions categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

Camps or excursions categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities can include:

- the cost of transport, food, entry fees and accommodation for students and teachers attending extra-curricular excursions and camps
- the cost of a casual relief teacher who is engaged for the purpose of supporting the extra-curricular excursions and camps.

Camps or excursions categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities cannot include the salaries of Department teaching staff attending the excursion.

Schools should ensure the cost of camps or excursions categorised as Extra-Curricular Items and Activities are kept to a minimum and made affordable for families. Schools must apply the Financial Help for Families policy in relation to camps or excursions categorised as Extra-Curricular Items and Activities to support families experiencing financial hardship. This includes the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) that assists with the costs of camps, sporting activities and excursions for eligible families.

## **Canteens**

Canteens in schools are governed by the Canteens policy.

Refer to [Canteens](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/canteens/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/canteens/policy>> for further information.

## **Classroom consumables**

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of classroom consumables that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum differently based on their own local context it is at a school's discretion to determine the classroom consumables necessary for delivering the Curriculum. This can include chemicals for Science, paint and coloured paper for Art, wood for Technology, and ingredients for Food Technology.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to classroom consumables on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to classroom consumables regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools must provide a clear description when requesting Curriculum Contributions so that parents are informed of what their contributions are going towards. However, schools do not need to itemise individual classroom consumables when requesting Curriculum Contributions. Schools must use funds raised from Curriculum Contributions for the purposes of which they were requested.

Schools can invite parents to purchase classroom consumables that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether a classroom consumable is extra-curricular.

A classroom consumable can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard item available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Classroom consumables provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning; however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with classroom consumables categorised as Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-curricular classroom consumables must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

## **Classroom equipment and materials**

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of classroom equipment and materials that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum differently based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine the classroom equipment and materials necessary for delivering the Curriculum. This can include class sets of items, sports equipment and any materials used by the teacher to teach.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to classroom equipment and materials on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to classroom equipment and materials regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools must provide a clear description when requesting Curriculum Contributions so that parents are informed of what their contributions are going towards. However, schools do not need to itemise individual classroom equipment and materials when requesting Curriculum Contributions. Schools must use funds raised from Curriculum Contributions for the purposes of which they were requested.

## **Digital and online subscriptions**

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of digital and online subscriptions that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum differently based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine the digital and online subscription is necessary for delivering the Curriculum.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to digital and online subscriptions on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to digital and online subscriptions regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools can also invite parents to purchase digital and online subscriptions from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own subscription, the school must ensure the student has free access to any digital or online subscription needed to access the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools can invite parents to purchase digital and online subscriptions that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether a digital and online subscription is extra-curricular.

A digital and online subscription can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Digital and online subscriptions provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning, however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to digital and online subscriptions categorised as Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-curricular digital and online subscriptions must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

## **Digital devices**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to digital devices as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's digital learning program.

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of the school's ICT facilities and digital devices the school owns that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum differently based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine the ICT facilities and digital devices necessary for delivering the Curriculum.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to the school's ICT facilities and digital devices on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to the school's ICT facilities and digital devices regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools can invite parents to bring from home, purchase, or lease, digital devices directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. When inviting parents to purchase, or lease, digital devices directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended digital devices, minimum specifications or peripherals (for example, headphones, case, bundled apps or software and device insurance). If a parent does not provide or purchase digital devices, the school must ensure that students have free access to digital devices as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools cannot communicate to families that parents must purchase digital devices from third parties. Schools are not required to provide students with digital devices to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must



determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant digital devices for the duration required to access the Curriculum. This could include using a shared class set device, being loaned a device or being given a device by the school.

Where schools invite parents to purchase digital devices from third parties, arrangements should be facilitated that provide favourable deals for their school community, leveraging the ability to represent large cohorts of potential buyers to save money for parents.

Refer to [Digital Learning in Schools](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy>> for further information.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include items that are required to fulfil the Curriculum such as the sale of digital devices or the hire, lease, or lease-to-own, of school owned digital devices.

## **Homework**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to items required for homework that is part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's context and delivery of the Curriculum.

This can include but is not limited to:

- running an afterschool homework club where students have free access to items
- providing students with access to items to take home and return to the school once the homework is completed
- sharing access to items between students by making them available to take home on scheduled days
- photocopying to provide access to reading materials (subject to copyright).

Students and their parents are responsible for returning all items to the school in the same condition they were made available, subject to standard wear and tear. Refer to Seeking payment for damages to school property above for more information.

## **International student fees**

International students enrolled in the International Student Program pay fees set out in a contract with the Department of Education and Training. These fees cover all costs that the family must pay for the student to complete their course.

Refer to the [International Student Program policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy>> for further information.

Schools may also request parents of international students to make voluntary financial contributions towards the cost of schooling in accordance with the Parent Payments policy. Schools cannot refuse international students' instruction in the Curriculum or disadvantage students on the basis of financial contributions not being made.

Schools can invite parents of international students to purchase items and activities that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of international students and are additional to or outside what the school provides to deliver the Curriculum.

All communications to parents of international students must use language that is easy to understand, is culturally appropriate and if required, translated into multiple languages. Schools can use funded [Interpreting and Translation Services](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/interpreting-and-translation-services/policy>> for key school communications.

Schools should clearly communicate that contributions are voluntary and consider the appropriateness of parent payment requests to parents of international students as:

- cultural or linguistic barriers may exist
- fee-paying international students already make large financial commitments to Victorian schooling.

## **Out of school hours care**

Schools can invite parents to purchase out of school hours care on a user-pays basis under Extra-Curricular Items and Activities.

Refer to the [Outside School Hours Care policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/outside-school-hours-care-decision-making-regarding-provision-oshc/policy>> for further information.

## **Safety equipment**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to safety equipment as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of safety equipment that is used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools can invite parents to supply their own safety equipment from home or purchase safety equipment from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school.

Schools are not obliged to provide safety equipment that is considered part of a student's uniform/clothing or is specifically fitted to them (for example, safety boots, closed shoes).

## **Stationery**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to stationery as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's context and delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of school-owned stationery that is used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to school-owned stationery on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to school-owned stationery regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools can also invite parents to bring from home, purchase or lease stationery directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. When inviting parents to purchase or lease stationery directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended stationery (for example, pens, pencils, notepads).

Schools cannot communicate to families that parents must purchase stationery from third parties. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own stationery, the school must ensure that students have free access to stationery as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools are not required to provide students with stationery to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to stationery for the duration required to access the Curriculum. This could include using a shared class set of stationery, being loaned stationery or being given an individual stationery pack by the school.

Where schools invite parents to purchase stationery from third parties, arrangements should be facilitated that provide favourable deals for their school community, leveraging the ability to represent large cohorts of potential buyers to save money for parents.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include items that are required to fulfil the Curriculum such as stationery.

## **Subject enrolment fees and elective subject fees**

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of a school's provision of subjects as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum:

- schools may request parents make specific Curriculum Contributions towards the cost of the individual subjects their child is enrolled in or
- schools may request parents make a Curriculum Contribution towards the general cost of the school's subject offerings so that the school can provide a

variety of programs.

Schools can invite parents to purchase items and activities associated with a subject that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity associated with a subject is extra-curricular.

An item or activity associated with a subject can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard item or activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Items or activities associated with a subject provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning; however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to extra-curricular items and activities associated with a subject if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-curricular items and activities associated with a subject must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional. This includes, but is not limited to, payment for attending an optional subject-related excursion or purchase of non-standard classroom materials.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in a subject, including an 'elective' on the basis of financial contributions or payments not being made. As all subjects provided to students by the school are delivered as part of the Curriculum, the option for students to choose between subjects does not qualify a subject as extra-curricular.

## **Swimming**

Schools must ensure that all students are provided with a free swimming and water safety program that aligns with Curriculum requirements. Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of a school's swimming program, including transport and entrance into swimming pools, as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools can invite parents to purchase swimming lessons that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether swimming lessons are extra-curricular.

Swimming lessons can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Swimming lessons provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning, however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to extra-curricular swimming lessons if payment is not received. However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-curricular swimming lessons must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional.

Refer to [Swimming in schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/swimminginschools.aspx) 

<<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/swimminginschools.aspx>> for further information.

## **Textbooks (including digital textbooks) and calculators**

Schools must ensure that students have free access to textbooks and calculators as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum. The extent and frequency of access that students require depends on the school's context and delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools may request Curriculum Contributions towards the costs of the school-owned textbooks and calculators that are used by students as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum or deny students access to school-owned textbooks and calculators on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made. Each student must have the same access to school-owned textbooks and calculators regardless of whether a student's parent has made a Curriculum Contribution.

Schools can also invite parents to bring from home or purchase textbooks and calculators directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. When inviting parents to purchase textbooks and calculators directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended textbooks and calculators. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own textbooks and calculators, the school must ensure that students have free access to textbooks and calculators as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to textbooks for the duration required to access the Curriculum. This can include class sets of textbooks, library copies,

loan and sharing programs, photocopied pages of relevant texts (subject to copyright).

Where schools invite parents to purchase textbooks from third parties, the school can continue to facilitate arrangements with third parties and negotiate favourable deals for their school community, leveraging the ability to represent large cohorts of potential buyers to save money for parents.

Extra-Curricular Items and Activities must not include items that are required to fulfil the Curriculum such as textbooks and calculators.

Second-hand books cannot be on sold by schools. Schools may facilitate second-hand book sales between parents but should not manage financial transactions. Schools can also recommend second-hand book suppliers to parents and students.

## **Uniforms**

Uniforms are governed by the Student Dress Code policy.

Refer to the [Student Dress Code policy](#)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-dress-code/policy>> for further information.

## **Vocational education and training**

Schools may request a general Curriculum Contribution towards the costs of a school's provision of vocational education and training (VET) courses as part of the school's delivery of the Curriculum. Schools cannot refuse students instruction in VET courses or deny student access to items or activities on the basis of Curriculum Contributions not being made.

Schools can invite parents to purchase items and activities associated with a VET course that enhance or broaden the schooling experience of students and are additional to or outside what the school provides for free in order to deliver the Curriculum. As each school delivers the Curriculum based on their own local context, it is at a school's discretion to determine whether an item or activity associated with a VET course is extra-curricular.

An item or activity associated with a VET course can be provided on a user-pays basis and categorised in Extra-Curricular Items and Activities if it is not required for students to meet Curriculum outcomes or if there is a free standard item or activity available for students to participate in the Curriculum. Items or activities associated with a VET course provided on a user-pays basis can still support curriculum-based learning, however, schools must be able to deliver the standard curriculum requirements to a student who does not participate.

Schools do not need to provide students with access to extra-curricular items and activities associated with a VET course if payment is not received.

However, schools cannot refuse students instruction in the Curriculum if payment is not received.

Extra-curricular items and activities associated with a VET course must be specific, clearly described and identified as optional. This includes, but is not limited to, an optional course-related excursion or non-standard classroom materials. Schools must not have parent payment arrangements that request payments for items or activities that schools receive full funding for such as VET equipment and materials.

Schools cannot refuse students instruction in a VET course, including an 'elective' on the basis of financial contributions or payments not being made. As all VET courses provided to students by the school are delivered as part of the Curriculum, the option for students to choose between VET courses does not qualify a course as extra-curricular.

Schools can also invite parents to bring from home or purchase VET tools and equipment directly from third parties instead of using what is made available for free by the school. When inviting parents to purchase safety VET tools and equipment directly from a third-party provider, the school may include a list of recommended tools and equipment. If a parent does not provide or purchase their own tools and equipment, the school must ensure that students have free access to tools and equipment as required for the school's delivery of the Curriculum.

Schools are not required to provide students with items to own, or keep, on a one-to-one basis. However, schools must determine appropriate resourcing to ensure students have access to the relevant VET tools and equipment for the duration required to access the Curriculum.

Schools are not obliged to provide safety equipment that is considered part of a student's uniform/clothing or is specifically fitted to them (for example, safety boots, closed shoes).

Schools can seek reimbursement from the Department for the cost of VET materials in line with the [Vocational Education and Training \(VET\) Delivered to Secondary Students policy](#)

<<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/vocational-education-and-training-vet-delivered-secondary-students/policy>> . Schools can find more information on reimbursements for VET materials at the VET Delivered to Secondary Students page on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Please note that information provided in the Parent Payment policy should be read in conjunction with the VET Delivered to Secondary Students policy.




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# Resources

## Resources




### Overviews

- [Parent Payments Policy – one page overview \(DOCX\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/parent-payments-one-page-overview.docx)   
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/parent-payments-one-page-overview.docx>
- [Requesting parent payments for digital devices \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-digital-devices-one-page-summary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-digital-devices-one-page-summary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Requesting parent payments for camps and excursions \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/requesting-parent-payments-for-camps-and-excursions.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/requesting-parent-payments-for-camps-and-excursions.docx> (staff login required)

### Templates

- [Parent payment arrangements template \(Primary\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-primary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-primary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Parent payment arrangements template \(Secondary\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-secondary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-secondary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Parent payment arrangements template \(Senior Secondary\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-senior-secondary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-senior-secondary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Parent payment arrangements template \(Specialist\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-specialist.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-arrangements-template-specialist.docx> (staff login required)

### Category examples

- [Parent payment category examples \(Primary\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-primary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-primary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Parent payment category examples \(Secondary\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-secondary.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-secondary.docx> (staff login required)
- [Parent payment category examples \(Specialist\) \(DOCX\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-specialist.docx)   
<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-category-examples-specialist.docx> (staff login required)

### Supporting resources

- [Implementation Guidance – transacting under the Parent Payments Policy \(DOCX\)](#) 



<<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/implementation-guidance-transacting-under-parent-payments-policy.docx>> (staff login required)

- [Parent Payments Policy – school communication to parents \(DOCX\)](#) 

<<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/parent-payments-policy-school-communication-to-parents.docx>> (staff login required)

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