



STUDENT ENTRY INTO AND EXIT FROM THE ACADEMIC EXTENSION PROGRAM POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

At Churchlands Senior High School (Churchlands SHS), an Academic Extension Program (AEP) is provided to those students who would benefit from it the most. Staff commit to identifying the most suitable students for the AEP, and to maintaining their place in the AEP whilst it remains in the best interests of the students to do so.

2. POLICY SCOPE

We aim to select students for the AEP using processes that are both transparent and equitable to all students.

We achieve this by:

- Using an independent assessment process that is externally set and marked.
- Analysing the results of students in school-based assessments.
- Using nationally accredited teacher nomination forms.
- Considering information supplied by external agencies, including parents.

Students will remain in the AEP throughout its duration, unless:

- They leave the school.
- It is found to be in the best interest of the student to leave the AEP and join mainstream classes.

Staff at Churchlands SHS are committed to ensuring that the learning needs of students in the AEP are met.

3. DEFINITIONS

Academic Extension Program (AEP)

AEP is a program that runs in four learning areas, those being Mathematics, English, Science and Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) (collectively known as the *MESH subjects*), throughout Years 7 to 10. Students who are part of the program follow a differentiated (extended) curriculum and participate in exclusive enrichment activities such as excursions and projects. In each year group there will be either one or two AEP classes per stream.

AEP Streams

At Churchlands SHS, there are two parts to the AEP that are known as streams. There is the English/HASS stream and the Mathematics/Science stream. Students can be in either stream or in both streams.

Higher Ability Selection Test (HAST)

The Higher Ability Selection Test (HAST) is a selection test used by schools across Australia and internationally to identify academically gifted students for participation in accelerated learning or enhancement programs. Students are tested in four domains, those being reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, abstract reasoning and written expression. The tests are set and marked by the Australian Council for Academic Research (ACER).

Gifted and Talented Checklists

The characteristics of high ability students are both complex and varied. The school currently uses two different checklists to identify and showcase the characteristics of individual students. The use of both checklists forms part of the GERRIC Mini-COGE professional learning which has been attended by a large number of current and past AEP teachers.

GERRIC Mini-COGE

GERRIC is a department of the University of New South Wales that carries out research into Gifted Education as well providing professional learning courses to educators. The Mini-COGE (Mini-Certificate of Gifted Education) is a two day course that helps teachers:

- Identify gifted, high potential and talented students.
- Differentiate the curriculum for high potential students.
- Implement ability grouping or acceleration.
- Understand gifted education research and best practices.
- Develop an existing (or create a new) unit of work to best suit the needs of the differentiated classroom and gifted students.

Underachievement

Underachievement is defined as a student's performance being lower than expected over an extended time period, across a range of assessments. The causes of underachievement are varied. These can include but are not limited to:

- Lack of engagement and motivation in the content/subject.
- Twice exceptionality, and their specific learning needs not being addressed.
- Social and emotional issues at school or home.

Teachers should refer to each students' HAST results to assist in their assessment of underachievement.

Twice Exceptionality

Twice exceptionality or *2e* is defined as a person being Gifted and/or Talented as well as having a disability. Examples include giftedness in abstract thinking, combined with ADHD; or being talented at mathematics whilst having diagnosis of dyslexia. Twice exceptionality, along with its causal factors, often goes unnoticed as students in this category use their gifts and talents to compensate for their disability.

4. PROCEDURES

Initial Entry into AEP (Prior to Starting Year 7)

Primary school students in Year 6 are invited to participate in the HAST. The school decides the date(s) and time(s) of the test. Information regarding the HAST, including how to apply is available from the school website and published through our local primary schools, Churchlands Bytes and the school newsletter. Parents apply to the school and pay the appropriate fee. To ensure equity, financial assistance is available for families that meet financial hardship criteria. The school will then process the application and register each student with ACER. Administration of the HAST at school level is the responsibility of the Associate Principal – Junior Secondary.

Once the results have been received by the school, applications will then be considered by the Associate Principal – Junior Secondary, the Associate Principal – Middle Secondary and the AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator. The outcome of this will decide how many classes there will be in each stream and which students have been successful in gaining a place. Parents will then be informed of whether their child has been successful in gaining a place. All decisions are final.

Later Entry into AEP (Entry in Years 7 – 10)

Students will only be considered for later entry into AEP should space in streams become available. In the event of this, recommendations will be sought from Heads of Learning Areas and the AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator. The following list shows information that could be used to form a recommendation for entry into AEP:

- The student took the HAST in Year 6 but was not offered a place before the start of Year 7.
- The student has achieved a consistently high ranking in school-based assessments.
- The Head of Learning Area has received a nomination for a student from at least one of their teachers, using the Gifted and Talented checklists.
- The school has received information from outside agencies (including parents) that indicate the student would benefit from being in the AEP, e.g., an expert diagnosis of giftedness, receipt of academic awards, reports from primary school.

Later entry will preserve the dual-stream nature of AEP. That is, the student will join the English/HASS stream and/or the Science/Mathematics stream. This means that the Heads of Learning Areas must coordinate their approach in recommending students for later entry.

Recommendations for late entry into AEP are considered by the Associate Principal for the year group concerned, in collaboration with the AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator. They will make a final decision based on strength of the recommendations as well as constraints such as timetabling and class sizes.

At the end of this process, a formal invitation to join the AEP will be emailed to the students, parents or guardians. If accepted, arrangements will be made to move the student into AEP. Movement may be immediate or at a convenient break in the work schedule such as the end of a term.

Leaving the school and subsequent readmission

Should an AEP student leave the school and then be readmitted at a later date, the student will return to the AEP, providing there is adequate space in the classes and there are no timetabling constraints. The school cannot guarantee a returning student a place in AEP.

Lateral Intake

Students joining the school from other schools or jurisdictions will be considered for entry into the AEP, should there be an explicit request from the parent(s) at the time of application for admission to the school. For this to be considered there must be clear evidence of one of the following:

- The student would have gained entry into AEP had they taken the HAST test at the same time as the existing Churchlands SHS students.
- The student would benefit from being in the AEP more than any other aspirant student who is already at the school.

Evidence can include (but is not limited to):

- Results from HAST tests, or equivalent, taken at other schools.
- Participation in an equivalent program at another school.
- Expert diagnoses of giftedness.

Underachievement

Once an underachieving AEP student has been identified, parents and coordinators need to be advised. In the first instant, an attempt should be made by the teacher to identify and remedy the cause of the underachievement. This could include use of the AEP Improvement Plan (see related documents). If the underachievement continues, pastoral care staff engaged to investigate any contributing social and emotional factors that are possibly present at school or home. If there is evidence of undiagnosed twice exceptionality. Learning support staff need to be consulted to adjust learning tasks to better suit the learning needs of the student. This could include the formation of an Individual Learning Plan (IEP).

In the event that no causal factors can be identified, the AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator, in collaboration with the classroom teacher will review the study habits and practices of the student and mentor the student to assist in improvement in their achievement.

If underachievement continues despite the school addressing causal issues, a case conference needs to be conducted to investigate further, set goals and deadlines for improvement and the student will be placed on probation.

If the student does not improve their achievement within the time frame agreed to, then the school will move the student from the AEP stream as soon as practically possible, providing there is available space in non-AEP classes for the student to move into. Exit from the AEP in this way will preserve the streams of the AEP. A movement out of one AEP subject will also mean a movement out of the other subject in that stream. For this reason, Head of Learning Areas must work together when deciding whether to move a student out of AEP.

Student and/or parent request to leave AEP

Parents may make a request for their child to exit AEP, or the student may directly request a movement out of AEP. In this occurrence, it is important that the reasons for the request are explored. This will usually involve a meeting between the parents and the House Coordinator, and/or the Head of Year, and/or AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator, and/or the classroom teacher. Ways of addressing the issues should be discussed to ensure that the specific needs of the student are being met. The benefits of remaining in AEP should be reiterated. Should the student wish to return to AEP in the future, they would be subject to the same criteria used to recommend any other student for movement into AEP. Should the parent still wish for their child to move out of AEP, then the school will move the student from AEP subjects as soon as practically possible, providing there is an available non AEP class for the student to move into. Exit from the AEP in this way will preserve the streams of the AEP. That is movement out of one AEP subject will also mean movement out of the other subject in that stream.

Poor behaviour of students in AEP

AEP students are subject to the same Student Behaviour and Good Standing Policy as other students, and expectations regarding standards of behaviour and attendance remain the same.

Poor behaviour is not a reason for students to exit from the AEP. Inclusion in the AEP is not a privilege or reward, but an opportunity for the specific needs of talented students to be better met.

Gifted and talented students can have particular traits that result in complex behaviours. Such traits can include, but not limited to:

- Highly developed sense of justice and morality.
- Hypersensitivity /emotional intensity.
- Precocious confidence and assertiveness.

In combination, these traits can lead to challenging behaviours for staff and other students. Off task behaviour and/or non-completion of tasks, including homework, is common when the level of challenge and content is not in their “zone of proximal development” (ZPD).

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Microsoft Word - Saylor Checklist Parents within compulsory schooling year. \(education.vic.gov.au\).](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/parents-checklist)

<https://sec.act.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Gifted-and-Talented-Teacher-Checklist.pdf>

6. RESPONSIBLE STAFF MEMBER

Policy Manager	Principal
Responsible Staff	Associate Principals, Heads of Learning Areas, AEP Teaching and Learning Coordinator
Approval Authority	Churchlands SHS Board
Approval date	2 November 2023
Next evaluation date	November 2026

7. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved Amended Rescinded	Date	Authority	Key changes/notes
V1	Approved	2 November 2023	Churchlands SHS Board	As Above