



**CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
MELBOURNE**

Guidelines for Boards of Regional and Diocesan Colleges

2018

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Introduction

This guide has been prepared for the information of:

- members of regional and diocesan college boards in the Archdiocese of Melbourne
- members of associations of canonical administrators and associations of delegated canonical administrators who have responsibility for the management of a regional or diocesan college
- principals of regional or diocesan colleges.

History

Regional colleges

The first regional college for boys, known as Immaculate Heart College, was founded in 1957 at Preston, with the Marist Brothers providing the administration and most of the staff. The Preston campus of Parade College, a member of the national body of Catholic schools known as Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA), is now located on this site.

The major growth in regional colleges occurred in the 1960s in response to the post-war population explosion and a huge unmet demand for Catholic secondary education. By 1970, 23 regional colleges had been established. Many were established with significant support from the religious congregations.

The first regional colleges were basic until Catholic education was able to access recurrent funds from the Victorian Government in the 1967–8 State Budget.

Diocesan colleges

Diocesan colleges come under the direct jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Melbourne. Currently there are four diocesan colleges:

- St Mary's College for the Hearing Impaired, Wantirna South (est. 1948)
- Ave Maria College, Aberfeldie (est. 1963)
- Marymede Catholic College, South Morang (est. 2006).
- Kolbe Catholic College, Greenvale Lakes (est. 2008).

Governance

Regional colleges come under the jurisdiction of a canonical administrator, an Association of Canonical Administrators or in some cases, an Association of Delegated Canonical Administrators.

In the case of a diocesan college, the Archbishop of Melbourne establishes, by decree, an Association of Delegated Canonical Administrators.

The Guide for Canonical Administrators and Boards of Secondary Colleges is designed to assist parish priests and others associated with the governance of regional and diocesan secondary colleges to understand their role and responsibilities.

A Model Statute for the Association of Canonical Administrators sets out the powers that are reserved to the Association of Canonical Administrators as distinct from those that are delegated to the college board.



The college board

Board participation is critical for the welfare of the college and achievement of its aims. The board is the peak organisation in which a parent or a friend of the college may seek to be involved. It is, to a large extent, the one organisation which embraces all other forms of involvement in the college. It is responsible for ensuring that the college is faithful to its charter as a Catholic school, developing policies to enable the college to function and overseeing the financial arrangements that underpin the college.

In undertaking these responsibilities the board is advisory to the principal of the college and the Association of Canonical Administrators.

The Catholic college must support the development of well-educated young people who will use their moral and religious maturity to provide leadership within the broad community. While the provision of the appropriate college environment to support this goal is largely the responsibility of principals and their staff, college boards play a significant role, in partnership with the canonical administrators, in facilitating the conditions for such a climate to grow. The role of the board is to:

- be intimately involved in the development and implementation of the mission statement of the college
- demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the Catholic ethos of the college
- support the canonical administrators, principal and staff in their work of developing the spiritual and intellectual life of their students.



Constitution of the college board

The ownership of the college is clearly defined in the constitution of the college board. A Model Constitution for a Regional/Diocesan College Board in the Archdiocese of Melbourne has been developed for use by both regional and diocesan colleges. The constitution includes information on the following areas:

- the member parishes of the region
- the board's membership categories and office bearers
- processes for the appointment of members and office bearers
- arrangements for the appointment of the principal and staff
- the board's role in overseeing the finances of the college.

The Agreed Formula is an attachment to the constitution that outlines the arrangements among the member parishes for the winding up or dissolution of the college (other than for the purpose of construction, amalgamation or reorganisation of the college).

Changing the constitution

Review of the board's constitution should be undertaken on a regular basis (e.g. every five years) to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant to the needs of the college. To propose major changes, the board may wish to appoint a small working party to undertake the necessary review.

All proposed changes must be consistent with the Model Constitution for a Regional/Diocesan College Board in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Recommendations for changes to the constitution should be discussed and approved by the canonical administrators and the board. All revisions to the constitution must be ratified by the Archbishop of Melbourne.

The procedure for obtaining ratification is as follows:

- the college sends a copy of the updated constitution with a summary of the changes or with changes clearly marked to School Boards, Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM)
- the CEM reviews the proposed changes and if appropriate, seeks clarification from the college regarding the changes
- the CEM forwards the updated constitution to the Archbishop of Melbourne
- the Archbishop of Melbourne ratifies the constitution and notifies the canonical administrators in writing
- the CEM forwards a copy of ratified and signed constitution to the principal of the college.



Board membership

The membership of the college board includes the parish priests (canonical administrators), the principal, staff and parents. External representatives with expertise in a relevant field may be invited to join the board. The membership is defined in the constitution of the board.

Canonical administrators

The president of the Association of Canonical Administrators is a member of the board. The number of representatives of the Association on the board is specified in the constitution. The Association representatives keep Association members informed of what is happening in the college and provide a means of involving the board in appropriate discussion and consultation on decisions related to their reserved powers.

Principal

The principal fulfils two roles on the board: the executive officer of the board and its chief education adviser.

As the board's executive officer, the principal:

- oversees the operations of the board and implementation of board policy and decisions
- oversees the induction and formation of board members.
- As the board's chief education adviser, the principal:
- ensures that board members are kept informed of educational developments in the college and the broader educational community
- ensures that board members are informed about the financial position of the college
- initiates policy development and/or review
- provides a link from the board to staff
- briefs the board regarding the need for any additional resourcing to support the college's educational programs.

Staff

The staff representative, who is normally elected to the position, is responsible for representing the broad interests of the staff. The staff representative also provides feedback to staff from the board, while at all times respecting the special role of the principal as college leader and executive officer of the board.

Parents*

Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. It is desirable that the group of elected parent representatives comprise a significant group, if not the majority, of the total board membership. The elected representatives provide a voice for parents in matters considered by the board and provide an important link between the college and the broader community.

Other board members

One position on the board is reserved for an honorary accountant who is an independent financial observer for the board and the Association of Canonical Administrators.

Two or three places are usually reserved for co-opted members such as:

- people with a long-standing association with the college



- experienced educators
 - professionals with experience in an area of relevance to the strategic plan of the college (e.g. building programs, fundraising).
 - Some boards may wish to include a student representative as a member of the board.
- * Parents are persons/people with parental responsibility, including legal guardians and carers.



Developing an effective board

Board members must be committed to the college and to its ethos in order to make a positive contribution. It is important that all board members are familiar with the constitution and understand how it governs the operation of the board and defines their contributions as board members.

New members need time to learn the fundamentals of the board's role and operations, while existing members need regular opportunities for renewal and review to ensure their focus continues to be directed toward the welfare of the college. Key understandings for board members include:

- the role of Catholic education and the Catholic school
- the history and ethos of the college
- the expectations of the particular communities they serve.

Induction and commissioning

A thorough and supportive induction process for new board members will ensure that they are able to contribute effectively to discussions around the boardroom table. The induction of new board members should be viewed as a process rather than an event.

A good induction process will be well planned and engaging, and subject to review at an appropriate time.

It is recommended that the canonical administrators (or delegated canonical administrators for diocesan colleges) formally commission the board members at the beginning of each year in a liturgical ceremony. This formalises the role of the board and gives the board a profile within the college and wider community.

Expectations of board members

Before deciding to take up a role on the board, prospective members should be informed about the time commitment involved. This commitment includes:

- preparation for meetings (including reading meeting papers)
- attendance at meetings
- involvement on a board committee
- attendance at specific college-related events as appropriate.

If possible, members should attend all scheduled meetings but if this is not possible, at least 75 per cent. The board's annual report should include a report on member attendance at meetings of the board and its committees.

Qualities and skills

Each Catholic school is different, but all schools share the mission of the Church in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The college board should be composed of people who appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church.

When seeking new members, boards are encouraged to reflect on the qualities and skills of potential board members. This list of qualities and skills of school board members may assist boards in this process.



Relationship development

In order to work well together and promote a high level of confidence and trust, all board members need to demonstrate:

- mutual respect through an understanding of the distinct role of each of the parties
- tolerance in listening to and accepting other points of view
- honesty in presenting a point of view at meetings
- confidentiality in ensuring that the views and opinions expressed at board meetings do not become the subject of discussion among the wider community.

The behaviour expected of board members is sometimes formally described in a document such as a code of conduct or in the relevant sections of a board handbook/board charter. The purpose of a code of conduct is to make the principles and values that underpin interactions between board members explicit.

Ongoing professional learning and development

The most effective professional learning is done by the board itself either during specifically designated sessions or during board meetings. Setting aside a short period in each board meeting for this purpose can be an effective form of self-development.

Another useful source of information and inspiration can be found within the college staff members, some of whom should be invited at times to discuss current developments in education and their particular portfolios in the college.

If possible, the board should undertake an annual review of its achievements and operation. The findings of this review should inform board planning for the upcoming year and the longer-term development of the board.

Succession planning

Succession planning is critical to the board's development.

Periodic review of the membership categories and terms of appointment for board members as defined in the constitution is recommended. This will ensure that membership arrangements are current and continue to support the goals of the college.

The board also should be conscious of the need to prepare current board members for taking the role of office bearers. One way to do this is by introducing a suitable person to the position of deputy chair 12 months before the chair is due to step down. This arrangement provides an opportunity for the deputy to understudy the chair with a view to taking over the following year. The deputy could also relieve the chair of some duties during the chair's final year.

Promoting the Ongoing professional learning of the Board

- Participation in carefully prepared prayer/reflection meetings to reflect on the ethos of the college.
- Reflection on key Church and education documents over a series of board meetings to develop a better appreciation of the Church's mission in education and of the role of the board.
- Participation in board retreats with invited speakers.
- Participation in externally provided professional learning.



Reviewing the board's membership and terms of reference

In considering the membership and terms of appointment of board members it may be useful to consider the following questions:

- Should there be an upper limit on the years a person may serve on the board continuously?
- Should there be a limit to the time a person serves in any one office of the board?
- Should the board consider establishing a committee to carry out an education program for prospective board members on the role and function of the board?
- What efforts should be made to interest parents of students entering the college for the first time to consider board membership? This applies particularly to parents of Year 7 students.



Operation of the board

The board handbook/board charter is a manual of information, policies and protocols for the smooth and efficient running of the board. It provides more specific details of the provisions in the board constitution.

It is the responsibility of the board executive to ensure that the board handbook/board charter is kept up to date.

Office bearers

The list of office bearers and who is eligible to be an office bearer are described in the constitution. The office bearers normally include:

- a chair
- a deputy chair
- an executive officer
- a secretary.

The chair has a public presence in the college and may act as a spokesperson for the college. The chair will be in regular contact with the other key members of the board, the president of the Association and the principal. The chair is also a member of the board's executive and the finance committee. The chair must not be an employee of the college.

The deputy chair deputises for the chair in his/her absence and works closely with the chair to ensure the smooth operation of the board. The deputy chair must not be an employee of the college.

The executive officer role is undertaken by the principal. The executive officer is responsible for the operation of the board and implementation of the board's policies and decisions. Another aspect of the role is oversight of the induction and formation of board members.

The executive officer is usually assisted in the role by a member of the college staff.

The position of secretary is filled on some boards by an elected member. The executive officer (principal) may also fill this role. The duties of the secretary are to:

- distribute papers for meetings
- take minutes of meetings
- manage board correspondence
- facilitate communication between board members
- maintain board records.

Committees

Normally only two committees are required under the constitution: the executive and the finance committee. These are critical to the operation of the board.

Other committees may be established by the board for specific purposes, e.g.:

- risk management
- policy
- building and maintenance
- capital improvement.



The authority of the board to establish committees in order to meet its current and future needs is established in the constitution. The board may decide to co-opt members of the college community not on the board to serve on a committee. All committees are advisory in nature.

All committees should:

- have clearly defined membership, terms of reference and, if established for a specific task, a deadline by which they must complete their work
- be chaired by a member of the board to maintain a link between the committee and the board
- provide regular reports to the board.

The membership of the executive normally comprises the chair, the principal, a canonical administrator and a parent representative. It brings together the leadership of the college, the board and the school authority.

The executive is responsible for:

- overseeing development of meeting agendas
- maintaining the business of the board between meetings and during periods of recess
- overseeing implementation of board decisions. Decisions made by the executive between meetings should be ratified by the board at its next meeting
- overseeing the professional development and formation of board members.

The challenge for the executive is to work together to foster the total education of the students. Each has a particular task:

- the president of the Canonical Administrators to ensure that the college is truly a Catholic one and that the resources are managed efficiently
- the chair to lead the board in supporting the canonical administrators and to represent the expectations of the parent and student communities
- the principal to develop educational programs that will optimise opportunities for student learning and growth and lead an enthusiastic and committed staff in the achievement of these ends.

The development of a good working relationship between the three is essential for the wellbeing of the college. It is important that the three parties represent a united front to the school community and speak with one voice on their hopes for the future of the college and any issues the college faces along the way.

The finance committee usually comprises:

- the principal
- a canonical (or delegated canonical) administrator
- a member of the board
- the honorary accountant.

The business manager of the college, while not a member of the finance committee, usually attends meetings and provides up-to-date financial statements for consideration of the board.

The finance committee has an advisory role. It is responsible for:

- providing advice to the board on finance-related matters
- reporting to the board on the college's finances.

The membership and responsibilities of the executive and the finance committee should be described in the constitution.



Meetings

Ordinary meetings

Boards meet on average about twice a term (eight meetings per year). The minimum number of meetings should be stated in the constitution, which may also specify that a meeting or several meetings may occur via telephone or video link-up.

Annual general meeting (AGM)

The AGM is an opportunity for the board to report to the college community. Notice of the meeting and invitations should be sent out well in advance of the meeting. It should occur at a regular time each year. The timing of the AGM and requirements regarding notices to the college community are set out in the board's constitution.

Community meetings

One way of reporting to the college community is through a forum at which a report can be given by one of the parent representatives on the board. Such occasions also provide a chance for parents to express their views about the college. The chair of such a forum should be careful to distinguish between the matters that are within the board's responsibility and those which lie within the authority of the principal.

Extraordinary/special meetings

Occasionally it may be necessary to organise a meeting that is additional to the list of scheduled meetings to address a particular issue or matter of business.

The process for calling an extraordinary meeting of the board and the circumstances under which it can be called, should be outlined in the constitution.

Open meetings

The board may consider holding an occasional public meeting when members of the college community could be invited to attend. These meetings are usually occasions when there is a particular issue to discuss.

Planning meetings/retreats

Short retreats for board members can be used for several purposes, the most common being:

- planning for the coming year (see Priority setting)
- board development (see Tips to promote development of board members)
- special-purpose meetings, where it is decided that particular matters are best considered outside the arrangements for ordinary meetings.

Documentation and record-keeping

There are a number of key documents that assist board members in the performance of their role. As a minimum, each college board should maintain the following:

Running effective meetings

- Document all meeting procedures.
- Prepare a carefully worded and organised agenda that includes a suggested time to be allocated to each item on the agenda.
- Establish a process to circulate the agenda and papers in good time before the meeting.
- Allocate adequate time for discussion.
- Manage closely the time allocated for the presentation of reports.
- Ensure the accurate recording of minutes and filing of records.



- the board constitution (see Constitution template for a Regional/Diocesan College Board in the Archdiocese of Melbourne)
- the board handbook/board charter
- agenda and minutes of board meetings
- a board correspondence file.



Work of the board

The board's responsibilities are set down in its constitution and should accord with the relevant section of the Model Constitution for a Regional/Diocesan College Board in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

In each of these responsibilities, the board is advisory and must respect the autonomy of the principal and staff as the appointed professionals, to develop and carry out the day-to-day tasks of managing the educational and financial welfare of the college.

Priority setting

A plan setting out the general directions of the board for the next 12 months is an important document for the board to develop if it is to be proactive and effective in its support of the college. The development of such a plan is best facilitated by the principal, so that it can be aligned with the strategic or improvement plan of the college.

Support for Catholic education in the college

This is the most critical responsibility of the board. Working in conjunction with the principal and the canonical administrators, the board is responsible for seeing that the college is faithful to its charter as a Catholic school.

While the board is not involved in the day-to-day operation of the college, it exercises an overall role in ensuring that:

- the requirements of the Archdiocese in the area of religious education are honoured
- the characteristics of the college as a Catholic school are pursued with diligence
- educational standards are sound.

Financial management

The Association of Canonical Administrators or the Association of Delegated Canonical Administrators for the college is charged with oversight of the college's financial management. This responsibility is delegated to the principal who is the college's financial manager. The board appoints a finance committee to assist the principal in this role. The duties of the board with respect to overseeing the finances of the college are set out in the Model Constitution for a Regional/Diocesan College Board in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The business manager, in consultation with the principal should prepare a monthly statement for the finance committee on the current financial situation and performance against budget. An abridged version of this report is forwarded to the board.

Policy development

As a component of their compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements, all schools are required to maintain policies in areas such as:

- curriculum and student learning

Enhancing the relationship between the board and the college community

- Arrange for the board to have a monthly report/feedback column in the college newsletter.
- Create a specific board email account for use among the college community.
- Have a current board presence on the college website.
- Send a copy of the chair's annual report to each family in the college.
- Involve members of the board in college activities as much as



- enrolment
- student health and wellbeing
- college buildings, facilities and grounds.

The college will also have a fees policy and a number of policies specific to particular groups and areas within the college. These policies may include:

- environmental and sustainable practices
- sponsorship and advertising
- staff employment and professional learning
- uniform
- VCE policies and procedures.

The extent of the board's involvement in policy development and review is a matter for negotiation between the principal and the board. However, all board members should have access to the college's current policies and receive advice from the principal if a major review of any policy is proposed.

The board will be active in promoting the policies of the college, particularly those in relation to supporting Catholic education and maintaining the Catholic nature of the college.

If the board is invited to lead development or review of a specific policy, it may choose to establish a working party for this purpose. The working party may include members of the college community not on the board but should be chaired by a member of the board, who should report regularly to the board on the progress of work undertaken by the working party.

Communication with the college community

It is important that the board be recognised for the role it plays in the school community and that the members are given the support they need to carry out their duties for the benefit of all. The board should also be active in developing a communications strategy which profiles the board's contribution to the college community and promotes transparency in relation to the work of its members.

Effective policy development and implementation

- Language of the written policy should be clear, succinct, unambiguous and in an easily readable form.
- The policy should reflect school strategies, goals and values.
- The policy should provide tangible benefits for students, staff and parents.
- Where relevant, the policy should be aligned to CECV or CEM policies.
- Consideration should be given to having key policies translated into the most common languages used by families in the school.
- The school community should have ready access to all policies via the school's website or intranet.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Common Terms

Association of Canonical Administrators

In most cases parish priests of the member parishes of the colleges. The association is established by the Archbishop of Melbourne by individual statute. The member parishes are named in the statute.

One of the canonical administrators is elected as president of the Association. Normally the position of president would rotate among the members of the Association.

Association of Delegated Canonical Administrators

In the case of diocesan colleges, the Association of Delegated Canonical Administrators may include priests, lay people or members of religious congregations. They are appointed by the Archbishop and perform the same duties as canonical administrators in regional colleges.

Board handbook/board charter

A document developed and approved by the board which outlines its role, structure and the responsibilities of its members. It can also describe board processes such as meeting protocols and maintaining a quorum.

Canonical administrator

In Canon Law, Catholic schools operate under the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical public juridic person. In practice, this means the parish, or parishes, the archdiocese or a religious institute. All public juridic persons must have a canonical administrator such as one of:

- the parish priest, or body of parish priests (i.e. an association of canonical administrators)
- the Archbishop
- the congregational leader.

Code of conduct

Documented principles and expectations of members of the board.

Constitution

A document which outlines the powers, duties and responsibilities delegated to the college board or conferred on it by an external authority such as the Association of Canonical Administrators.

The constitution also specifies the number of members of the board, how they are to be chosen, and when they are to meet.

Reserved powers

Certain powers that are retained by the Association of Canonical Administrators by means of the statutes for the canonical administrators of the college.

Subsidiarity

A principle which dictates that a central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.



Appendix 2: Resources

References

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Websites

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Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd www.cecv.catholic.edu.au

Governance Institute of Australia www.governanceinstitute.com.au

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development www.education.vic.gov.au

Independent Schools Victoria www.independentschools.vic.edu.au

Victorian Council of School Organisations Inc www.viccsso.org.au

