



VCE Pathways and Acceleration Policy

Context

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding school for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1893. St Patrick's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known. Edmund Rice Education Australia is committed to providing safe and supportive environments where all children and young people entrusted to our care are affirmed in their dignity and worth as a person.

Background

Edmund Rice Education Australia – Victorian Schools Limited (EREA-VSL), as St Patrick's College's governing authority, sets the policy framework for all EREA-VSL schools. These policies have been contextualised for St Patrick's College's particular school environment so that our policies reflect the needs of our students*.

*Student includes any person enrolled in the College, either as a day pupil or as a boarder.

Preamble

St Patrick's College strives to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for its students. The College views education as both holistic, and formative; we encourage students to participate fully and apply their best effort to all dimensions of the educational process – spiritual, academic, social, emotional, and physical.

All students in Years 11 and 12 at St Patrick's College participate in either the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), or the Victorian Certificate of Education – Vocational Major (VCE-VM). Students who complete their work requirements and demonstrate learning in each outcome, with the appropriate subject sequences, will qualify for the VCE or VCE-VM.

Overlaid on the VCE is a system of examinations conducted by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), whose results are used for calculating a rank, known as an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank). The ATAR enables tertiary institutions to compare the overall achievements of all students who have completed Year 12. In Victoria, ATARs are calculated by the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) when a student completes the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

This policy has as its primary focus, each student's wellbeing, and academic progress, whilst seeking to maximise their ATAR. We acknowledge that, as a school in the Edmund Rice tradition, Inclusive Community is one of our four touchstones. This means that we celebrate all abilities that make up our diverse community. Academic success is primarily of relevance for the choice it provides our students, in their post-schooling pathways.

VCE-VM Pathway

If a student intends to pursue a vocational pathway immediately after finishing school, then the VCE-VM may be the most suitable course of study. It prepares students to move into apprenticeships, traineeships, further education and training, or directly into the workforce. The program has flexibility, in that it enables students to select a range of VCE, VCE-VM or VET (Vocational Education) subjects, without having to complete the associated external examinations. A student will still complete all School Assessed Coursework/training for each subject. This pathway provides opportunity for students to qualify for their Victorian Certificate of Education – Vocational Major, without the associated ATAR score. Further information regarding the VCE-VM pathway can be found in the VCE Subject Selection booklet, or you can contact the College and speak to the VCE-VM & VET Coordinator, Head of Senior School along with the Head of Curriculum & Assessment.

VCE Acceleration

When it comes to subject selection, it is critical that a student selects and completes subjects that they enjoy and find motivating. This is the greatest indicator of future success; a significant amount of time and effort will go into every subject, and intrinsic motivation will be the greatest driver in student achievement.

For some VCE students, it may be beneficial for them to ‘accelerate’ beyond their regular year, to complete a subject (or subjects) earlier. Students wishing to accelerate may complete one or two Unit 1 and 2 subjects, or one or two Unit 3 and 4 subjects. Appendix 1 outlines the different pathways and requirements for each subject area.

Students are not accelerated automatically at St Patrick’s College. The College reserves the right not to accelerate a student, if that course of action is deemed not to be in the best interests of that student.

The College will only allow a student to be accelerated if the student has shown they can manage the extra workload that arises out of studying a subject ahead of their regular year group.

This would occur only after documented evidence of consultation with the Head of Academic Enrichment and Extension (Head of AE&E), Head of Senior School, Heads of Faculty, current subject teacher, parent/s and the student. Appendix 2 outlines this process.

Each year is important in setting up and preparing every student for success. Applying to study a subject ahead of their regular year needs to be supported by previous evidence of capacity and preparation. It is important that the student not only achieves highly within the accelerated subject, but that other subjects studied are not adversely affected. Therefore, there will be tracking and monitoring occurring throughout the course and support for the student will be provided to best support the student as required. This may involve the student discontinuing the accelerated pathway and enrolling in a course that better aligns with their academic progress. The progress of all accelerant students will be reviewed each semester, taking into account both academic achievement and effort ratings, before any interventions are implemented.

Furthermore, the collection of data from off-level testing in the desired course will be conducted. This is the administration of a test at a level above the student’s age or grade level. It provides

essential information about students' strengths and developmental trajectory in the proposed accelerated class. It will focus on the specific skills required for that subject along with an opportunity for the sophistication of the student's vocabulary and writing skills to be observed rather than specific content or theoretical points.

The Head of AE&E and Head of Faculty will organise for off level testing to occur to collect predictive performance data. It is essential the questions are marked by a VCE level subject specific teacher to ensure the nuance of the student's skills and knowledge is identified. Ideally, the off-level testing will occur with the following parameters.

- To grade skip their current year level, they should gain above 80% off level testing and continue until student reaches marks between 70-80% at the discretion of educators and their professional judgement.
- To accelerate into a Year 11 course from Year 9 they should gain marks between 80-90% depending if one or two courses are requested.

Acceleration is best suited to students who are already excelling in a related subject area. For this reason, the following criteria applies, for VCE acceleration of one subject:

Criteria for One Accelerated Subject:

- **80% or above**, when all subjects are averaged from Semester 1 outcomes AND
- **80% or above**, in the subject seeking to be accelerated (or similar subject) AND
- **80% or above in off level testing** in the subject seeking to be accelerated AND
- **80% or above**, in EITHER any English study (excluding Foundation English) OR any Mathematics Study (excluding Foundation Mathematics) depending on the field of the accelerated subject.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may wish to undertake two accelerated VCE subjects within a year; in this instance, the following criteria applies:

Criteria for Two Accelerated Subjects:

- **90% or above**, when all subjects are averaged from Semester 1 outcomes AND
- **90% or above**, in the subjects seeking to be accelerated (or similar subject) AND
- **90% or above in off level testing** in the subject seeking to be accelerated AND
- **90% or above**, in EITHER any English study (excluding Foundation English) OR any Mathematics study (excluding Foundation Mathematics) depending on the field of the accelerated subject.

Criteria for Accelerated VET Subjects:

Acceleration into VET subjects for Year 10 students is limited by the number of places available after Year 11 have finalised their selections.

Students in Year 10 will need to clearly demonstrate the following parameters prior to selection:

- Their academic achievement when all subjects are averaged from Semester 1 outcomes AND
- Their academic achievement in the subjects seeking to be accelerated (or similar subject) AND

- A record of sustained effort and work practices along with positive social behaviour records in Years 7-9
- Prior work experience if available or applicable
- An interview with the VM-VCE & VET Coordinator and Head of Faculty

Please note: the College reserves the right not to accelerate a student if that course of action is deemed not to be in the best interests of that student

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Specific Information from each Faculty

Appendix B – Acceleration Process

Status of Policy

This policy has been downloaded from CompliSpace, is endorsed by EREA-VSL and is reviewed annually.

Policy owner	St Patrick's College - Ballarat
Approving authority	Principal
Approval date	September 2025
Risk rating	HIGH
Date of next review	January 2027
Publication details	School website

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned TERE Board Framework	Child Safety
Related policies	Assessment and Reporting Policy Curriculum Framework (Senior Secondary) Policy Homework Policy School Based Assessment Policy Teaching and Learning Policy

APPENDIX A

Specific Information from each Faculty

Arts

- Students in Year 10 can accelerate in Media, Visual Communication Design, and Art Making & Exhibiting.
- Students are encouraged to select the following Year 9 courses Media, Visual Communication and Design, Art - 2D and/or Art - 3D, as a preparation pathway for the Year 11 Units 1/2 in Media, Visual Communication Design, and Art Making & Exhibiting. Students can accelerate without this pathway in exceptional circumstances.

Drama

- Students in Year 10 can accelerate in VCE Theatre Studies.
- Students are encouraged to select the following Year 9 courses Acting & Directing and Theatre Technologies as a preparation pathway for the Year 11 Units 1/2 in Theatre Studies. Students can accelerate without this pathway in exceptional circumstances.

English

- The only subject that students in Year 10 can accelerate is VCE English.
- Students who accelerate Units 1-2 English could also be encouraged to complete Year 10 Literature (the subjects tend to overlap in areas).
- Literature and English Language cannot be accelerated.

HaPE

- Students in Year 10 can accelerate in Physical Education, Health and Human Development and/or Outdoor & Environmental Studies

Humanities

- The best subjects to accelerate in Year 10 are Business Management, Legal Studies, Politics and Ancient and/or Modern History.
- In Year 11, students can move into Unit 3/4 of the above classes if they have done either Units 1/2 or the Year 10 pathway elective the previous year. Please note the 3/4 History subjects are Revolutions and Australian History.
- Accounting and Economics in Year 11 will only be accelerated in exceptional circumstances

Mathematics

- In Year 10, Specialist Mathematics 1&2 can be completed by invitation only.
- In Year 11, students can also accelerate General Mathematics 3&4
- For any student wishing to study all 3 Maths subjects, they are encouraged to use the model below. This would allow the student to complete the 3 Maths subjects, but only ever completing 2 in each semester.

Yr10	Yr11	Yr12
Yr10 Pre Methods	General 3&4	Methods 3&4
Specialist 1&2	Methods 1&2	Specialist 3&4

Music

- Students can accelerate in Music subject to an audition process.

Science

- In Year 10, students can accelerate in Agriculture, Biology and Earth and Environmental Science.
- Chemistry, Psychology and Physics will only be accelerated in exceptional circumstances

VET

HaPE

- VET - Sport and Recreation - Certificate III
- Students can accelerate in Year 10 subject to availability and selection criteria.
- If there is no availability, Year 10 students are encouraged to select the Physical Education, Health & Human Development, and/or Specialised Sport course/s to prepare for the VET - Sport and Recreation course.
- Students selecting this pathway will need to have a desire to join the VET - Sport and Recreation Unit 1 class in Year 11 as preference will be given to those students who have completed the Year 10 Sport and Recreation course to the appropriate standard.
- Certificate III is a nationally recognised qualification designed for adult learners. It involves a higher level of responsibility and independence, so students will need to show strong commitment and dedication to succeed.

Science

VET - Agriculture - Certificate II

- Students can accelerate in Year 10 subject to availability and selection criteria including age of 16 to operate farm machinery.
- If there is no availability, Year 10 students are encouraged to select the Agricultural Science Year 10 course to prepare or the Unit 1 Agricultural & Horticultural Studies for the VET - Agriculture course.
- Students selecting this pathway will need to have a desire to join the VET - Agriculture Unit 1 class in Year 11 as preference will be given to those students who have completed the Year 10 or Unit 1/2 Agriculture Pathways course to the appropriate standard.

Technology

VET - Building & Construction - Certificate II

- Students can accelerate in Year 10 subject to availability and selection criteria.
- If there is no availability, Year 10 students are encouraged to select the Pathways in Trade course to prepare for the VET - Building & Construction course.
- Students selecting this pathway will need to have a desire to join the VET - Building & Construction Unit 1 class in Year 11 as preference will be given to those students who have completed the Year 10 Pathways in Trade course to the appropriate standard.

VET - Engineering Studies - Certificate II

- Students can accelerate in Year 10 and will need to show a strong aptitude for Mathematics in particular Geometry and Measurement.

- VET Engineering Studies 3/4 is scored in the VCE
- Students in Year 9 may choose Design & Technology - Metal as a pathway to prepare for VET Engineering Studies.

VET - Hospitality - Certificate II

- Students can accelerate in Year 10 subject to availability and selection criteria.
- If there is no availability, Year 10 students are encouraged to select the Pathways in Hospitality course to prepare for the VET - Hospitality course.
- Students selecting this pathway will need to have a desire to join the VET - Hospitality Unit 1 class in Year 11 as preference will be given to those students who have completed the Year 10 Pathways in Hospitality course to the appropriate standard.

VET - Creative & Digital Media - Certificate III

- Students can accelerate in Year 10 subject to availability and selection criteria.
- If there is no availability, Year 10 students are encouraged to select the Creative Digital Media Year 10 course to prepare for the VET - Creative & Digital Media course.
- Students selecting this pathway will need to have a desire to join the VET - Creative & Digital Media Unit 1 class in Year 11 as preference will be given to those students who have completed the Year 10 Creative Digital Media course to the appropriate standard.
- Certificate III is a nationally recognised qualification designed for adult learners. It involves a higher level of responsibility and independence, so students will need to show strong commitment and dedication to succeed.

APPENDIX B

Acceleration Process

1. Read the Acceleration Policy and complete a VCE Acceleration Application Form from page XX in Year 10 Subject Information Booklet. The link and Policy will be present in the email and via the link on the Subject Selection page of the College website.
2. Students and their parents or caregivers attend a Subject Selection interview in Week 2, Term 3. At the interview, they discuss their acceleration plans with the Head of AE&E. These interviews are:
 - a. Compulsory for future Year 11 accelerant students (current Year 9)
 - b. Compulsory for future Year 12 students (current Year 11)
3. The student completes the appropriate online subject preferences in the normal manner and prints a Web Preferences Receipt.
4. The student completes an off-level test set by the Head of Faculty and administered by the Head of AE&E.
5. The Head of AE&E will collate data from the students off level testing, historical school data and comments from the Head of Senior School, Heads of Faculty, current subject teacher, parent/s and the student.
6. The Head of AE&E, Head of Senior School and Head of Curriculum & Assessment will assess the applications for acceleration based on the acceleration criteria – any follow up communications will take place as required.
7. The Head of AE&E will advise the student as to whether the application has been successful.
8. If the application is unsuccessful, the College Timetabler will make the required changes to the student's web preferences; if the application is successful, the subject choice will remain and be included in the student's timetable for Head Start.