

OPTIONAL TOURS AND INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES POLICY

Policy	Optional Tours and Intercultural Experiences
Version	4.0
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Policy Officer	KEM EO

1 Rationale	<p>Given KEM’s overarching governance responsibilities, the following policy has been developed specifically to cover KEM schools’ optional tours and intercultural experiences, both national and international (formerly referred to as ‘Immersion’). It provides clarity about the informing values, criteria and process for KEM approval of optional tours and intercultural experiences.</p>
2 Principles and Values	<p>2.1 Equity and access In KEM schools, core services must be accessible to all students within the school community. However, KEM schools may offer students opportunities, experiences, and activities that extend beyond the core curriculum. KEM recognises that some activities may cost more than some families can afford. The number of such activities should be kept to a minimum.</p> <p>2.2 Educational merit Any optional tour/intercultural experience must be directly related to the school’s learning and teaching program and/or have demonstrable educational merit. KEM recognises that recreation will be an element of the experience, however, the primary focus should be on learning during the experience and on opportunities for reflection after the activity.</p> <p>2.3 Catholic Social Justice teaching is grounded in belief in humility, equality and the common good.</p> <p>2.4 KEM’s core values and the principles of current Catholic social teaching. The planning and execution of optional tours/intercultural experiences must be informed by KEM core values and by current Catholic social teaching, including an emphasis on a ‘strengths-based’, as opposed to a ‘needs-based’ approach to interaction with developing communities or First Nations communities. We all have much to learn from the richness of such communities.</p>
3 Audience	<p>The audience for this policy is KEM’s Board, Management, Principals and personnel employed or engaged in KEM schools.</p>

<p>4 Definitions</p>	<p>4.1 Optional tours include school activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take place outside of the normal routine of in-school learning and teaching • are not compulsory • may involve travel, intra-national and international • may involve overnight or longer stays <p>4.2 Tours/Visits In the context of intercultural exchanges with communities, Visit is a more appropriate term than Tour.</p> <p>4.3 Intercultural Experiences (formerly referred to as ‘Immersion’ experiences) involve staff and students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.</p> <p>4.4 Educational merit: Broadly defined, this includes social, cultural, ethical, spiritual, and historical experiences that are related to the values base of the school.</p>
<p>5 Procedures: Planning Requirements</p>	<p>An optional tour/intercultural experience may be approved subject to the following requirements.</p> <p>5.1 Practicalities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Alternative learning experiences that permit a more inclusive levels of student participation will have been explored (e.g. an intensive language experience with native speakers based in the local community) before the decision is made to pursue a tour/intercultural experience. b. Optional tours/intercultural experiences that are expensive and not available to all will not be presented to students or parents as essential to superior achievement in a particular area of learning. The potential outcomes resulting from participation will not be overstated. c. Optional tours/intercultural experiences should predominantly occur during school holiday time, to avoid disruption to students’ classroom learning. d. A school’s financial resources should not directly subsidise optional tours/intercultural experiences, nor should fundraising <p>5.2 Educational rationale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The optional tour/intercultural experience has clear educational merit and is not primarily recreational in focus. b. It will challenge and enlighten participating students. <p>5.3 KM Values and Catholic Social Teaching</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is in keeping with KM core values and with current Catholic social teaching (see Resources, particularly in reference to Social Justice Visits). b. The proposed activity is inclusive and potentially accessible by all students in the group for whom it is intended. For example, schools

- may offer an intercultural visit to students of a specific year level.
- c. KEM Principals should keep equity of access in front of mind, and, in consultation with KEM, exercise discretion regarding inclusion of students who might not otherwise be able to participate for financial reasons.

5.4 Social Justice Visits

When schools plan intercultural experiences and visits to developing or First Nation communities, Principals, leaders and planners must address the following questions in their Stage 1a applications:

- a. Has the school group been invited to visit the community by community elders or others?
- b. What, if any, is the existing relationship with the community to be visited?
- c. Is it intended that there will be an ongoing relationship of equals?
- d. Will the experience demonstrably benefit and enrich both school and community members?
- e. Are Principals and leaders /planners up-to-date with current (and recommended) 'strengths-based' as opposed to 'needs-based' approaches to development? (See Caritas Australia, *Strengths-Based Approach to Development*, above.)
- f. Using the strengths-based approach as a guide, what preparation of leaders and student participants is planned and how will it be delivered?
- g. Will the communities and participants be involved in ongoing (ideally daily) assessment of how the visit is proceeding?
- h. What processes have been developed for evaluating the strength of the preparation, the challenges faced, and the final outcomes of the visit?
- i. Where optional tours/intercultural experiences are organised through/with sponsoring organisations, what due diligence has been undertaken to ensure that the sponsoring organisation will use the money received consistent with the high standards set by Kildare Ministries?

5.5 Risk Management

- a. Risk management is an essential element of the planning and running of OPTICE activities.
- b. Safety of students and staff will be the highest priority when considering whether OPTICE activities should be conducted.
- c. All participants are to be covered by travel insurance.
- d. Staff attending will include at least two members trained and equipped to deal with students who may become ill or injured.
- e. Whether staff volunteer for the optional tour/intercultural experience or are selected to participate, their duty of care remains that of an employee of the school.

6 Stage 1 Application Procedures

6.1 Stage 1 Application – 13 months beforehand (Forms 1a and 1b)

- a. At least 13 months before the intended activity, the school is to submit OPTICE Form 1: Initial Application to the Company Secretary, a month prior to the KEM Board meeting for which the submission is intended. This minimum period of notice will give time for students and parents to save money for the activity.
- b. The Executive Officer will provide advice about the application's compliance with sections 5.1 to 5.4 of this policy.
- c. The Risk and Assurance Manager will review the application and provide advice to the school, to enable refinement to the risk management planning in the submission. (Section 5.5)
- d. The Risk and Assurance Manager will provide advice to the Board regarding the risk management associated the trip This includes the DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) [travel advice](#) on the risks and requirements for the intended destination/s. Schools must provide a suitable high level risk assessment at this stage.
- e. The Board will review the information related to first and second time applications and will determine whether Initial Approval is granted. For subsequent times, the Executive Officer may approve.

6.2 Financial Considerations

- a. Parents and students must be notified at the time of organising an OPTICE experience that cancellation is possible and financial losses will be borne by families, not the school.
- b. Documentation related to the potential costs for families of withdrawing from the trip after initial deposits are paid and at other stages must be clearly communicated to parents.
- c. A school's financial resources should not directly subsidise optional tours/intercultural experiences, nor should fundraising support expensive optional tours as this further penalises students unable to participate in the optional tour. An exception to this general statement may apply where an optional tour is focussed on education for social justice.
- d. If the costs for staff in such optional tours/intercultural experiences are to be covered by students, the practice should be transparent. Staffing numbers should be appropriate to the number of students and the activities, but not be excessive.

6.3 Initial Approval

- a. After receiving Initial Approval from the Board the school can inform its school community about the activity and then invite applications and deposits.
- b. Initial Approval is conditional, subject to satisfactory detailed risk management planning and suitably safe conditions existing in the intended destinations.
- c. DFAT travel advice is to be regularly monitored by the Staff tour organisers from the time after the proposal is lodged.
- d. Initial approval of an optional tour/intercultural experience is for a single instance. When required, local education authorities (e.g. VCEA, for the Catholic Schools Activity Locator in Victoria) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will be notified.

7 Stage 2
Detailed Planning
Procedures

7.1 Stage 2 Detailed Planning – 6 months beforehand (Forms 2a and 2b)

- a. A copy of detailed pre-planning documentation with organisational arrangements must be provided to the KEM EO and Board at least six months before the tour/ occurs. This is to occur each year the activity is to run. It will include updated information about the rationale, dates, full itinerary, risk assessments, DFAT travel advice, names and relevant experience of supervising staff, and the contact details for a designated responsible staff member remaining at the school.
- b. The sequence of formation of students, to prepare them for the experience, is to be provided at this stage.
- c. Arrangements for debriefing of students during and after the experience are to be outlined at this stage.
- d. A thorough evaluation is to be undertaken after the return of the experience, including feedback from school leaders and the staff and students who attend. Draft evaluation processes are to be outlined in the detailed planning stage.
The evaluation must include feedback about management of child safety, satisfaction of student and staff participants with the experience, and the degree to which the tour achieved its objectives, both for the school, the students and any communities visited.

7.2 Social Justice Visits – Guidance for Stage 2 Planning

- a. Social Justice Visits are to be undertaken with a strengths-based approach. Caritas Australia's Strengths-Based Approach to Development provides helpful advice about to conducting such experiences. The following excerpt illustrates this approach:
'Caritas Australia works in regions of the world where people are marginalised and most vulnerable to experiencing poverty and injustice. Despite the many challenges people face, we believe in every individual's inherent and God-given dignity and worth, and that each individual has unique gifts and talents.'
- b. A strengths-based approach honours and upholds this dignity, and empowers all people to be architects of their own development. It helps identify the community's strengths and assets, including natural resources but most importantly their human potential, skills, strengths and abilities.
- c. Where optional tours/intercultural experiences involve interactions and reciprocal learning with other communities, schools should ensure that students and staff members are authentically involved in community development projects, and that they understand what impact their contribution (positive or negative) could have on the local community. (For guidance see Caritas Australia, *Strengths-Based Approach to Development*.)
- d. Comprehensive formation and preparation programs and follow up debriefings should be established to cover all educational, cultural and organisational aspects of the optional tour/intercultural experience. In the case of social justice activities particularly, reporting and follow up activities should take place for the enrichment of the broader school community.

	<p>7.3 Stage 2 Review and Approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Detailed Planning details, via Forms 2a and 2b and any attachments, are to be reviewed by the Executive Officer and the KM Risk and Assurance Manager. b. The Executive Officer and Risk and Assurance Manager will work with the school to refine the Detailed Planning. c. Subject to approval of the Detailed Planning by the Executive Officer and the Risk and Assurance Manager, Forms 2a and 2b will be provided to the Directors for their information. d. Directors will be invited to raise questions or concerns with the Executive Officer and the Risk and Assurance Manager. 	
8 Evaluation Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All OPTICE activities are to be evaluated b. At a minimum, the evaluations for first time OPTICE activities are to cover the areas that are specified in the OPTICE Evaluation c. Evaluations of all OPTICE activities are to be sent to the Executive Officer within a month of the completion of the activity. 	
9 Ongoing Approval Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Stage 1 application to run an OPTICE activity the second time must be accompanied by the detailed evaluation of the first activity. b. If approval of a second instance is granted, the tour/intercultural experience may become a regular event, provided that the nature of the activity remains consistent and risk levels do not increase. c. If a significant change in the nature of an OPTICE activity takes place or the risk levels increase, the activity needs Board approval. d. If an activity has successfully run two or more times, the Executive Officer may approve the activity after due diligence including review of the Risk Register by the Risk and Assurance Manager. The Board will be informed that the activity has been approved to run again. 	
10 Cancellation Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Board of Kildare Education Ministries, as employer of staff, reserves the right to cancel an optional tour/intercultural experience at any time, after consultation with the school Principal. Such cancellation or curtailment will be solely focused on the safety of participants or the community they are visiting. b. Where schools might be in a position of considering the cancellation of an optional tour/intercultural experience at short notice or during, the Executive Officer may be called to participate in an extra-ordinary meeting(s) (via conference call where necessary) with the Principal to ensure that an effective consultation and discernment process has occurred to inform the final decision. 	
11 Staffing Ratios	Type of Activity	Ratios; minimum number of staff
	Day excursions	1:20 staff-student ratio, minimum of 2 staff
	Overnight base camps	1:10 staff-student ratio, minimum of 2 staff
	Overnight study camps	1:15 staff-student ratio, minimum of 2 staff
	Interstate travel	1:10 staff-student ratio, minimum of 2 staff
	International travel	1 to 10 students - minimum of 2 staff 11 to 20 students - minimum of 3 staff 21 to 30 students - minimum of 4 staff

12 Responsibilities and Communication Obligations	Principals must notify all staff of the content of this policy and provide a copy of the policy to staff proposing optional tours/intercultural experiences. Families must be made aware of the conditions under which a planned activity is being approved and under which it may be cancelled.
13 Breaches of this policy	Breaches of this policy may be addressed by further education or, when judged necessary, corrective or disciplinary action.
14 Appendices	APPENDIX A - OPTICE Form 1a – Initial Application APPENDIX B - OPTICE Form 1b – High Level Risk Register APPENDIX C – OPTICE Form 2a – Detailed Planning APPENDIX D – OPTICE Form 2b – Risk Register & Emergency Management APPENDIX E – OPTICE Form 3 – School Evaluation Proforma
15 Related Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KEM Child Safety and Protection Policy • KEM Principles of Learning and Teaching Policy • KEM Promotion of Student Wellbeing Policy
16 Resources	<p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deus Caritas Est [1] (Pope Benedict) #32-35 • Laudato Si' (Pope Francis) especially #229-232 • Fratelli Tutti (Pope Francis) especially #8, #22, #106-111, #167, #198, #203 • Living Justice Living Peace (Kildare Ministries) • Kildare Ministries' Values, Vision and Mission Statement • Kildare Education Ministries' Mission Statement • AITSL Standards of Professional Conduct • Strengths-Based Approach to Development (PPT - Caritas Australia) Catholic Social Teaching Toolkit (Caritas) Caritas Australia Catholic Social teaching FAQs • Travel Advice Explained (DFAT) <p>South Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CESA Camps, Excursions, Sporting and Adventure Activities Policy • CESA Camps, Excursions, Sporting and Adventure Activities Procedures • CESA Student Overseas Excursion Procedure <p>Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camps-and-Excursions - Students with Disabilities Guidance Notes (MACS) • School Camps and Excursions Guide (CCI) • Interstate-and-Overseas-Tours Guidelines (CEOM) Offsite Activity Checklist (CECV)