

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Purpose or Rationale

Villanova College is an independent Catholic College from Years 5 - 12 “striving for excellence in boys’ education as an Augustinian community one in mind and heart on the way towards God”.ⁱ Villanova College is a College where education is the formation of the whole person within a faith community. The staff, parents and students both past and present contribute their gifts and talents towards the development of young men of Gospel values who seek the common good. The community promotes life-long learning through continually challenging itself in the restless search for truth.ⁱⁱ

It is the Catholic Church’s Vision in the Archdiocese of Brisbane that “schools and colleges aspire to educate and form students who are challenged to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and who are literate in the Catholic and broader Christian tradition so that they might participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and wider society.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Villanova College is, in partnership with parents and parishes, part of the Church’s mission in the Archdiocese of Brisbane to educate and support the faith of its members. The College embraces the living tradition of the Catholic Church, enriching the mission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane with its Augustinian charism and organisational independence.^{iv}

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure the College’s religious education program complies with Brisbane Archdiocesan guidelines;
- provide a framework of principles to support religious education at the College that are guided by Gospel values and give expression to Augustinian vision, mission, values and ethos;
- outline the actions the College takes to practically implement this policy.

Policy

The vision for religious education at Villanova College is based on the Brisbane Archdiocesan vision for Religious Education. The College will provide a religious education program aligned with Brisbane Archdiocesan guidelines and faith formation experiences as fundamental components of a Catholic School curriculum. It will also provide a curriculum that is aligned with Augustinian Charism and Mission, the Vision and Mission of Villanova College and is inclusive and respectful of all denominations. The College recognises the importance of collaboration with family and parish in promoting the faith development and religious life of its students.

Implementation

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to all members of College staff, all students and parents.

Principles

In keeping with the vision for religious education of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the College:

- emphasises the complementarity of the two dimensions of religious education in that it articulates the College’s aspirations for students in terms of their religious literacy and faith formation;

- aspires to educate and develop young men of Gospel values, whose literacy in the Catholic tradition and whose formation within a faith community enable them to promote the common good.^v

Religious Education

1. The College, as a Catholic school, is committed to the study of religion as a way of providing a vision of reality that is enriched by the interaction of both a religious and an educational standpoint, thus contributing to the total development of the human person who understands and values authentic relationships, wisdom and spirituality.

2. The College presents the educational study of religion as study that nurtures faith through understanding and as providing an intellectual basis for the adolescent search for meaning, within the context of the Catholic tradition.

Religious Life of the College

1. The Religious Life of the College is focused on the second dimension of Religious Education, commonly referred to as “teaching people to be religious in a particular way”.^{vi} It comprises four interrelated components: Religious Identity and Culture; Evangelisation and Faith Formation; Prayer and Worship; and Social Action and Justice. Each of these components, while mutually reinforcing, provides a significant focus on a distinctive aspect of the religious life of a school.^{vii} The College emphasises the religious life of the College by ensuring students experience a faith and community dimension to their educational journey.

2. The religious life of the College is the responsibility of all members of the community, and an integral part of the College’s formal and informal curriculum. In particular it is the responsibility of all staff, not just those with formally identified religious education responsibilities.

3. Parents and caregivers commit to the religious and faith education of their child as required by their enrolment agreement with the College.

4. The College celebrates liturgies and prayer experiences that are relevant and engaging.

5. The College respects and welcomes students, parents and staff from different faith backgrounds. However, all students are expected to participate in the College liturgies and prayer experiences.^x

Practical Implementation

The College puts these principles into practice by undertaking the following actions:

Induction and Formation Processes

This policy, and the procedures and practices that flow from it, are part of the staff, student and parent induction and formation processes on an ongoing basis and are included in the relevant publications of Villanova College.

Religious Education

1) Curriculum

The College delivers the Australian Curriculum and the BCE Religious Education Curriculum from Years 5 to 12. The educational study of religion is based on the four strands of Beliefs, Sacred Text, Christian Life and Church. These strands are interrelated and are taught in an integrated way, and in ways that are appropriate to specific local contexts.^{viii} Careful attention

is given to the overall goal of religious literacy and developing students who can articulate their faith and live it in an open and authentic way.

2) Classroom teaching and learning

The classroom teaching and learning of religion at the College operates from an educational rather than from a catechetical framework. ^{ix}

3) Augustinian Tradition

The College's faith-based curriculum includes the rich stories and traditions that underpin the College's proud heritage including the stories of Saint Augustine and his practical everyday spirituality and other prominent Augustinians, such as Saint Thomas of Villanova.

Religious Life of the College

The way that students and staff engage with the religious life of the College forms a significant dimension of the education for both heart and mind offered at the College. Students are shaped in their journey through Villanova by the sacramental and prayer life of the College, faith formation activities such as retreats, as well as by a rich array of community service opportunities and events. ^x

1) Liturgies and Prayer Life

The College celebrates regular liturgies and prayer experiences through assemblies, pastoral care groups, and as part of the ceremonial life of the College, when the community comes together to celebrate liturgical seasons, feast days and special events.

Each day, the College sets aside sacred time and sacred space, for example, in the discipline of daily prayer in pastoral classes. ^{xi}

The centrality of the Eucharist to the community is evident in College masses which are celebrated regularly in the reflective, sacred space of the Villanova Chapel. These are prepared by Religious Education classes, pastoral care groups and other College groups. These celebrations are attended voluntarily, and involve students, staff and parents.

2) Retreats and Other Programs

Students from all year levels participate in Retreats or days of reflection in which they are encouraged to reflect, pray and discuss issues related to their own personal spiritual journey and their ability to contribute in a positive way to their family and wider community.

A wide range of faith formation opportunities are also available to staff through professional development programs.

3) Ministry Groups and Service Program

The College encourages its students to put their connection to faith into practice through its Ministry groups, service program and compassionate fundraising.

Evaluation and Review

The effectiveness of Villanova College's Religious Education Program will be reviewed as part of the Archdiocesan cyclical validation review processes of Villanova College and the results of the review will form part of the relevant Annual Report to the members of the Augustinian Provincial Council and the Villanova College Board.



This policy is to be reviewed after three years or earlier to take account of any changes to relevant legislation or regulations or Brisbane Archdiocesan guidelines on religious education or to Villanova College's operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing environment.

Review Date: October 2023.

Endorsement: This policy was approved and endorsed by the Villanova College Board on 21 October 2020.

References

- i. Villanova College Vision Statement; *Rule of St Augustine*, 1 (taken from Acts 4:32).
- ii. Villanova College Mission Statement.
- iii. Religious Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Curriculum, P-12 2013 p10
- iv. Villanova College Guiding Principles.
- v. Villanova College, Religious Education Program 2016, 9.
- vi. Gabriel Moran (Moran, 1991).
- vii. Brisbane Catholic Education, Religious Life of the School P-12
- viii. Villanova College, Religious Education Program 2016, 8.
- ix. Villanova College, Religious Education Program 2016, 8.
- x Villanova College, Religious Education Program 2016, 9.
- xi Villanova College, Religious Education Program 2016, 16.