

STAWELL SECONDARY COLLEGE

Selecting Teaching and Learning Resources

Rationale:

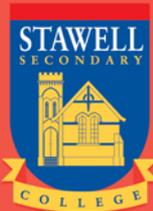
- Controversial but educationally valid curriculum content should not be avoided simply because it may be controversial to some people. Instead, but educational valid matters should be dealt with professionally, systematically and objectively, without personal teacher bias or an unreasonable obligation to appease. The overriding consideration is that the curriculum meets the standards of the relevant level of the Victorian Curriculum and is engaging to students balanced by the need to appropriately select curriculum materials.

Aims:

- The aim of the policy is to ensure that the learning environment of Stawell Secondary College is safe, supportive and inclusive and that teaching and learning resources selected are appropriate to a contemporary learning environment.

Definitions:

| Word | Definition |
|-------------------------|---|
| Film or video materials | Classification web site – Australian Government Information for Schools – showing films and playing computer games fact sheet. |
| D E & T policy | http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/selection.aspx NB: in the following all italicised content is directly imported from D E & T policy site. |
| Controversial topics | Controversial topics will often be appropriate and important subjects of study in schools and, at times, cannot be avoided in the context of teaching and learning. However, the contexts of controversial topics or themes about which objections can be anticipated include: themes related to magic or fantasy, racial and religious themes, sexual activity, nudity and related themes, drug misuse or addiction, crime, violence and cruelty, suicide and excessively bleak scenarios, the depiction of revolting or abhorrent phenomena and satirical or comparative perspectives on race, religion or gender. |
| Obscene | Offensive, rude, or shocking, usually because of being too obviously related to sex or showing sex. (Cambridge Dictionary). |
| Offensive | Causing distress, upsetting. |



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Responsibilities:

It is the responsibility of teachers and principals in liaison with the school council to ensure that the selection of teaching and learning resources:

- considers the expected student learning outcomes and standards described in the VCAA curriculum frameworks
- considers the particular needs of its students
- does not expose students to highly offensive or obscene materials or themes
- ensures that curriculum resources are suitable for the age group using them
- considers the words, behaviour, images or themes of the resources in terms of the:
 - context
 - impact on the audience age group
 - literary, artistic or educational merit of the material
 - intention of the author and general character of the material
 - how parents might react to their children being exposed to this content
 - standards of morality, decency, and propriety generally accepted by adults
 - impact on persons from different ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds.

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that:

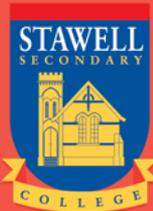
- the school implements the policies and procedures that comply with Departmental guidelines
- the school community is informed about possible controversial texts and that students and their parents have a right to object to teaching and learning resources under the provision of the Department's guidelines.

Implementation:

- The selection of teaching and learning materials will be referred to the Head of Faculty
- If necessary, the leadership team member who oversees teaching and Head of Faculty will be involved in the discussion of the selection of material(s).
- It is expected that teachers will forwarn students about up-coming content that may be controversial. It is expected that teachers will allow students to identify themselves as offended or distressed and will debrief with students or facilitate a debriefing to resolve issues for students.
- In selecting teaching and learning resources, teachers, in liaison with the principal and school council, need to consider the following:

Materials/themes within the resource likely to be regarded as offensive or obscene by the school community?

The resource cannot be used irrespective of any possible educational value.



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Materials/themes within the resource controversial or likely to be regarded as inappropriate by some students or their parents?

Alternative texts and study arrangements should be selected for students who may be involved in objections to the proposed materials on the grounds that they are inappropriate.

Note: If objections to materials on the grounds that they are inappropriate are anticipated, the school must inform the relevant students and their parents of the controversial nature of the resource and inform them that an alternative is available if students or parents hold a genuine and reasonable objection. Parents and students should be informed that they have a right to object.

In the event of individual students being given alternative materials or activities, teachers should endeavour to integrate the alternative study or activity into the classroom program and ensure that the student is supported in his or her position and not isolated from other classmates.

Film or computer games classified as:

- X or R
- M
- PG
- MA 15

- The resource cannot be used.
- Parental permission must be obtained for students under 15.
- The impact of PG classified (parental guidance) films and computer games should be no higher than mild, but they may contain content that your students find confusing or upsetting. PG classified material is not recommended for viewing or playing by persons under 15 without guidance from guardians.
- This material can only be seen if the student is 15 years or older; or if the student is under 15 years they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Note: In all cases the classification rating must be followed see: Australian Government Attorney-General's Classification website. Television classifications and warnings must also be



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| | needed for example warnings about disturbing images, sexual references. |
| Material is a prescribed or suggested VCE text by the VCAA | <p>These materials are appropriate for students studying VCE subjects.</p> <p>Note: It is important, however, that selection procedures should include consideration of the appropriateness of VCE materials when they are proposed for use by students in the years/age groups preceding VCE studies.</p> |

- Parental objections

If parents object to materials, the Principal must:

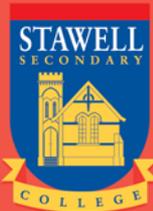
- Establish the basis for an objection to curriculum resources.
- At all times demonstrate respect for the views of objectors.
- Determine the grounds of an objection by referring to the selecting teaching and learning resources guidelines and not imply agreement with the objection during this process.
- Make every effort to resolve objections to the use of specific curriculum resources through discussion and conciliation.

Note: Before considering any action it should be established that the objection is based on the objector feeling or believing that the material is inappropriate and will harm the student in some way.

Objections based solely on the grounds that that curriculum material is alleged to be educationally unsound or aesthetically unsound do not warrant action in relation to these Departmental policies. In the regular course of teacher-student and teacher-parent communication, teachers should discuss or explain the choice of particular materials in terms of educational value.

Implementation Process:

- 1 If the school receives an objection to the use of a curriculum resource then the school determines the basis of the objection and tries to resolve the matter through discussion with the objector. Regardless of the outcomes of this initial discussion, details of the objections should be circulated to the relevant teacher(s), Head(s) of Faculty and the Principal for information and any necessary action.



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- 2 If after the initial discussion, the objection is not withdrawn the Principal liaises with teachers and Heads of Faculty and:

| <i>When the material is...</i> | <i>...then the principal</i> |
|---|--|
| Found to be offensive or obscene, regardless of educational value | Removes the material from the school curriculum. |
| Reasonably held to be objectionable or inappropriate to the objector only | Ensures that alternative material is offered. The expectation on the teacher is to make a reasonable effort to offer alternative content, having regard to the workload of the teacher and, for the student, the learning and teaching that would be associated with the alternative material. SMT (XUNO) will be used to flag students who may reasonably be thought to find material objectionable or inappropriate. |

- 3 If the alternative material that has been offered and is unacceptable to the objector and the issue remains unresolved for this or any other reason then the principal refers the matter to school council. The school council considers the matter in full to determine the status of the objection in terms of the Departmental guidelines and take appropriate action.
- 4 The Principal briefs their Regional Network Leader with decisions made by the school about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle in July, of every year. The review will be led by the Teaching and Learning Leaders and referred to the Policy Sub-Committee and School Council for ratification.

Last Reviewed: July 2019
Next review date: July 2020

Update history:

| First issued | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Date of update | Summary of change(s) |
| July 2020 | No changes |
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