



OPTIONAL TOURS AND INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES POLICY

Policy	Optional Tours and Intercultural Experiences
Version	3.0
Date of Approval	July 2023
Effective date	July 2023
Date for Review	July 2025
Policy Officer	KEM EO

<p>Rationale</p>	<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>
<p>Principles and Values</p>	<p>Equity and access KEM’s guiding principle is that core services should be accessible to all students within the school community. KEM recognises, however, that KEM schools will offer to students opportunities, experiences, and activities that extend beyond the core curriculum, and that may not be readily available within families, or may cost more than some families can afford. 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.</p> <p>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 and on opportunities for reflection after the optional tour/intercultural experience is over.</p> <p>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. Caritas Australia’s <i>Strengths-Based Approach to Development</i> provides an indicative guide: ‘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</p>

	<p>inherent and God-given dignity and worth, and that each individual has unique gifts and talents.</p> <p>The strengths-based approach honours and upholds this dignity, and empowers all people to be architects of their own development.</p> <p>[It] helps identify the community’s strengths and assets, including natural resources but most importantly their human potential, skills, strengths and abilities.’</p>
Audience	<p>The audience for this policy is the Board and Secretariat of KEM, KEM Principals and personnel employed or engaged in KEM schools.</p>
Definitions	<p>Catholic Social Justice teaching is grounded in belief in humility, equality and the common good.</p> <p><i>‘The one who serves does not consider himself/herself superior to the one served. Those who are in a position to help others will realise that in doing so they themselves receive help. This duty is a grace... To do all we can with what strength we have is the task which keeps us always at work: “The love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14).’¹</i></p> <p>Optional tours (formerly included under KEM’s ‘Immersion’ policy) 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, national and international • may involve overnight or longer stays <p>Tours/Visits In the context of intercultural exchanges with communities, Visit is a more appropriate term than Tour.</p> <p>Intercultural Experiences (formerly included under KEM’s ‘Immersion’ policy) 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’. (Caritas Australia, <i>Strengths-Based Approach to Development</i>.)</p> <p>Educational merit: Broadly defined, this includes social, cultural, ethical, spiritual, and historical experiences that are related to the values base of the school.</p>
Procedures for KEM Approval of an Optional Tour and/or Intercultural Experiences	<p>An optional tour/intercultural experience may be approved under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is in keeping with KEM core values and with current Catholic social teaching (see Resources, particularly in reference to intercultural experiences).

¹ Deus Caritas Est (Pope Benedict) #32-35

- 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.

Educational rationale

- The optional tour/intercultural experience has clear educational merit and is not primarily recreational in focus.
- It will challenge and enlighten participating students.
- 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 go ahead with a tour/intercultural experience.
- Optional tours/intercultural experiences that are expensive/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.

Regarding intercultural experience and visits to developing or First Nation communities, Principals and leaders/planners must address the following questions in their applications:

- Has the school group been invited to visit the community by community elders or others?
- What, if any, is the existing relationship with the community to be visited?
- Is it intended that that there will be an ongoing relationship of equals?
- Will the experience demonstrably benefit and enrich both school and community members?
- 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*.)
- Using the strengths-based approach as a guide, what preparation of leaders and student participants is planned and how will it be delivered?
- Will the communities and participants be involved in ongoing (ideally daily) assessment of how the visit is proceeding?
- What processes have been developed for evaluating the strength of the preparation, the challenges faced, and the final outcomes of the visit?

Approval and Timing

- Notification of proposed optional tours/intercultural experiences, should be provided to the KEM Board for approval, 12 months or more before they would run. The proposal must be accompanied by completed versions of the following proformas:
 - OPTICE Form 1 - Application Proforma
 - OPTICE Form 2 - Planning Checklist
 - OPTICE Form 3 - Risk Register and Emergency Management Plan
- DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) [travel advice](#) on the risks and requirements for the intended destination/s must be included in the proposal and travel advice should be continually monitored by the Staff tour organisers from the time the proposal is lodged.
- Initial approval of an optional tour/intercultural experience is for a single instance. The application to run for a second time must be accompanied by the evaluation of the first. If approval of a second instance is granted, the tour/intercultural experience may become a regular event provided that it remains consistent in approach and all other elements e.g political climate remain the same. If there is a significant change in nature, it will need to be approved anew by the KEM Board before it can proceed.
- Where required, notification should also be made to the relevant Catholic Education Office, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Contact details for the responsible staff member not attending will be also be provided.
- Adequate notice (12 months or more) should be given to families to allow students and parents to save for an optional tour/intercultural experience.
- Optional tours/intercultural experiences should predominantly occur during school holiday time.
- A copy of detailed pre-planning documentation with organisational arrangements must be provided to the KEM EO and Board at least three months before the tour/ occurs. This is to occur each year the activity is to run. It should include rationale, dates, full itinerary, risk assessments, DFAT travel advice, names and relevant experience of supervising staff, and the designated school emergency contact details.

Staffing, Risk and financial arrangements

- In preparing for optional tours/intercultural experiences, particularly those that involve extensive national or international travel, the school must engage in comprehensive and appropriate risk assessments (including the following of advice from relevant government agencies) and insist that all participants are covered by travel insurance.

DFAT assigns countries advice levels 1-4 to help Australians avoid or reduce risks when travelling. A higher level means a higher level of risk.

The four levels are:

1. [Level 1 - Exercise normal safety precautions](#)
2. [Level 2 - Exercise a high degree of caution](#)
3. [Level 3 - Reconsider your need to travel](#)
4. [Level 4 - Do not travel.](#)

- KEM will exercise extreme caution in approving or, where circumstances require, cancelling an organised optional tour/intercultural experience where the safety of students and staff may be at risk. In recognition of recent court cases, judgements made in this regard should exceed the former standard of 'in loco parentis'.
- Participating staff should include at least one member professionally trained and equipped to deal with students who may become ill or injured.
- 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.
- Parents and students must be notified at the initial time of organising an optional tour/intercultural experience that cancellation is possible and any financial losses will be borne by families, not the school.
- A school's financial resources should not directly subsidise optional tours/intercultural experiences, nor should fundraising in support of expensive optional tours be focussed within the school community 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.
- If the costs for staff involved in such optional tours/intercultural experiences are covered by student participants, the practice should be transparent. Because supervision costs directly add to the costs borne by participants, staffing numbers should be appropriate to the number of students and the nature of activities, but not exceed such requirements.

Social Justice and formation

- 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*.)
- 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.

- Where optional tours/intercultural experiences are organised through/with sponsoring organisations, due diligence with regards to researching the sponsoring organisation is to be undertaken by the school, for example, by investigating where the costs of fundraising might flow.

Evaluation

- A thorough evaluation is to be undertaken, including feedback from school leaders and the staff and students who attend. 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.

<p>Procedure When Cancelling an Activity</p>	<p>Considerations when cancelling an optional tour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Where schools might be in a position of considering the cancellation of an optional tour/intercultural experience at short notice or during, members of the KEM Board 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.
<p>Responsibilities and Communication Obligations</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Breaches of this policy</p>	<p>Breaches of this policy may be addressed by further education or, when judged necessary, corrective or disciplinary action.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>APPENDIX A- KEM International Travel/In-Country Immersion Experiences Position Paper, July 2020 APPENDIX B - OPTICE Form 1 - Application Proforma APPENDIX C - OPTICE Form 2 - Planning Checklist APPENDIX D – OPTICE Form 3 – Risk Register and Emergency Management Plan</p>
<p>Related Policies and Procedures</p>	<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
<p>Resources</p>	<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)
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Kildare Education Ministries International Travel / In-Country Immersion Experiences

**Position Paper
July 2020**

Given the governance responsibilities of Kildare Education Ministries, and in light of contemporary circumstances (COVID-19), the Board wishes to provide the following advice regarding immersion experiences, whether they be international trips or in-country immersions.

1. Statement of Principle

In offering educational programs to students, KEM's general principle is that core services should be accessible to all students within the school community. Whilst the principle should always apply to activities related to the core program of the school, the Board is of the belief that any 'elective' experiences offered should also be in accordance with principles of equity and access for all. Because issues of access are frequently related to cost, the Board is reluctant to endorse expensive excursions if many students may be denied access to the experience. For any such excursions to be endorsed by KEM, alternative in-school enrichment experiences would have to be provided for those students unable to participate.

As a guide, the following criteria would need to be satisfactorily addressed before any international travel or in-country experience could be endorsed by KEM:

- Is the proposed activity in keeping with Catholic social teaching?
- Is the proposed activity in keeping with the values of the school?
- Is the proposed activity inclusive and accessible by all? If not, what alternative opportunities will be offered for students, also studying the subject, who cannot participate in the immersion program?

- Are the curriculum learning objectives of the proposed activity clear?

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato si'* should also be used as a reference point for guiding principles, e.g.:

- In what ways does this initiative contribute to an understanding of the questions of justice, so as to hear both the 'cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor'? (Ls' 49)
- How does this proposed activity educate in "ecological citizenship" (Ls' 210) and promote a commitment to intergenerational solidarity so that there is an inhabitable planet to future generations? (Ls' 159)

2. Rationale

- Activities, such as international, national, or co-curricular excursions that are expensive, should not be presented to students or parents as being directly advantageous to achievement in a particular area of learning.
- A school's financial resources should not directly subsidise such an activity, nor should fundraising in support of expensive excursions be focussed within the school community as this further penalises students unable to participate in the activity.
- Consideration may be given to immersion experiences where the school is establishing, or already has a long-term relationship which contributes to systemic change and mutual learning, e.g. with Indigenous communities and with schools and communities in Timor Leste.
- The Board cautions that the value of trips involving contributions to disadvantaged or developing communities may be questionable. There is little evidence to support long-term sustainability or change as a result of such trips, and some evidence that they can promote an unhealthy dependency. Consideration needs to be given to alternative support through advocacy in Australia for improved overseas development assistance.

- Of major concern to the Board are trips organised through/with sponsoring organisations. Due diligence for KEM schools here would entail independent research into the sponsoring organisation, e.g., into their governance, and a commitment to eradicating 'Orphanage tourism' or 'Voluntourism'.
- KEM understands that international travel and in-country immersions are used within the education marketplace to generate a 'competitive edge' for schools. This should not be the motivating factor or rationale for KEM schools. International travel and in-country immersions must be consistent with Kildare Ministries values and have demonstrable and curriculum-focussed educational worth if they are to be considered for approval by KEM.
- Whilst it is reasonable that direct costs for staff involved in such excursions be covered by participating-student contributions, the accounting must be transparent. Indirect costs to the school due to the absence of staff must also be considered. Because supervision costs directly add to the costs borne by participants, staffing numbers should be appropriate to the number of students and the nature of activities, but not exceed such requirements. Whether staff volunteer or are selected to participate, their duty of care is that of an employee of the school. In approving staffing, consideration needs to be given to having a range of staff, not always the same teachers, undertaking these responsibilities.

3. Educational Benefit

- If it is believed that an international trip or immersion program has educational merit, then ideally it should be available for all. Where it is not, (e.g. a LOTE based excursion), it should not be presented as providing an advantage over other students unable to participate in the activity. Such trips can contribute to a student's development in particular areas, for example, language proficiency, but the potential outcomes resulting from participation should not be overstated.
- Educational merit should be supported by a curriculum component that supports student learning. Whilst it is recognised that an international trip or immersion program can be a general learning

experience, the Board considers that these should have a direct and specific link to curriculum.

Whatever the immersion experience, the focus should be on learning rather than service.

- The activity should clearly possess educational merit (broadly defined to include social, cultural, ethical, spiritual and historical experiences) that are related to the values base of the school and to explicit learning program objectives. The majority of the time should be focussed on its educational values and promote mutual learning with overseas partners rather than on the incidental learning that comes from travel and leisure experiences in a different cultural setting.
- Alternative programs that permit higher levels of participation should always be explored, e.g. an intensive language experience with native speakers based within the local community. Overseas language trips need to provide structured and intensive language immersion and not be solely tourism-focussed.
- Comprehensive formation, preparation and follow-up programs should be put in place and cover all educational, cultural and organisational aspects of the excursion. In the case of social justice activities, reporting and follow-up activities should take place within the broader school community.
- Consideration needs to be given to the provision of appropriate preparation time: (a) for the teachers involved in international excursions; and (b) for those conducting alternative learning opportunities at school.

4. Risk

- Appropriate request for approval, including risk assessment, should be submitted to the KEM Board at least 6 to 12 months prior to an activity being proposed to parents.
- The Board of Kildare Education Ministries, as employer of staff, reserves the right to cancel an international excursion at any time, after consultation with the school Principal.

- Increasingly, overseas trips and in-country immersions carry potentially excessive risk for students, their families, staff and school reputation. In preparing for such activities, the school must undertake a risk assessment, if necessary by engaging a professional company (which must be independent of any travel or excursion agencies involved). The school must be familiar with and follow the advice from relevant government agencies. All participants must be covered by travel insurance. The risk analysis assessment should be carried out prior to proposing the activity to the KEM Board, parents and students.
- Families (parents and students) need to be advised in advance that they will have to carry any financial loss that could be incurred should an excursion be cancelled, curtailed or re-organised.
- Where schools are in a position of having to considering the cancellation of a trip at short notice, members of the KEM Board may be called to participate in an extra-ordinary meeting(s) (via conference call where necessary) with the Principal to support effective consultation and discernment in the decision making process.
- Appropriate notifications, including rationale, dates, itinerary, supervising staff, names of participating students, and the name and contact details, should be provided to Kildare Education Ministries, the relevant Catholic Education Office, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Contact details for the responsible staff member not attending the excursion should also be provided.