Standard of Service: Groves School of Distance Education

Introduction

Distance Education is a different way of doing school. We have written this Standard of Service to help explain how some key aspects of how we will deliver our Distance Education service including the:

- Definitions of home educators, students and teachers.
- Interactive teaching methods to be followed.
- Communication procedures to be followed by the students, their teachers and home educators.
- Regular tracking and assessment of work submitted by the students to the teachers.
- Regular monitoring of the students’ achievement of the learning standards.
- Reporting of students’ progress and achievement.

This document needs to be read in conjunction with the enrolment contract and the program guides. Please take time to read and understand these documents.

Definitions of home educators, students and teachers

- Groves Christian College is the name of the school. Groves School of Distance Education known simply as Groves DE is the department within Groves that serves distance education families.

- Home Educator is the term given to the parent (or guardian) who is the supervisor of distance education within the home (or other location). Alternatively the home educator may be another person the parent authorises to be the supervisor, such as a grandparent or paid tutor. Groves DE needs clear communication from the enrolling person about whom the home educator will be. Likewise, if the role of home educator is a shared one, Groves DE needs to understand the arrangement so that teachers may be authorised to speak to the home educators regarding the student’s education. Educational plans and associated coursework is dependent on the home educator being present and available for the student during learning times. The role of the home educator involves time, commitment and planning together with the ability to openly and regularly communicate with teaching staff. As indicated above, parents may need to employ a paid tutor should they require more explicit assistance in educating their child particularly in the senior phase of learning.

- Student is a full time enrolled distance education student in Prep to Year 12. Groves DE acknowledges the important role that students play in their own education through each phase of schooling. Students are not passive members of the distance education process. Groves DE promotes the benefits of encouraging and expecting children to become active participants in their learning, along with their parents and teachers. For example, in the Middle Phase (Secondary Years 7 to 9) students are capable of a higher level of self-sufficiency and need to assume more responsibility for their academic success. Likewise Senior Phase (Secondary Years 10-12) students have high levels of personal responsibility for their performance. The work that home educators have invested in over the years instructing their
children to learn time management skills, study skills, and meeting deadlines for assignments comes to the forefront in this later phase of schooling.

- Teacher is the Groves employee who provides a range of professional educational services to the home educator and student to support distance education. Similar to day schools, depending on the program, learning needs and phase of learning of the student, a number of teachers and other Groves staff may be involved in the distance education delivery of a student.

- Educational plan will include the learning goals, set work and other guidelines for the home educator and student to follow. Home educators and students often supplement additional activities as time and interest allow to the core work of the educational plan.

**DE is typically delivered through interactive teaching methods**

Interactive teaching methods are used in Groves DE as teaching and learning is a dynamic process that requires two way communication between the student/home educator and the teacher. It is essential that students/home educators maintain regular communication with their teachers. Our teaching methods vary depending on a number of factors including the:

- Program option being entered into (eg Inquisify or ARISE).
- Phase of learning (eg Foundation, Intermediate, Middle or Senior).
- Experience of the home educator (eg new parent to DE or experienced tutor).
- Level of internet service available at the student’s location.
- Learning needs of the student which may mean teaching methods are adjusted, modified or individualised.

Typically the teaching and learning process works in the following manner.

**Enrolment and Planning Stage:**

- Parents enrol their children in Groves DE.
- Students undertake diagnostic activities as required to supplement the learning performance and progress evidence provided by the family to the school (for example: report cards, NAPLAN results etc.).
- Home educators (parents or tutors) supervise diagnostic testing undertaken by the student and then submit this testing to the teacher who is designing the learning plan.
- Teachers design and provide an educational plan for the home educator to teach from and for the student to engage in. In some cases, an initial educational plan is provided to address particular learning needs or as a temporary plan while further evaluation is undertaken by the student to enable a comprehensive educational plan to be designed. The home educator and student’s input into the prescribed educational plan is an essential element of the planning process to promote ownership and understanding of the work. This input often includes students and home educators negotiating the flexible elements of the educational plan such as art and technology projects to be undertaken in the home and subject choices in Senior Phase in conjunction with College Career Advisor and/or Senior Phase staff.
Coursework Stage:

The coursework information that flows from the educational plan is increasingly delivered via digital means along with traditional textbooks and workbooks. Groves DE recognises that alternative means are still required for some families and will attempt to make provision where practical and cost effective. Home educators lead the students in the distance education process within the home on a day by day basis. This includes instructing, reviewing work and providing feedback. How distance education families carry out the process within the home differs from family to family, but most families achieve success through following routines.

It is an expectation that students’ responsibility in terms of formal studies increases gradually as they progress through each phase of learning (similar to other family or personal or family business responsibilities). The work to be completed is their responsibility no matter the year level, however, the support and encouragement they need from the home educator differs based on the age and ability of the students. Students are always the first reviewers of their work.

Teachers help monitor and track the student’s learning progress through a range of interactive teaching methods. These differ depending on the program option and the phase of learning. Teaching methods Include:

- Regular email or other digital learning platform work return requests, including student and home educator feedback to the teacher were appropriate, to help inform the teacher regarding progress made.
- Issuing of assessment pieces to be completed under controlled conditions and returned for grading.
- Scheduled personalised phone or video teaching sessions throughout the semester (works out to about eight per semester).
- Workshop teaching sessions (usually two per semester) available in a number of centres. These are supplemented by a number of smaller events in a number of regional areas.
- Opportunities to participate in camps, trips and sports days.
- Responding to home educator or student initiated clarification requests about set work.
- For 2016 the Term Work Returns will continue to ensure teachers have evidence, however, as teachers request more common assessment tasks in a dynamic fashion, the decision about fixed term work returns will be reviewed.

Based on this monitoring, teachers provide professional teaching direction in the form of:

- Feedback to the home educator/student.
- Adjustments to some of the work set out in the educational plan where possible.
- Educational recommendations about other activities that would be helpful.
- Direct specialised instruction to support the home educator’s work.

Reporting Stage:

Reporting happens throughout the year in terms of ongoing feedback but happens formally through:

- Teachers writing report cards twice a year similar to what happens in the day school. These reports are based on the evidence collected over the semester. Teachers make judgements regarding student performance against the standards set out by the accredited educational authorities.
Students, home educators, and teachers taking part in formal progress interviews twice a year. These are preferred to be in person where possible at a suitable location. We are not able to include this service for remote and some regional districts based on the cost but we will work with families to determine the best possible alternative.

Standard Student/Home Educator - Teacher Communication Procedures for P-9 Programs.

Two way communication is chiefly through:

- Emails: This allows all parties to ask questions, make requests and generally keep connected. Emails are expected to be responded to by the close of business of the next school day by teachers. When the teacher is involved in workshops etc, we expect them to at least acknowledge emails and give an indication when they will be in a position to better respond to the email.

- Scheduled personalised phone or video teaching sessions throughout the semester (works out to about eight per semester). Phone calls or Video calls times are negotiated between the teacher and home educator. It is normal practice for Years P-9 teachers to first speak with the home educator before speaking with the student. The interaction would normally be around 20 to 30 minutes. Each teacher has a timetable that they are accountable for in terms of their teaching. Timetables are designed so each student has regular scheduled contact.

- From time to time, students/home educators have requests about set work outside of the scheduled teaching sessions. Teachers do have some capacity on their timetables to respond to such requests. In these cases students/home educators need to:

  o Email the teacher directly with the request for a phone call. Students/home educators need to include the question and enough detail so the teacher is able to understand the context of the question. Teachers will book a phone session with you via email and then call you at the scheduled time.

  o Teachers are able to respond to a reasonable amount of requests in a semester per student. It is a critical point to remember the role of the home educators who have taken on the responsibility of the day to day instruction and supervision of their students in distance education. Distance Education Schools are set up to support the distance education of students being instructed by their home educators.

- To maximise the time teachers have to teach, newsletters and other notices are used to provide students/home educators with program updates and other important operational information. It is expected and assumed that newsletters and other notices are read in a timely manner.
Standard of Service - Senior Subjects (Years 10 - 12) 2016

Introduction

As a child progresses into the senior years of schooling, the complexity of material they cover becomes greater and more specialised. This requires the expertise of specialist teachers who have qualifications within their speciality. Many teachers of senior subjects have extra qualifications (such as a science degree) or experience from a previous career in relevant fields like programming, engineering, and business.

Students progressing into the senior years will be taught by a number of teachers - often a different teacher for each subject. This stands in contrast to the students experience in primary (or even middle) school. Likewise, the teachers of senior students are responsible for significantly more students than a primary teacher, though only for a portion of each student’s educational undertaking.

To provide equitable access for students in the secondary years, schools often create a schedule of classes during which the teacher is able to spend time with the students (commonly referred to as a ‘timetable’). This is the time when most of the teaching, questions, and communication for that particular subject occurs.

Consequently, senior teachers do not have the flexibility to respond to impromptu phone calls, emails, and messages. They are often conducting other lessons at such times.

In order to provide the best access for students to their teachers, the following standard of service has been developed specifically for the senior years (10 - 12).

Teaching and Learning Standards

Typically the teaching and learning process works in the following manner:

Planning Stage:

Students need to work with school staff to determine a course of study for Year 10. This usually takes place in the second semester of Year 9.

In Year 10, the staff will work with you and your parents/carers to develop a Senior Education and Training (SET) Plan.

Your SET plan will help you:

- structure your learning in Years 11 and 12 around your abilities, interests and ambitions
- think about your education, training and career options after Year 12
- set and achieve your learning goals in Years 11 and 12, and beyond
- include flexible and coordinated pathway options in your course of senior study
- communicate with your parents/carers or teachers/careers counsellors about your post-school plans.
Once your SET Plan is completed, you and the key people involved in developing your plan should sign and date the plan to show your agreement.

It is recommended that you review your SET Plan regularly to make sure your subjects and learning are right for you, and that you can maintain a pathway to the courses and career you want after Year 12.

If you would like to make a change to your subjects or courses, it is important that you discuss this with the Director of Distance Education. You must have approval from us before changes are made.

Coursework Stage:

Teachers monitor and track the student’s learning progress through a range of interactive teaching methods. In the senior years these methods include:

- Access to an online learning community in the form of digital forums (or similar) to ask questions in regards to the content or processes of work delivered on the digital platform
  - Questions posted online should receive a response by the close of business of the following school day. Where a teacher is involved in school events, an acknowledgement of the question will be posted which will indicate when the teacher will be in a position to better respond.

- Access to video group tuition sessions - a 20-30 min group video tuition session for each subject will be available most weeks of the term on a timetabled basis

- Formal feedback on assignment drafts, delivered within one business week of the draft submission (per assignment)

- Formal assessment and feedback on summative assessment items, delivered within two business weeks of the submission of the assessment.

Reporting Stage:

Reporting occurs throughout the year in the form of ongoing feedback on each assessment item. This is complimented by the provision of a formal report card twice per year (once per semester).

Reports are based on the evidence collected over the semester for each Inquisify subject that a student is undertaking. Judgements regarding student performance are made against the standards set out by the accredited educational authorities, such as the QCAA.

Each year, senior teachers will prepare folios of students’ assessment pieces for submission to the QCAA panels for moderation and verification of the judgements made on achievement.

Student-Teacher Communication Procedures

Two-way communication is chiefly achieved through the scheduled video group tuition sessions and the online learning community forums. Due to the nature of a senior teacher’s caseload, individual or impromptu emails and phone calls are often not the most effective method of communication. However, teachers may initiate email or phone-based communication regarding urgent or important matters such as examination arrangements or un-submitted assessment items.
There is an expectation that students will be familiar (that is, prepared to ask questions in the session) with the week-to-week course work in preparation for active participation in the video group tuition session.

For matters of an individual or personal nature, students may need to resort to the use of emails. If a teacher receives a question from a student via email that would benefit the cohort to know the answer to, the teacher may direct the enquiry back to the forum.

General year level or access questions should be directed to the Director of DE who serves as the Secondary Coordinator.