

MUTUAL OBLIGATION:

Teamwork between Parents, Year 12 Students and the School.

It should come as no surprise to anyone associated with the rearing and education of children that the three most important sets of people in this wonderful process are **parents, teachers and the young person**. If all three are “on the same page”, then success is much more likely but never guaranteed. The child’s biggest influencers are

- Parents
- Teachers
- Peers/friends.

Girton has a strong agenda for its students. The **Mission and Values** document sets out our major agenda supplemented by many practices which fall under its umbrella. We cannot over-emphasise the importance of parents being fully supportive of this agenda. If the student hears and observes quite different values at home from his/her School’s values, then he/she will be confused and caught in the middle. Success is unlikely and the likelihood of distress is much greater. By Year Twelve, young people are becoming close to being autonomous but they still need the leadership and guidance of parents and staff.

Brain maturation is widely different across the range of students; some have adult brains, many have still developing frontal lobes –the site of decision-making and judgements – which will take up to six more years – beyond Year 12 - before full adult maturity. More boys than girls will have some time to go before full development of good judgements. When students turn eighteen, nothing magic happens; they do not suddenly mature overnight.

This leads to some points which are important for students, teachers and parents at this time. The final VCE year is important because it will set the stage for the next few years. For some, it will provide the opportunity for fast-tracking into the major life choices – study, career, travel and more. Some will have to take a much slower path –in some instances by some years – because of decisions made and implemented *or not* this year.

The School’s Responsibilities are many but include:

- Conducting our School according to the Mission and Values;
- Providing good leadership consistent with our Christian Mission;
- Assisting parents and students in creating strong positive choices for character, life and career at the close of Year 12;
- Adhering to the mandated agendas of Commonwealth and State Policy;
- Providing a strong academic curriculum which will give the student every chance of attending a university or other tertiary course of choice;
- Providing good teaching and strong, professional, helpful teachers;
- Ensuring excellence of behaviour in classrooms and in other programmes;
- Ensuring that School is a safe, supportive place free from unwarranted and unfair harassment and bullying;
- Providing a good range of co-curricular opportunities for participation and achievement in sport, performing and creative arts, community service, outdoor education, leadership and exchange programmes.
- Communicating with parents through reports, newsletters, meetings, parent-teacher meetings and being ready to meet parents to discuss any worries and concerns relating to the student.

What do we ask of Year 12 Parents?

- Please ensure your children attend School every term-day on time; we require (under Commonwealth & State (VCAA) rules) a written, signed note of explanation for each absence);
- Please ensure they do homework and study – EVERY night, at weekends and during vacations; a good steady approach all year, not last-minute cramming; please don’t make excuses for them;

- Please monitor discreetly that they are getting enough sleep; mobile 'phones and msn/ MySpace are often in use through the night making the following day's classes problematic; pull the plugs if they won't;
- Keep them off all alcohol; it negatively affects cognitive function especially in developing brains; binges increase the risk of alcoholism. Attending parties and social events is one thing and fine in moderation, keeping them alcohol-free is another.
- Restrict major distractions like cars; they have managed so far without one; hold off until after the VCE, otherwise a lot of study-time may be wasted;
- Please let us know *early* if there are any worries or concerns which may affect the student's mood or well-being or performance at School;
- Please ensure they are playing sport and/or getting exercise; it is a very bad idea to give up sport at this stage. The exercised body and brain are much fitter, calmer and ready for the tasks of the VCE; with a healthy diet and good sleep, good study is more likely;
- Please ensure they are dressed and presented according to the Uniform and Grooming rules;
- There *is* time in each student's schedule for exercise, relaxation, a co-curricular activity, some community service; wise balance is important. Please remember the Colleges, some employers and other organisations view school and community involvement very highly – for entrance selection, for scholarships and bursaries. A small amount of part-time work may be alright, but some students sacrifice a year or more of professional life (through neglect of study) to the excessive "need" for spending money now.
- Your children/ young adults need your leadership as much as ever; it is simply a more discreet mentoring and discussion-style leadership than that of a few short years ago. Most of what is needed in Year 12 is up to them, but they still need wise counsel and some boundaries. Please do not abrogate all leadership and decision-making support.
- Please read the e-Link, our School newsletter, every fortnight so you are well informed.

What do we ask of Year 12 students?

- Please read the list above!
- Understanding your responsibilities *before your rights*; if you have rights, then please ensure you have met your responsibilities.
- Excellent self-leadership;
- Leadership of your colleagues in Year 12 and of the School;
- There are no "*frees*" or "*free periods*"; you will have some **Study Periods**.
- Invest in your future – good study patterns, good exercise, sleeping and eating patterns;
- Enjoy the process; for most students Year 12 is tough, enjoyable and goes very fast! Laugh a lot. You learn much about yourself in the course of the Year.
- Set clear strong specific goals with the game-plan to achieve them.
- Your **team** consists of you, your peers, your parents and your teachers. If you are fighting, squabbling or ducking away from any of them, YOU have a problem! The VCE is a team game, almost impossible to win alone.
- If you are worried about things, confide in someone. If they are affecting your school work, we are happy to try to assist. Look out for your peers' well-being and let us know if anyone needs help.

My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there. Charles Kettering.

Yesterday is not ours to recover but tomorrow is ours to win or lose. Lyndon B Johnson.

Everyone's future is, in reality, uncertain and full of unknown treasures from which all may draw unguessed prizes. Lord Dunsany.

Clayton Jones,
Headmaster,
January 2008.