**Student Dress Codes**

**Exemption Procedure Good Practice Case Studies**

**Case Study 1: Exemption request for a facial piercing**

The Treasury Secondary College student dress code policy states that students can have a maximum of one ear piercing in each ear. No other visible piercings are allowed. The student dress code policy is provided to parents during the school enrolment process and is reviewed by the school council on a cyclic basis. Students are aware of the dress code policy and are consulted when the dress code is reviewed to ensure their views are considered.

A student in Year 10 has his lip pierced during the school holidays and returns to school with the lip piercing. The student and his parents apply for an exemption to the student dress code policy so that the student can wear his lip piercing. As part of the application for exemption, the student and his parents speak to the principal about the reasons behind his request.

The principal listens to the explanation from the student and his parents, and determines whether the exemption should be granted. The principal considers whether the right of the student to freedom of expression would be considered to outweigh the school council policy regarding the restriction on piercings in the dress code. The principal will also consider whether there would be any way of accommodating the student’s request while still achieving the purposes of the dress code.

In this case, the application is rejected and the student and his parents are given written reasons for the rejection. The principal explains to the student and his parents that school councils develop and implement student dress codes and, under the current college dress code policy, lip piercings are not allowed (for several reasons, including occupational health and safety). The principal advises the student and his parents that they can write to the school council about this issue, so that their views can be considered when the student dress code policy is next reviewed.

**Case Study 2: Exemption request on disability grounds**

Garden Secondary College has a student dress code policy that states all students must wear simple, black lace-up leather shoes. Runners, slippers, platforms or T-bar sandals are not permitted.

The family of a student enrolling at the school in year 7 has contacted the principal regarding an exemption to the dress code due to the student’s inability to wear the types of shoes listed in the student dress code policy. The student has cerebral palsy and wears an ankle-foot orthotic (AFO) on their right leg. The family informs the principal that the AFO can only be worn with a specific type of runner.

The principal advises the family to apply for an exemption and meets with them to discuss options. Through discussions with the family the principal grants the exemption confirming that the student can wear the specified style of runner provided the shoes are, where possible, mainly black in colour.

**Case Study 3: Exemption request on religious/cultural grounds**

City Secondary College has a large Muslim student population at the school. The school council, in consultation with the school, students and parents had developed and written a school dress code policy providing examples of uniform combinations that students can wear. In the summer months girls can choose to wear a white short-sleeved school shirt with shorts or pants or the school dress.

Several girls and their parents apply for exemptions to wear a long-sleeved top under their school shirts during the warmer months as, for cultural reasons, they did not wish to wear short-sleeved shirts.

The principal grants exemptions to these students, and they are able to wear long-sleeved tops under their school shirts so long as they are white. Because several exemptions are granted for the same reason, the principal brings the issue to the attention of the school council. A partial review of the student dress code policy is undertaken by the school council to address the issue. Consultation takes place with the students, parents and local Muslim community, and additional styles of long-sleeved school shirts are added to the school uniform and sports uniform lists. The council’s decision to review and modify the policy ensures that their dress code enables students from a range of backgrounds, including cultural, linguistic, and religious to participate fully and comfortably in school life.

As in the case studies listed above, a function of school councils is to develop and implement dress codes for their students as outlined in legislation relating to dress codes. All dress codes must meet human rights and anti-discrimination requirements, include an exemption process, address health and safety considerations and meet local requirements relating to uniform supply arrangements.