

Name of Guidelines	Guidelines on the Implementation of the Children on University Premises Policy
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Description of Revision	

Human Resources Directorate

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1. Overview

The University seeks to provide a "family friendly" work and learning environment. The Children on University Premises Policy supports this aim and also recognises the University's duty of care as a responsible employer. The policy therefore seeks to strike a balance between the safety of children on University premises, limiting their exposure to risks, and the maintenance of equity standards. Thus the policy seeks to address both occupational health and safety and equal opportunity issues.

Australian Catholic University is obligated to meet its responsibilities under the various Occupational Health and Safety Acts that apply to it and has occupational health and safety policies on the provision of a safe working environment for staff and visitors. However these policies do not address all the issues that arise from the presence of children on university premises. There is a need for clear guidance as well as discretion and reasonableness in meeting the expectations of parents/guardians and the expectations of those making decisions about children on University premises.

ACU recognises that:

- students and staff need to bring their children onto University premises from time to time;
- the safety of all persons on University Premises, including children, is of the utmost importance; and,
- the education function and effective operation of the University must be maintained and the presence of children on campus needs to be accommodated within this requirement.

Consequently, it is necessary to identify:

- the responsibilities of the person supervising the child or children;
- the requisite level of supervision; and,
- appropriate/inappropriate areas for children to be present.

ACU also recognises that care must be taken to ensure that the policy is not implemented in such a way as to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against a staff member, student or prospective student on the grounds of sex, or carer or parental responsibilities. In particular, the University supports flexibility of working and learning arrangements to enable staff and students to meet family responsibilities in special circumstances. For example, students or staff may require flexible arrangements in order to breastfeed. ACU provides special facilities for students or staff who are breastfeeding.

2. Publicly Accessible University Premises

While the University precincts are private property, some areas are widely publicly accessible to everyone and permission to enter them is not normally required.

Examples of such areas are:

- gardens and courtyards;
- cafes and cafeterias;
- chapels and reflection rooms; and,
- foyers and lobbies.

Moreover, children are welcome on campus for approved University activities such as Open Day, concerts and performances, and guided tours. Adults accompanying children in such circumstances, and in the publicly accessible areas, are at all times responsible for their care, safety and welfare.

Libraries are a special case. They are both a learning environment for students and staff, and a working environment for library staff. All users of the library are required to respect and uphold conditions necessary to provide an appropriate atmosphere for study, research and work. Therefore, children under secondary school age should not be left in the library unsupervised. Young people of secondary school age may, however, work in the library without the supervision of a parent or guardian, provided their conduct is appropriate.

3. Responsibilities in relation to this Policy

Everyone using University facilities has responsibilities in relation to the practical implementation of this policy. One such responsibility is to seek to obtain prior permission to bring a child or children into a working or learning environment. This is necessary to allow supervisors and lecturers to carry out their responsibilities under this policy.

3.1 The University is responsible for:

- providing an environment that is conducive to work and learning for all staff, students and visitors;
- providing a healthy and safe learning and working environment for all staff, students and visitors in line with legislative requirements; and,
- taking reasonable steps to assist students, staff and visitors who may have special needs to access facilities and services.

3.2 Executive Level Staff are responsible for:

Effectively communicating the Policy in the area under their management by ensuring that:

- the implementation of the Policy is fully explained in the induction of new staff and a copy is provided to each new staff member;
- the Policy is well publicised and implemented within all work areas under their management (eg notices are displayed in laboratories, workshops and clinics where children are not normally allowed, with particular attention drawn to any circumstances that are potentially especially dangerous); and,
- supervisory and other staff who report to them are aware of the policy, and are able to implement it fairly and reasonably.

3.3 Supervisors (including Heads and Assistant Heads of School) are responsible for:

- assessing potential risks related to requests made by staff to ensure that children are not allowed into any dangerous areas (other than in permitted circumstances [see: **Section 3.3** of the Policy] and under appropriate supervision);
- providing approval for children of staff to attend in specific situations, taking into account:
 - the particular circumstances that have led to the request;
 - the likely impact on students, staff and visitors; and,
 - the health and safety issues and risks;

- where applicable, ensuring that when programs involving the presence of children on campus are arranged by staff, there are adequate measures to protect the health and safety of the children;
- in certain circumstances (see: **Section 3.7** of the Policy) providing written approval for programs involving children prior to the commencement of the program;
- ensuring that the Policy is observed fairly and reasonably by the staff they supervise; and,
- providing guidance to the staff they supervise on implementing the Policy.

3.4 Teaching staff are responsible for:

- assessing potential risks related to requests made by students to ensure that children are not allowed into any dangerous areas (other than in permitted circumstances [see: **Section 3.3** of the Policy] and under appropriate supervision);
- providing approval for children of students to attend in specific situations, taking into account:
 - the particular circumstances that have led to the request;
 - the likely impact on other students; and,
 - the health and safety issues and risks;
- seeking approval from their nominated supervisor for any programs (see: **Section 3.7** of the Policy) that involve the presence of children on University Premises.

3.5 People wishing to bring children into the University learning environment or their personal work environment are responsible for:

- assessing any options available for alternative child care arrangements before approaching their lecturer or supervisor;
- obtaining approval for bringing a child or children into a University learning environment or their personal work environment. The expectation is that such approval will be obtained in advance. On the rare occasions when this is not possible, the person wishing to make the request should:
 - leave a message for the supervisor/lecturer;
 - advise another supervisor in the unit if one is available (should the supervisor be unavailable); or,
 - contact the supervisor/lecturer as soon as possible after arrival on campus.
- taking reasonable steps, while on campus, to safeguard the health and safety of the child or children in their care;
- considering the potential risk to the health and safety of others that may be associated with bringing children into the University learning or work environment, and taking reasonable steps to safeguard against risks including ensuring that the child or children are not suffering from a contagious illness;
- ensuring that any child or children in their care do not inconvenience or endanger staff, students or visitors in the course of their work or learning;
- ensuring that the child or children are adequately supervised by them at all times.

4. Considering requests to bring children onto University premises

In considering requests to bring children into the learning and working environment lecturers and supervisors should:

- avoid assumptions and consider each request on a case by case basis; and,
- be mindful of the need to be able to demonstrate the "reasonableness" of a decision.

All decisions relating to a request to be accompanied by a child or children need to take account of factors such as the availability of other options, the operating environment, the likelihood of disruption to others and, in the case of classroom activity, the nature of the subject matter being covered (ie safety/content).

If a student requests to be accompanied by a child or children and the lecturer is concerned that the content may be inappropriate or upsetting for children, the lecturer should advise the student of what will be covered. In such cases (providing that the venue has been assessed as posing no other risks to children), the student, as the guardian of the child or children, is responsible for making the decision on whether it is appropriate for the child or children to be present.

5. Withdrawing permission for a child or children to be present in a learning or working environment

Parents or others with children can be required to remove a child or children if in the considered judgement of the nominated supervisor, lecturer or person in charge of the area:

- the health or safety of the child or children is at risk;
- the child or children are presenting a health or safety risk to others; or,
- the work of staff or students is being disrupted or inconvenienced by the child or children.

In the case of children of staff, the person's nominated supervisor has the authority to require that a child or children be removed from the work and/or learning environment.

In the case of children of students, the lecturer involved, or in some cases the person in charge of the area has the authority to require that a child or children be removed from the work and/or learning environment.

In the library, any member of staff on duty has the authority to require that a child or children be removed from the area.

6. Policy review

The University may make changes to this policy and procedures from time to time. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this Policy may forward her/his suggestions to the Director, Human Resources.

7. Further assistance

Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this Policy should firstly consult her/his nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in her/his work area. Should further advice be needed, she/he should contact the Human Resources Consultant responsible for their campus.