

Tutor Code of Conduct

Version 2.0

Last updated: December 2024

Please note: The "Child safety" section of this policy includes a discussion of serious crimes committed against children.

Introduction

This policy sets out the expected and prohibited behaviour for tutors at VCE Summer Tutoring.

VCE Summer Tutoring has a responsibility to develop a program that is safe for all program participants. This Tutor Code of Conduct is an important part of discharging that responsibility. Other related policies are the Student Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

This policy covers:

- The standard of behaviour expected of tutors
- What is prohibited
- Confidential material you may receive
- How we deal with breaches

Tutors are reminded that, although the program physically takes place on locations attended by adults, almost all students are under the age of 18, and tutors therefore must take particular care when interacting with students even though they may be close in age.

Scope

This policy applies to all people involved in the delivery of VCE Summer Tutoring, including:

- volunteers,
- staff,
- contractors,
- committee members of VCE Summer Tutoring Inc.

In this document we use the word "tutor" to mean all those people. When we say "you", we mean an individual tutor.

This policy applies during the VCE Summer Tutoring program. This includes when you are on location during the program (even if you are doing something else), when you are in any

of our online spaces, or when you are off-location but recognisably associated with VCE Summer Tutoring (e.g. running an off-location activity or wearing your lanyard).

Some parts of the policy (for example, social media) continue to apply even after the program. These are highlighted specifically.

Expected behaviour

VCE Summer Tutoring expects a high standard of behaviour from tutors. We regard this as important modelling to students. As guiding principles, tutors should:

- act professionally, and
- act in ways that would be appropriate in a school environment.

We ask that all students act as someone who is “committed to learning”. Accordingly, we ask all tutors (even those not directly involved in delivery of the academic program) act as members of a tutor cohort “committed to teaching”.

The VCE Summer Tutoring program is delivered as a two-week integrated course. Because of this, although not every tutor is involved in every activity, when you are involved in an activity, we ask that you are enthusiastic about it and support and encourage students to complete it.

We ask that you:

- Respect, and show respect to, students and other tutors
- Attend all your classes (discussed below)
- Prepare for your lessons, and raise any content issues with your Subject Coordinator or the Teaching Support Officer team well in advance of your lessons
- Attend required training
- Raise issues you have with other tutors privately and with an appropriate person (the other tutor, their tutor team leader, or the Program Managers)
- Familiarise yourself with and follow our rules and policies, particularly this Code of Conduct and our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Respect the property and rules of any location at which the program is taking place
- Tell us if you receive an interim negative notice or negative notice relating to your Working With Children Check; or if your Victorian Institute of Teaching registration is suspended; or any other equivalent

Absence from the program

VCE Summer Tutoring relies on the volunteered efforts of many people to deliver our program. We honour this contribution and will do what we can to flexibly accommodate the other activities in your life.

Generally, we ask as part of acceptance of your volunteer offer that you commit to certain hours. Where possible we will allocate you to timetabling blocks that are most convenient for you. We indicate the required hours in our role descriptions.

We ask that you arrive and sign-in ten minutes before your first scheduled activity on each day, to check the room and assist the Operations Team. If you don't, the Operations Team will follow-up and begin following its tutor absence procedure.

- **Before the program, if you know you won't be available at certain times:** You should discuss this with the Program Managers before accepting your offer to ensure this can be accommodated, or your timetable can be arranged.
- **During the program, if something comes up:** Let us know as soon as possible. If you are giving more than 24 hours' notice, this can be by email to the Program Manager Team; if it is less than 24 hours you must call the Program Manager Team.
- **If you're running late:** Call the Operations Team as early as possible and give them a realistic estimate of what time you will arrive and be ready to teach.

Late arrivals, and absences with less than 24 hours' notice, are regarded as breaches of this policy. As unexpected events sometimes happen we will endeavour not to treat them as serious breaches unless they happen persistently. Nonetheless, absences hamper our ability to deliver a quality program and discharge our obligations under our Child Safety Policy.

Child safety

Child safety (also called safety of young people in a VCE Summer Tutoring context) is an area of significant focus for VCE Summer Tutoring.

We ask that you read our Child Safety Policy and ask questions about anything you're unsure of.

The safety of young people is a responsibility of all tutors and should be a paramount consideration in your decision-making. At VCE Summer Tutoring, we treat all students at the program as if they were under 18 years old and subject to our Child Safety Policy.

There are some key behavioural expectations we have regarding how you interact with students:

- **Be mindful of your position:** a big power difference exists between you and students. Even though you may only be a few years older than students, you have completed high school, and potentially are enrolled in, or have completed, an advanced degree, and you have many adult responsibilities. The tutor–student relationship is one in which you have the power, and therefore your behaviour must be exemplary
- **Model appropriate and positive conduct:** students will follow your lead
- **Be aware of your physical surroundings:**

- Pay attention to your students: although you'll see them for only two weeks, that's still enough time to get a sense of their rhythm, and if you think something is wrong, discuss it with the Welfare Team
- Treat students as fellow human beings: although they are (usually) under 18, they are approaching adulthood and their ideas, thoughts and opinions should be treated with respect. In particular, if a student approaches you with an issue or makes a disclosure to you, take them seriously (even if you suspect what they are telling you is non-credible) and assist them according to this Code of Conduct and our Child Safety Policy

Managing disclosures

A student may come to trust you and make a disclosure to you of a serious situation.

The disclosure may involve:

- a difficult home environment, including one affected by neglect or family violence
- a serious crime committed against, or witnessed by, the student
- abuse, including sexual abuse, of the student or of another person
- another situation capable of causing serious harm to the student

In most cases, you will not be adequately equipped to resolve the matter disclosed to you. Your focus should be on referring the matter to appropriate authorities. We will support you to do that.

You should:

- Listen carefully and non-judgmentally. Thank the student for sharing this information with you.
- Invite the student to speak with Welfare or the Program Managers, and support them while they do this if they ask you to.
- Inform the student that you will need to speak to the Welfare Team or Program Managers about this incident.

A disclosure may be made to you with a request for confidentiality, but it is important that tutors do not agree to this as there are some situations where it is not possible to keep confidence. Tutors should inform students that they must act to keep people safe and this may require speaking to others about a disclosure. In Victoria, adults are normally legally required to report to police¹ if they reasonably suspect a child under 16 is a victim of a sexual offence by an adult.

¹

<https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/safer-communities/protecting-children-and-families/failure-to-disclose-offence>

What you can't do

Social media

We regard "social media" expansively, and to include: "traditional" social media, ephemeral message sharing, chat apps, dating sites and multiplayer games.

In this section we use "friend" in the sense of a one- or two-way connection established between social media users; different platforms use different terminology including "match", "connection" or "follower".

Students are generally social-media literate and will have no difficulty looking you up online.

You are unlikely to want to shut down your online life during VCE Summer Tutoring. Nonetheless, we ask that:

During the program

- You hide your dating profiles
- Your publicly-accessible social media profiles are "school appropriate"²
- You unfriend or delete any VCE Summer Tutoring student

During and after the program (this list continues to apply after the program)

- You don't add any VCE Summer Tutoring student as a friend
- You don't accept any friend/connection requests from any VCE Summer Tutoring students
- You don't have any contact on social media (including private messaging on chat apps/SMS) with VCE Summer Tutoring students except in an incidental and public way (for example, if you both by coincidence comment on the same news article)
- If a student contacts you, briefly explain the policy and desist from contact. If they persist, you should block them and if necessary report the matter to VCE Summer Tutoring

You must inform the Program Managers if you become aware of a prior relationship with a student (including family). This transparency allows us to manage these relationships and operate in a child safe manner while you are both on program together.

We acknowledge that, once a former student has left school and also is over 18, they fall outside the reasonable ambit of VCE Summer Tutoring policy. Nonetheless we require tutors to be aware that a power differential may persist, and to be judicious in dealing with former students.

² Many social media platforms include a feature to view your profile as it appears to the public, which is helpful for complying with this rule

Social media is an evolving area, where social trends and community expectations can evolve rapidly. You should discuss anything you're not sure about with the Welfare Team or Program Managers.

In some cases you may want to make contact with a student for professional reasons, either because they solicited you for private tutoring, or because you promised to provide them with a VCE resource. In this case, the student must initiate this contact, and you must contact the Program Managers in writing to inform them of the nature of this contact and any ongoing relationship therefor. The Program Managers will then facilitate contact between the tutor, the student and the student's parent or guardian.

You can't contact your students to make an offer to them of private tutoring.

Photos

Don't make photos or videos of other program participants (students and tutors) without obtaining their permission. Be mindful of who's in the background of photos you take.

Don't take pictures of students unless it is for a program activity and purpose, such as part of a Group Activity or to share it with the Communications Team.

Fraternisation

VCE Summer Tutoring has a responsibility to deliver a program that is inclusive and safe for all participants. We acknowledge that we operate in an environment where almost all our students are minors, and have a range of ages, comfort levels, cultural backgrounds and reasons for attending the program.

For this reason we prohibit "fraternisation" (defined below) between students, between students and tutors, and between tutors.

We regard as "fraternisation" any of:

- physical affection or unnecessary physical contact (whether or not desired), including:
 - hugging,
 - kissing,
 - holding hands,
 - picking someone up,
 - sex;
- progression of an intimate relationship;
- lewd behaviour including flirting.

All tutors on the program are responsible for implementing this rule.

As a result of this rule:

- Even if you are in an existing relationship with someone else on the program (or someone else who regularly attends a program location), you cannot fraternise with them during the program.
- Although fraternisation is prohibited in general, tutor–student fraternisation is particularly serious. It is a grave violation of our Child Safety Policy and may be a crime, aggravated by your position of power.
- If a student attempts to fraternise with you, you must:
 - disengage immediately
 - remind them of the rules
 - report the matter to the Program Managers or Welfare Team as soon as possible.
- You should endeavour to act in ways that are beyond reproach, including avoiding actions that could be misinterpreted (even though they have an innocent intention) and jokes that are not appropriate for children.

Discrimination, including racism, sexism & homophobia

We expect all program participants to respect each other. Our students and tutors come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but everyone on the program is part of a community committed to education. We don't allow any form of discrimination or bigotry, including:

- racism,
- sexism,
- homophobia or biphobia,
- transphobia,
- discrimination based on intersex status or gender identity,
- ableism (discrimination based on a perceived disability),
- discrimination based on religion,
- discrimination based on financial, cultural, political or social background,
- discrimination based on school,
- discriminating against someone based on who they're friends with.

This list is not exhaustive.

As well as avoiding these behaviours, we expect tutors to actively intervene to address discrimination, bigotry or harassment. Often this is as simple as telling someone a joke is not appropriate, or having a short, private discussion about how their words were hurtful. Sometimes more complicated intervention is warranted, and the Welfare Team can help you in planning this.

Appropriate language and content

Tutors must refrain from making jokes or comments that aren't appropriate for children in a school-like setting. This includes discussing or referencing:

- sex or or sexual innuendo,
- jokes that play on stereotypes,
- discussion of smoking, drug or alcohol use,
- referencing your own intimate relationships in the presence of students.

Discussion of these topics should also be avoided, but may be appropriate in the following contexts:

- In a lesson where the topic is included in the VCE study design
- In a workshop where directly related to the topic of that workshop, and permission has been sought from the Program Managers in advance
- Where such a discussion is necessary for the safety of a student

Do not discuss these topics with other tutors while you are on program, as you are in an environment where students might be able to hear you.

Harassment and bullying

We don't tolerate harassment and bullying on the program, no matter to whom it's directed. Both of these things are very rare on our program.

We expect all tutors to enforce this policy, by intervening in smaller incidents and working with the Welfare Team to address larger ones.

While the definition of bullying relates primarily to ongoing courses of conduct, we expect tutors to intervene in case of isolated incidents as well.

Drugs and alcohol

VCE Summer Tutoring is a drug and alcohol free environment. This means that alcohol, smoking, or consumption of illicit drugs is not permitted at any time during the program.

The venues at which VCE Summer Tutoring delivers the program are often smoke free. If you smoke or vape, it should be done off-location while removing anything that identifies you as a program participant (e.g. lanyards, clothing, merchandise, etc.)

If you wish to consume alcohol off-location outside of program, you must remove anything that identifies you as a program participant .

Confidentiality

Some information must be kept confidential. This includes personal information about students and tutors, medical information about students and tutors and information in our incident reports.

VCE Summer Tutoring adopts a “need to know” principle, where confidential information is provided only to people who need it. Some examples include:

- A student’s tutors may need to know about an accommodation they need because of a disability
- The Operations Team needs to have access to tutor and student disability accommodations to pass that information on in the case of class swaps
- The Welfare Team may need to know the details of an incident or disclosure a student has made to coordinate a response plan
- The Operations Team needs to know tutor contact details to follow up about logistical changes

If you have access to confidential information, you’re responsible for keeping it safe and using it only for the purpose for which it was given. This means:

- If stored electronically, making sure it’s protected by a strong password
- Avoid writing it down or printing it unless operationally necessary, and if so, keeping track of all printed copies so they can be archived or destroyed
- Destroying paper documents by shredding rather than in a bin
- Where possible, keeping confidential information on our secure systems (such as the TMS)
- Not sharing your username or password to our systems (Tutor Portal and TMS) and making the Program Managers aware if you think someone else may have access
- When making notes about an incident, ensuring they are dated, signed and promptly given to the Program Managers

If you are not sure if a piece of VCE Summer Tutoring information is confidential, treat it as if it is.

How we enforce our Codes of Conduct

Enforcing this Code of Conduct, and the Student Code of Conduct, is the responsibility of all tutors. However, the Program Managers have overarching authority and responsibility for managing Code of Conduct violations and making decisions on disciplinary matters.

Enforcing the Student Code of Conduct

Please familiarise yourself with the Student Code of Conduct, which sets out what students can and mustn’t do.

As a tutor other than a Program Manager, you may:

- Informally discuss or warn a student about a violation
- Give a student corrective feedback (remind them of a rule) where a breach is clear

- If a student is persistently disruptive and your class or activity cannot continue in their presence, you may request assistance from the Operations Team, the Welfare Team or the Program Managers

Other disciplinary actions described in the Student Code of Conduct are managed by the Program Managers, who may delegate some disciplinary authority to the Welfare Team.

If you see a breach of the Tutor Code of Conduct

If you witness a minor breach of the Tutor Code of Conduct, you are empowered to remind that tutor of the rules. If you see a more serious breach of the Tutor Code of Conduct, you should report it promptly to the Program Managers or a relevant Team Coordinator. If you are unsure whether a breach is serious, please treat it as serious.

If a breach might engage our safeguarding responsibilities—for example, a student has or may come to harm, or a tutor violates the no-fraternisation policy in respect of a student—**that matter must be reported to the Program Managers without delay.** This may mean you need to pause an activity to step outside and call the VCE Summer Tutoring Duty Phone.

If you breach the Tutor Code of Conduct

The Tutor Code of Conduct is a plank undergirding our safe and inclusive program. Therefore, in the case of breaches, our primary duty is **protective**—we must prevent other participants from coming to harm and endeavour to redress any harm that has occurred.

The disciplinary actions available are:

- An informal discussion or warning
- Giving you corrective feedback
- A formal discussion with a Program Manager
- A written warning
- Supervision at a specific activity
- Exclude you from a specific activity
- Exclude you from the program

We may skip these steps or approach them in a different order, depending on the situation and its seriousness.

Records of disciplinary actions are retained and are considered in recruitment for future programs.

If you breach the policy of any location at which the program is being delivered, we may be obliged to report that to the manager of any relevant locations.

If a crime may have been committed, we have a responsibility to report that to Victoria Police.

Feedback

Developing our codes of conduct is an ongoing process, and we adjust them every year in response to feedback, the previous year's program, and changes in community expectations.

Feedback on the Tutor Code of Conduct should be addressed to the Program Managers at program@vcesummertutoring.au.

Policy information

Last updated	December 2024
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Next review date	July 2025

Version history

Version	Date	Description
1	Dec 2023	Initial version
2	Dec 2024	Second version