

The logo for Varsity College features the word "VARSITY" in a bold, white, serif font, positioned above the word "College" which is written in a white, cursive script font. The background is a dark blue gradient with a large, light yellow triangular shape in the upper right corner.

VARSITY
College

ASPIRE Academic Excellence

ASPIRE Academic Excellence program

“Collaboration, Innovation, Achievement and Excellence”

Rationale

The ASPIRE Academic Excellence program at Varsity College is designed to achieve high-quality student outcomes by fostering engagement and immersion in the curriculum, cultivating a lifelong love of learning. It provides exceptional, like-minded students with shared passions the opportunity to collaborate in core academic areas, including English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Mathematics, and Science. Establishing a strong foundation in these subjects during the junior phase of learning is essential for academic excellence and success in senior school.

The ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is designed to provide students with opportunities to broaden and enhance their learning experiences through curriculum enrichment activities, excursions, nationally recognized competitions, and partnerships with universities and industry professionals. The program emphasizes academic excellence, leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, and the development of values that extend beyond the classroom. Through innovation and collaboration, ASPIRE aims to equip students with the skills and pathways needed to excel in their academic journey and future endeavours.

The ASPIRE program fosters a strong tradition of academic distinction, both in and beyond the classroom. Students in the program set high personal standards, continually striving for excellence while upholding the core values of perseverance, integrity, and ambition. Through a supportive and collaborative culture, they develop essential life skills such as teamwork, respect, responsibility, and discipline—qualities that benefit them in academic, professional, and personal pursuits. This culture of excellence shapes students into confident, capable learners while fostering a sense of pride and belonging within the ASPIRE community.

Goals and Purpose

The ASPIRE Academic Excellence program offers students a unique and innovative curriculum that focuses on enriching and enhancing student learning through application, problem solving, critical thinking, and real-world experiences. The program helps students to develop a personal commitment to their education. This teaching and learning environment captivates students in deliberate, multi-sensory learning experiences to ensure deep and rich engagement, not only with their learning, but with their peers and teacher.

What will the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program offer my child?

- Opportunities to work in a collaborative culture with other high achieving students who have a similar passion for learning.
- Deeper and richer access to the Australian Curriculum with emphasis on developing higher order thinking skills.
- Inspiring activities which engage students and broaden their thinking.
- Access to national and regional competitions which can provide further opportunities with external bodies and are recognised by employers and universities.

Varsity College has unique, modern, fully equipped facilities to accommodate all programs and students. The staff are experienced, enthusiastic and dedicated to the development of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program and the successful outcomes of the individual students.

Key Personnel

ASPIRE Academic Excellence Coordinator

Jasmine Foster-Tuddenham – jfost163@eq.edu.au

Jasmine is responsible for leading, coordinating events, activities, excursions, and the administration of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program. She is an experienced and dedicated teacher who has taught both Junior and Senior Secondary Science. Jasmine has been involved in excellence programs for a number of years and loves developing learning experiences that both engage and challenge students, deepening their understanding of the curriculum and equipping students with leadership skills for the 21st Century.

Head of Department – English

Olivia Gollan – ogoll3@eq.edu.au

Olivia is an experienced Senior English Teacher and Head of Department for the English faculty at Varsity College. She has a background in journalism and is passionate about the importance of English as a subject for all students. She believes the key skills core to the English curriculum- analysis, media literacy and critical thinking – are skills that all students must be equipped with to succeed not only at school, but beyond the school gates.

Head of Department – Humanities and Social Science

Sarah Aicken – sfox79@eq.edu.au

Sarah is an experienced Senior Modern History Teacher and Head of Department for the Humanities and Social Science faculty at Varsity College. Passionate about all areas of the Humanities, she is dedicated to inspiring students to think critically about the world around them. Sarah fosters a culture of inquiry, encouraging students to engage deeply with historical and social concepts. With expert knowledge in critical inquiry, analytical writing, and research skills, she equips students with the tools to develop informed perspectives and become thoughtful, engaged citizens.

Head of Department – Mathematics

Alison Lees – axlee6@eq.edu.au

Alison is an experienced practitioner and advocate for academic programs that develop both depth of understanding and critical thinking skills in Mathematics. With extensive knowledge of Senior Mathematics subjects and a globally spanning teaching history, Alison plays a key role in shaping the mathematics component of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program. She is dedicated to fostering a love of Mathematics in students, inspiring them to think logically, approach challenges with confidence, and become lifelong learners in this critical subject area.

Head of Department – Science

Deb Kerwick – dphil107@eq.edu.au

Deb is fascinated by and passionate about all aspects Science and STEM, with a background in Biomedical science and technical work in an Anatomical Science Facility combined with local and international science teaching experience. Deb is committed to fostering curiosity and providing enriching experiences that support an inquiry-based approach to learning. She ensures that students engage deeply with scientific concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and cultivate a passion for discovery that will prepare them for future academic and career pathways.

Head of Department – Junior Secondary Phase of Learning

Lori Hayes – lhay60@eq.edu.au

Lori's teaching background is in Junior and Senior Design & Technologies. She is passionate about creating engaging and supportive learning environments that inspire curiosity and a love for learning. She believes in developing 21st-century skills to empower students to become problem solvers, deep thinkers, effective communicators, and strong collaborators, equipping them to navigate and thrive in the world around them.

Program Overview

The ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is a focus on the core areas of the Australian Curriculum studying English, Humanities and Social Science, Mathematics and Science.

English

The English component of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program offers a deeper exploration of language and literature, integrating comprehensive and authentic extra-curricular opportunities. In Year 7, students engage with a diverse range of topics, from uncovering the lives of unsung heroes to examining poetry and visual texts as forms of protest. They develop their skills in narrative writing, persuasive techniques, debating, and analysis of protest poetry while also undertaking a novel study.

To enrich their learning, students participate in workshops with published authors, attend literature festivals, and engage in public speaking workshops, helping them refine their communication skills and develop a passion for storytelling, analysis, and creative expression. Additionally, students have the opportunity to experience live theatre, deepening their appreciation for dramatic texts and performance.

Humanities and Social Science

The Humanities and Social Science component immerses students in three key disciplines: History, Geography and Economics & Business. In History, students dive into the history of Australia, as well as an investigation into the ancient civilisations of either Rome, Greece or Egypt. This is culminated in a celebration of learning at the Night at the Museum event. In Geography, students analyse the factors of liveability on a local, national and global scale. Whilst in Economics and Business, students explore the world of business environments and factors of production.

Students extend their learning beyond the classroom through participation in the Australian History and Geography Competitions, allowing them to apply their knowledge in a national context. Additionally, excursions to museums provide hands-on experiences that deepen their understanding of historical and geographical concepts, fostering a connection between classroom learning and the real world.

Mathematics

Mathematics in the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program challenges students to extend their knowledge beyond the standard curriculum, fostering deep conceptual understanding and advanced problem-solving skills. A high-expectations classroom environment, combined with an accelerated learning pace, allows students to explore mathematical concepts in greater depth. They engage in rich problem-solving tasks, develop logical reasoning, and apply their knowledge to real-world contexts.

To further enrich their experience, students have opportunities to participate in national and international mathematics competitions, including the Computational Algorithmic Thinking (CAT) Competition and the Australian Mathematics Competition (AMC). These challenges allow students to test their skills in logic, pattern recognition, and mathematical reasoning on a broader scale, reinforcing their problem-solving capabilities and analytical thinking.

Science

Through inquiry, experimentation, and hands-on learning, the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program in science nurtures curiosity and scientific thinking. Students engage in rigorous exploration of key scientific concepts, developing their ability to hypothesise, analyse data, and draw meaningful conclusions. Collaboration and innovation are central to the learning experience, encouraging students to communicate their findings effectively and apply their knowledge in real-world contexts.

Students further extend their learning through participation in national and international science competitions, such as The Big Science Competition and the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) Science Competition. Additionally, students engage in Griffith University's Science Trivia Challenge and STEM-focused events, including the Science and Engineering Challenge, where they apply their knowledge in dynamic and interactive problem-solving activities. These opportunities expose students to real-world scientific applications and foster a deep appreciation for the role of science in society.

Aspire Academic Excellence Application Process

Application Process

The Varsity College ASPIRE program applicants are required to:

- Complete the online ASPIRE program Application which can be found on the Varsity College website.
- Upload all required documentation as required and submit by the closing date. Please note that incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- All applications must be received no later than the close date advertised on our platforms.
- You will receive further correspondence about testing dates and times once your application has been received and processed.

Applicants should be aware that the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program requires a financial commitment. Program fees cover enrichment activities, excursions, competition entry fees, and access to specialised learning opportunities. These fees are outlined during the application process and are non-refundable.

Student Selection Criteria

Successful applicants for the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program must demonstrate strong academic performance, a commitment to learning, and exemplary behaviour. Supporting documentation is required to verify the following criteria:

- Applicants must achieve an A or B grade across the four core areas of English, Mathematics, Science, and Humanities and Social Science, with a minimum of at least one A in these areas.
- Students should attain high-band results in the Reading, Writing, Numeracy, and Grammar & Punctuation components of their NAPLAN assessments.
- Applicants must maintain excellent behaviour and effort in all aspects of their schooling.
- Students are required to achieve outstanding results in the ASPIRE Academic Exam (see details below).

Aspire Academic Excellence Exam

The exam will be sat in two parts, each 45 minutes in length. Part A comprises an English and Humanities component and Part B comprises a Mathematics and Science component. No specific study is required for this exam, it will assess expected skills for the relevant age group.

Year 6 into Year 7

Year 6 applicants will apply through the enrolments process led by our enrolments team. All applicants will then sit the ASPIRE Academic Excellence entrance exam. The exam is for all applicants and is comprised of a literacy component and a numeracy component, lasting two hours in total. No specific study is required for this exam, it will assess expected skills for the relevant age group.

Year 8 and Year 9

Throughout the year, students in the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program will be monitored to ensure they are meeting the expectations of the program. At the conclusion of year 7 and 8, selected students are required to reapply for the program in the following year. The top students from core classes will also be invited to apply for the program for the following year, if spaces become available.

Upon completion of the selection process, the Heads of Department for English, Humanities and Social Science, Mathematics, and Science, along with the ASPIRE Academic Coordinator, will determine the suitability of each applicant. Entry into the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is highly competitive, with limited placements available. Selection is based on

demonstrated academic ability, performance in the entrance exam, and overall suitability for the program. Successful applicants will be notified by the school, and the school's decision will be final.

Expectations and Program Requirements

The ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is committed to providing and maintaining a high performing and supportive learning environment for all its students. Being a part of the program is a privilege, and students involved in the program must value and respect their placement. To this end, ASPIRE Academic Excellence students will endeavour to perform at the highest level across the following performance areas:

Academic (classroom and extra-curricular)

- Maintain high academic standards. This is considered at least one 'A' and a minimum of a 'B' grade across all ASPIRE Academic Excellence subjects.
- Maintain no lower than a 'C' grade in all other subjects.
- Submit all completed assessment by the due date.

Behaviour and Effort

- Maintain excellent behaviour and effort across all subject areas.
- Respect teachers and fellow students at all times.
- Be punctual and prepared for all lessons.
- Display high levels of appropriate behaviour at all times but with all Varsity College staff (teaching and corporate services), contract and supply teachers.

Culture

- Students understand their responsibility as an ambassador of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program to be seen as a positive role model to others within the local community.
- Maintain a high level of school attendance.
- Active participation in competitions, events, activities and excursions related to the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program.
- Adhere to the Varsity College Appearance Policy at all times.
- Be accepting and tolerant of all students.
- Show modesty and humility when interacting with peers.

Maintenance of Position in Program

ASPIRE programs operate a formal review process at the end of each term for students who consistently are not meeting ASPIRE Academic Excellent performance areas as outlined in the Expectations and Program Requirements. Grounds for review may include:

- Consistent lateness.
- Truancy, repeated detentions, after school detentions or suspension.
- Failure to submit assessment (monitoring and due dates).
- Failure to meet academic, behaviour and effort standards.
- Failure to meet the financial commitment of the program.

The ASPIRE Review Process for students consistently not meeting expectations is completed at the end of the term. The following procedures are then implemented:

- The students and their parents are contacted by the Deputy Head of School where expectations of the program will be discussed. Specific targets will be identified and it is the student's responsibility to meet these.

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- The student will be placed on probation for the following term. If students fail to meet their targets throughout this period, their enrolment in the program will be cancelled, and they will be placed in a mainstream class.

Upon accepting a place in the ASPIRE Academic Excellence Program, students commit to meeting the program's expectations, while parents demonstrate their support for this commitment by signing and returning the Student/Parent Agreement (Appendix 1).

Appendix 1: Student/Parent Agreement

Student Agreement

I understand that the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is designed to support and challenge highly motivated students who demonstrate a commitment to academic excellence, personal growth, and active participation in a rigorous learning environment. By being part of this program, I acknowledge the high expectations placed upon me and commit to upholding the values of dedication, perseverance, and integrity. I am aware that by accepting a place, I will agree to adhere to the Expectations and Program Requirements and uphold the values and expectations therein.

As a student in the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program, I agree to the following:

1. In all areas of college life, I understand that I bear responsibility as an ambassador of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program to be seen as a positive role model to others within the local community.
2. I will endeavour to perform at the highest level across the ASPIRE Academic Excellence areas.
3. I will demonstrate grit and determination as I strive towards my goals with the support of my parents.
4. If I do not meet the program's academic, behavioural, or commitment expectations, I understand that I may be placed on probation. If I fail to meet the necessary improvements during this period, my position in the program may be revoked, and my program fees forfeited.

I would like to accept my position to be a part of the Varsity College ASPIRE Academic Excellence program.

Parent Agreement

I understand that the purpose of the ASPIRE Academic Excellence program is to provide my child with a learning environment that supports and facilitates quality learning outcomes in their program of study. I also understand an aim of the program is to ensure that I, as a parent, am supportive of both my child in the program and of Varsity College.

I will, as much as possible, assist my child in maintaining a high level of commitment in order to successfully achieve quality learning outcomes in their program of study.

I will commit to the following:

- Assist my child in maintaining an exemplary level of attendance in order to maintain learning standards.
- Actively encourage my child to maintain excellent standards in all subject areas.
- Provide support to my child and the college in adhering to Varsity College policies and procedures.
- Monitor the completion of set homework and assessment.
- Maintain open lines of communication with the college to ensure success for my child.
- Meet all financial commitments as outlined during the application process (please note all ASPIRE fees are non-refundable).

Signed: _____ (Student) _____ (Parent)

Date: _____