



ASPIRE ACADEMIC

ENGLISH, SOCIAL SCIENCE ACADEMY HANDBOOK

## History and Rationale

2016 was the foundation year for the ASPIRE English and Social Science Academy (ESSA) Program. The ESSA Excellence Program aims not only to produce high quality student outcomes, but to use engagement and immersion in the curriculum to assist in developing a life-long love of learning. The program will initiate a strong tradition of academic excellence both in and out of the classroom.

Each of the students within the ESSA program will endeavour to raise their own expectations and adhere to our program's core values on a daily basis. Students involved in ESSA can expect to be part of a team culture that instils many characteristics that are vitally important to life in the outside world, such as teamwork, respect, responsibility and discipline.

## Goals and Purpose

The ASPIRE English Social Sciences Academy (ESSA) 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.

The English and Social Science curriculums allow students to hone their investigative research skills, immerse themselves in extended creative writing, learn the power of persuasion, and master the vital skills of public speaking. The ESSA course also encourages students to use their imaginations and to set achievable goals for growth, both in the academic and personal wellbeing spheres. Varsity College encourages students to believe that effort leads to success – ESSA aims to reinforce this fundamental value which leads to a life-long love of learning.

## Key Personnel

### ESSA Co-ordinator

Kathi Armstrong – karms60@eq.edu.au

- Experienced Senior Teacher
- Bachelor of Education from Griffith University
- Master of Special Needs and Intervention Education from Griffith University

## Program Overview

The ASPIRE ESSA Program offers a deeper program of the study of English language and literature for students that integrates comprehensive, authentic extra-curricular opportunities.

Extra-curricular opportunities that are exclusive to ASPIRE ESSA students include workshops with published authors, participation in the Australian History and Geography Competitions, visits to Bond University (as part of our Curriculum Connect Program) as well as off-campus excursions to literature festivals, public speaking workshops, museum and live theatre experiences.

In Year 7 ESSA English, topics are as diverse as unfolding the lives of unsung heroes, to the examination of poetry and visual texts as a means of protest. In Social Science, students investigate ancient civilisations, explore the Murray Darling Basin and analyse the factors of liveability.

### English Units:

**Unit One:** Narrative short story

**Unit Two:** Debate

**Unit Three:** Analysis of protest poetry and visual texts

**Unit Four:** Novel study

### Humanities and Social Science Units:

History

**Term One:** Ancient Egypt

**Term Two:** Ancient Civilisations (class choice of Rome, Greece, India or China)

Geography

**Term Three:** Water in the World: The Murray Darling Basin

**Term Four:** Place and Liveability

## Partnerships and Industry Links

The ESSA ASPIRE program has built strong partnerships with a variety of academic providers and professional literary experts. We work closely with local tertiary education institutes, including Bond University's 'Curriculum Connect' program. Additionally, students gain rich literary knowledge through direct, face-to-face contact and learning experiences with a variety of published authors both on campus and during off-campus excursions.



## Student Selection Criteria

Successful applicants for the ASPIRE ESSA Program will need to demonstrate (and provide supporting documentation for):

- Complete and submit ASPIRE ESSA Application Form.
- A or B across 4 core areas (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science).
- High band results in Reading, Writing and Grammar and Punctuation NAPLAN assessments.
- Above average level of behaviour and effort.
- Outstanding results in the ASPIRE Academic Exam (see below).

## Academic Exam

The Academic Exam is for ALL ASPIRE Academic applicants (AMS, Chinese and ESSA). The exam will be sat in two parts, each an hour in length. Part A comprises a literacy component and Part B comprises a numeracy component. No specific study is required for this exam, it will assess expected skills for the relevant age group.

***Upon completion of the selection process, staff and specialist teachers will decide on the suitability of each applicant. Successful applicants will be notified by the school and the school's decision will be final.***

# Expectations and Commitment to Program Requirements

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

## Academic (classroom and extra-curricular)

- Maintain high academic standards. This is considered a 'B' grade across all relevant ASPIRE subjects.
- Maintain no lower than a 'C' grade in all other subjects.
- Submit all assessment, completed and by the due date.

## Behaviour and Effort

- Maintain a very high standard of 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, not only during ASPIRE lessons, but with all Varsity College staff (teaching and corporate services), contract and supply teachers.

## Culture

- Students understand they bear responsibility as an ambassador of the ASPIRE Programs to be seen as a positive role model to others within the local community.
- Maintain a high level of school attendance in order to maintain learning standards.
- Active participation in competitions, events, activities and excursions related to the ASPIRE programs.
- Maintain high uniform standards in line with the Varsity College Appearance Policy.
- Be accepting and tolerant of all students.
- Show modesty and humility when interacting with students.

## 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 Global ASPIRE Performance Areas as outlined in the Expectations and Commitment to Program Requirements. Grounds for review may include:

- Consistent lateness.
- Truancy, repeated detentions, after school detentions, suspension.
- Failure to submit assessment on a regular basis (monitoring and due dates).
- Failure to meet academic, behaviour and effort standards as outlined in the Expectations and Commitment to Program Requirements.
- Failure to meet the financial commitment of ASPIRE 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 either the ASPIRE Coordinator or the Head of Department where expectations of the program will be discussed. Specific targets will be identified and it is the student's responsibility to meet these.
- 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 for the remainder of the year.

## 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 **18<sup>th</sup> March 2024**
- You will receive further correspondence about testing dates and times once your application has been received and processed.

Upon completion of the application process, staff and specialist teachers will decide on the suitability of each applicant. Successful applicants will be notified by the school and the **school's decision will be final.**

# APPENDIX 1: Student Parent Agreement

## Student Agreement

I understand the purpose of the ASPIRE Program is to select and retain the most highly motivated and knowledgeable students who will maintain the level of commitment, dedication and interest necessary to successfully achieve quality learning outcomes in their program of study.

The ASPIRE Program will create and maintain a learning environment of like-minded students that will support me in achieving my personal and academic goals in my program of study.

1. In all areas of college life, I understand that I bear responsibility as an ambassador of the ASPIRE 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 Global ASPIRE Performance 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 adhere to the standards of the ASPIRE Program I understand that I may be removed from the program and forfeit my entrance fees.

I would like to accept my position to be a part of the Varsity College ASPIRE Program in 2025. I am aware that by accepting a place, I will agree to adhere to the ASPIRE Expectations and Commitment to Program Requirements and uphold the values and expectations therein.

## Parent Agreement

I understand that the purpose of the ASPIRE 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 ASPIRE 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 a high level of attendance in order to maintain learning standards.
- Actively encourage my child to maintain high 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 homework set.
- Where possible and convenient attend Parent Teacher Interview Evenings.
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student)