

The ACT Education Act 2004 legislates that all children, living in the ACT of compulsory school age (6 to 17), are enrolled and attending school fulltime or registered for Home Education, except in exceptional circumstances when an approved Exemption Certificate is in place.

The ACT Education Act 2004 applies to all children and young people living in the ACT and all schools in the ACT – Public, Catholic and Independent.

An Exemption Certificate is required when a child or young person is not attending school full-time or registered for Home Education for a period of 5 or more weeks (25 school days – whole or part days).

Schools are required to discuss with the parent/carer the need for an Exemption Certificate as soon as it is apparent the young person will be absent from school for an extended period of time (whole or part days).

An application should be completed as soon as it is apparent the child will have an extended or regular non-attendance. Applications received after 22 November 2024 will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Children turning six are required to be enrolled and attending school within 10 school term days of their sixth birthday. Exemption Certificate applications for children turning six will be considered in the month prior to the child's sixth birthday.

An Exemption may be approved when a child or young person:

- is unable to participate in learning due to their health and/or wellbeing.
- has not completed year 10 and is undertaking an apprenticeship, traineeship, alternative training/education (eg: CIT/TAFE/RTO) or employment.

Supporting Evidence is required for all Exemption applications:

- current letter from involved professional independent to the school (psychologist, paediatrician, psychiatrist, other medical specialist or general practitioner) confirming it is in the child's best interest for their health/wellbeing that they have an approved partial or fulltime exemption **OR**
- copy of signed Training Contract; confirmation of Enrolment with CIT/TAFE or other RTO; confirmation of participation with a Transition to Work program; written confirmation of employment including start date, weekly hours, conditions (eg period of probation).

Exemptions are not required or approved for: travel, family holidays, overseas postings, student exchanges, sporting /arts participation, school work experience or ASbA.

Students who have completed year 10, are not yet 17 and are seeking full-time work / apprenticeship / traineeship are required to complete an Approval Statement. For further information contact Approval Statements email EDUApprovalStatements@act.gov.au or call (02) 6205 3253.

Parents of students enrolled in an ACT school and resident of NSW are required to apply to NSW Department of Education for an Exemption. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2005-0259/exemption-from-school---procedures--pdf-1307-5-kb-> and forward to attendance@det.nsw.edu.au

For further information and to obtain an Exemption Certificate Application Form please contact:
ExemptionCertificates@act.gov.au or 6205 3695

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A student attends therapy appointments one day a week/fortnight. Is an Exemption required?

Yes. Students are required to attend school fulltime.

The family is travelling around Australia for 6 months. Is an Exemption required?

No. Parents are required to provide in writing to principal details of family plans, with principal agreement student would be considered to be on leave.

The student is attending on campus part time and then completing all further required schoolwork from home. Do parents need to apply for an Exemption?

No. If the young person is completing all tasks required by the school an Exemption is not required. If student is not fulfilling the agreed requirements an application for a partial exemption would be required.

How do I mark the role when a student has an approved Exemption?

When an Exemption is approved parents and school receive the Exemption Certificate that outlines the dates and any conditions. Once the Exemption Certificate has been received the school can amend attendance record to reflect the approved Exemption period.

Can an application be submitted in term 4 for the whole school year due to a child's ill health?

No. Schools are required to advise parents of the requirement for an Exemption Certificate as soon as it is apparent the student will have an extended period of absence or an ongoing regular day/part day of non-attendance. Exemptions are not backdated or approved retrospectively.

Can the school psychologist provide the required letter of support?

No. Letters of support are required from professionals (psychologist, psychiatrist, paediatrician, other medical specialist or general practitioner) who are independent of the school.

A parent has requested a second year of preschool for their child who will turn 6 part way through the second year. What advise do I provide the parent?

It is at the principal's discretion if a second year of preschool is offered, the decision being based on what is in the best interest of the child. When a second year is supported, parents are required to apply for an Exemption Certificate in the month prior to their child's 6th birthday.

A young person aged 14 is seeking an Exemption for part time employment. Can this be supported?

It is an offense to employ a child or young person of compulsory education age during school hours, without an approved Exemption Certificate (or Approval Statement if young person has completed year 10 and is not yet 17). There are laws about the employment of children and young people in the ACT. In the first instance parents and employer are required to contact the Community Services Directorate Young Workers Team at youngworkers@act.gov.au or (02) 6205 0480. https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/youth/young_workers

Can an application be declined?

Yes. An application will not be approved if there is insufficient supporting evidence from an involved external professional/employer. When an incomplete application is received the Exemption team will talk with the parents to identify if the required evidence can be provided.

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