



**Catholic Secondary Schools Religious Studies Courses -  
Requests for Exemption**

**# 200.43**

**Adopted:** June 14, 2012  
**Last Reviewed/Revised:** November 2024  
**Responsibility:** Superintendent of Education  
**Next Scheduled Review:** 2028-2029

---

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to provide direction to Secondary Administrators, Superintendents, and the Director of Education in relation to requests by parents/families and students to be exempted from taking Religious Studies Courses at one of our Catholic secondary schools.

**APPLICATION AND SCOPE:**

All students registered in Catholic Secondary Schools are required to take at least one Religious Studies Course in each year unless they have completed Grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 Religious Studies Courses (e.g., for fifth year students).

Students enrolled in Catholic Secondary Schools are expected to participate fully in the faith-life of the school (including daily prayer, Masses, and Campus Ministry activities).

All teachers in a Catholic Secondary School shall incorporate the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations into every course that is being taught.

Subsection 42(11-13) of the Education Act provides for an exemption for a “program or course of study in religious education” for a “person who is qualified to be a resident pupil in respect of a secondary school operated by a public board who attends a secondary school operated by a Roman Catholic board”. This exemption only applies to “open access” students who meet the qualifications in the above provision. Thus, if a student is a Catholic student who attended Catholic elementary school, they would not meet the requirement warranting an exemption.

**REFERENCES:**

- [Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations](#)
- [The Education Act and Regulations](#)

**FORMS:**

- Appendix A – Religious Studies Exemption Meeting Guide for Vice-Principals
- Appendix B – Religious Studies Exemption Meeting Guide for Principals
- Appendix C – Religious Studies Exemption Meeting Guide for Superintendents
- Appendix D – Religious Studies Exemption Meeting Guide for Director
- Appendix E – Sample Letter for Religious Studies Exemption for Principals – Does Not Qualify for Exemption
- Appendix F – Sample Letter for Religious Studies Exemption for Principals – Does Qualify for Exemption Refer

**DEFINITIONS: N/A**

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:**

It is the responsibility of Principals and Vice-Principals to be the first line of communication with parents/families and students regarding requests for exemptions by parents/families or students from taking Religious Studies courses.



Superintendents and the Director of Education play key roles in working with families through the consultation phases of the process for requesting exemptions.

As a means of helping to clarify the school and the Board's position regarding the program offered at our Catholic Secondary Schools, it is necessary to engage in an application process that ensures the applicant is fully aware of the impact that an exemption from Religious Studies may have, as well as the mission and purpose of Catholic schools.

No request for exemptions to Religious Studies Courses shall be processed until all phases of the application process have been completed.

### **1.0 Registration**

To be considered for an exemption, the student must first be registered at a Catholic Secondary School in the appropriate boundary area.

### **2.0 Application**

For an application to be made, a written request must be received by the secondary school Principal prior to the beginning of a semester from which the exemption is being requested from the parent/guardian or adult student (the applicant). The written request must include the reason(s) for the request to help facilitate further discussions regarding the impact that the exemption may have on the student.

### **3.0 Information Meetings**

Once the application has been received by the school Principal, the Principal shall set up a meeting between the applicant and the appropriate Vice-Principal. The Vice-Principal shall use the appropriate meeting checklist as a guide for the discussion (Appendix A).

After the meeting with the Vice-Principal has been completed and only if the applicant wishes to pursue the application, the Vice-Principal shall set up a meeting between the applicant and the principal of the school. The principal shall use the appropriate meeting checklist (Appendix B) and send a follow-up letter to the parent after the meeting (Appendix E or Appendix F).

After the meeting with the Principal has been completed and only if the applicant wishes to pursue the application, the principal shall set up a meeting between the applicant and the school superintendent. The Superintendent shall use the appropriate meeting checklist (Appendix C).

After the meeting with the Superintendent has been completed and only if the applicant wishes to pursue the application, the Superintendent shall set up a meeting between the applicant and the Director of Education. The Director of Education shall use the appropriate meeting checklist (Appendix D).