



2 August 2021

HSC TRIAL INFORMATION SESSION

Dear Parents, Carers and Year 12 Students

We are continuing our planning for the Trial HSC Examinations to be completed in a COVID safe environment. Part of this planning requires the College to closely monitor and adhere to the NSW Government Health Advice, with an understanding that this advice can change based on the current level of infections throughout the Greater Sydney Region. We are aware that students and families will have many questions in relation to the Trial Examinations, the final assessment mark that is provided to NESA by the College and the HSC Written and Practical Examinations. NESA is constantly releasing advice regarding the HSC and I will continue to share this with families when it is received. The latest advice can be accessed on the NESA website at [HSC Exams](#).

As indicated in my previous correspondence to families, an online information webinar has been planned for Monday August 9 at 6.30pm, to provide families with further advice as well as an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. This information session will be facilitated using Microsoft Teams Webinar. Students will receive an invitation via their St Edward's College email and parents via the email address we have on file for them.

The invitation will allow families to accept or decline the invitation as well as provide an indication of the questions that they would like covered in the session. St Edward's staff will analyse these questions and provide responses on the evening. This approach will allow us to respond in a more timely and conclusive manner on the night. We ask families to respond to this webinar invitation and provide any questions by Thursday August 5.

Further details regarding the administration of the examinations will be provided to students in the coming days. We are carefully planning the safety protocols for the examinations and are waiting on the advice from NESA and the NSW Government to finalise these plans.

I thank families that have been in contact with me regarding questions about the HSC Trials Examinations, the HSC written examinations and final assessment and anticipate that the information session on Monday night will provide further clarification. With this letter, I have provided responses to the common questions that have been already asked.

It is important that we continue to monitor our health and wellbeing during this time of stay-at-home restrictions. Our boys are encouraged to continue to talk with family and friends about what they are experiencing in dealing with the stresses of working from home and the HSC, and they are reminded of the support offered at school by Mr McCauley, their teachers and the College Counsellors. Parents can also reach out to the school, either to me directly, to Mr McCauley or to our College Counsellors via our [Parent Support Line](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact me at principal@stedwards.nsw.edu.au if you have any questions or would like to discuss the information outlined in this letter and I look forward to meeting with you online on Monday August 9.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bonnici
College Principal



Q AND A

1. Why aren't the boys attending face-to face classes on Monday August 16 and Tuesday August 17, in preparation for the examinations?

One of the guiding principles that we have followed throughout the whole COVID experience has been to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. We strongly believe that we can create a safer environment for our boys and staff through a carefully structured examination experience, in which students adhere to the physical distancing requirements and health and hygiene protocols. This requirement is far more difficult to sustain when students return to school for face-to-face classes, in particular during the recess and lunch breaks. It is hoped that by the time the Trial Examinations are completed the level of community infections will be reduced to a level in which the restrictions associated with the current lockdown will have been eased.

In addition to this, our Year 12 teachers will continue to deliver Home-Based Learning for their remaining classes and this plan prevents excessive movements for staff and students in the lead up to the examinations.

2. Why can't the examinations be moved further back in the term, to allow students more time to prepare and possibly experience some face-to-face teaching?

St Edward's signs up each year to participate in the Catholic Secondary Schools Association (CSSA) Trial Examination Program. This program allows us to make fair and equitable judgements of student achievement as the examinations are externally developed but marked by our teachers. To ensure the integrity of this examination program, the timetable for exams is also externally set and St Edward's must follow this timing like all other Catholic Schools.

3. My friends have children at other schools who are doing their exams later in the term or will be beginning next week?

Schools that are conducting Trial Examinations at different times within the term, will not be participating in the CSSA Trial Examination program.

4. COVID-19 has interrupted my son's completion of his major work and I am concerned that he has been disadvantaged.

Last Friday evening, NESA released a new COVID-19 Special Considerations Program for students experiencing COVID-related significant disruption while preparing for language and performance examinations and working on major projects. Schools in areas under Level 4 restrictions can apply to receive a mark from their teacher instead of participating in the performance exam or handing in their major project to NESA.

We are exploring the criteria for eligibility for this program and will provide advice to students in the coming days.

5. Will my son be safe during the Trial Examinations?

While we are waiting on the detailed advice to be provided by NESA and CSNSW in relation to conducting COVID safe examinations, we are also carefully developing a plan which is designed to promote a safe environment. The examinations will be organised in a manner which maximises physical distancing. Hand sanitising stations will be readily available on entry and clear instructions will be provided about student travel to and from school and arrival at school. The examination spaces will be thoroughly cleaned after every



examination and expectations regarding physical distancing will be enforced by supervising staff on student arrival and departure from school and between examinations.

Students will be strongly encouraged to undergo a COVID test in the week leading up to the first examination and provide evidence of a negative result on the morning of the first examination. We would greatly appreciate parents and student support with this requirement, as we believe it is an important measure in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students and supervising staff. If a family has concerns regarding this request, they are asked to contact me via email at principal@stedwards.nsw.edu.au or by phone on 4321 6400 to discuss their concerns.

All staff who are supervising the examinations will be required to undergo a COVID test in the week prior to the examinations and provide evidence of negative result.

We have not yet been provided with advice regarding the compulsory wearing of masks throughout the examinations. We understand that this may be a point of concern for some boys but we will be required to follow the advice from NSW Health on all protocols established.

Importantly in the lead up to the examinations and throughout the examination period, students will be required to follow the guidelines of the stay-at-home orders, to minimise the risk of infection and potential spread to other students in their cohort. We ask for students to act responsibly in relation to this public health order and for parent support in ensuring this requirement is adhered to.

These are just some of the protocols being established in our COVID Safe Examination Plan. We will continue to develop this plan, implementing all the recommendations provided by the relevant governing authorities.

6. I feel that my son's final assessment mark and performance in the examination will not be as good as it could have been because of the disruption to learning caused by COVID-19.

There is no doubt that online learning does not replicate face-to-face teaching and it is therefore understandable that there are concerns regarding the potential impact on student performance in the HSC caused by COVID-19. Teachers have worked hard to provide the best possible learning environment on-line and it is important that students continue to take responsibility for ensuring that they commit to do their best under the circumstances. We are extremely pleased with how the boys have been responding and engaging in lessons. The trial examination is an important component of the final assessment mark but teachers also have assessment that has been previously completed throughout the HSC as a reference point in determining the final mark. Teachers are experts in assessing a student's overall performance in a course according to the band performance descriptions and will use this understanding when determining the final assessment mark.

COVID permitting, students will return to face-to face lessons after the trial examinations and lessons will continue into Term 4 now that the HSC written examinations have been rescheduled to a later start. During this time, teachers will focus on a clearly structured revision program and use student performance in the trial examinations to guide this revision.

Most importantly, all we can ask is for students to try their best throughout this difficult time. Their health and wellbeing should be the main focus, as the HSC and ATAR do not sum up thirteen years of schooling and all they have learnt and achieved along the way.



7. What if my son falls ill during the Trial or HSC Examinations?

A clear process to apply for illness and misadventure is in place and will be explained to the boys in the lead up to the examinations. The College must be contacted on the morning of the examination providing notification that your son will not be attending the examination. A medical certificate will be required to be provided with the application for illness and misadventure. Importantly if your son experiences any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 they are required to stay at home, undergo a COVID-19 test and not return to school until a negative result is obtained. He will be required to provide evidence of a negative test prior to attending his next examination.

We look forward to receiving your questions prior to the webinar on Monday August 9, and always feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any concerns you may have.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bonnici
College Principal