



August 2021

### HSC TRIAL EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED

Dear Parents, Carers and Year 12 Students

We have continued to monitor closely the Health Advice provided by the NSW Government and Catholic Schools NSW in making planning decisions around the HSC. As experienced in all areas of society, throughout the pandemic, this advice is constantly changing based on the level of infection throughout the community.

The previous advice from the NSW Premier indicated that there would be a return to face-to-face lessons on Monday August 16. Following this advice, St Edward's made the decision to conduct the trial examinations following the CSSA Examination timetable according to the following two principles.

1. If students were required to return to face-to-face lessons in accordance with the NSW Health advice, we could provide a much safer environment if they were sitting examinations than if they were attending classes as per normal.
2. We strongly believe in the benefit of students sitting a Trial Examination, in preparation for the HSC final examinations. Without this opportunity students first attempt at an HSC Examination will be the final external exam.

The NSW Premier announced today that there is no longer a requirement for students to attend face-to-face classes in the Greater Sydney Region, and areas in which school attendance is generally not advised by NSW Health, and that students will not participate in any Trial HSC Examinations onsite at school. This decision has been made in response to current levels of infection within society which are not declining at the rate that the government had hoped, with concerning numbers being reported in the age demographic of our students. It has also been reported earlier this week and confirmed today that there are positive cases of the virus in young people on the Central Coast.

Based on this information St Edward's has made the decision to **cancel the trial examinations, not commence face- to face lessons on Monday August 16**, as it is unsafe to do so and move to an alternate form of final assessment, following NESA approved guidelines. Teaching staff at St Edward's have been developing an assessment contingency plan in preparation for this outcome which will be finalised and shared with students next week. We will continue to follow the health advice in making decisions about the timing of the return to face-to-face lessons, including providing an opportunity for students to complete major work components of assessment to attend school following a clear COVID Safe Plan if required. Making this decision allows us to provide further clarity about the remainder of the HSC, which will hopefully reduce uncertainty and relieve some of the stress that students may be experiencing.

I would like to thank the many parents that have registered for the webinar on Monday evening and provided questions for clarification. It is clear from these questions that the main concerns raised are related to the safety of students attending school during the examinations. It is hoped that this decision alleviates this concern.

#### Final Assessment:

1. Students will continue to work at home from Monday August 16.
2. As advice continues to change, we will inform families on when a return to face-to-face lessons will occur.
3. Students will participate in a final piece of assessment in the majority of their courses.



4. Newly developed assessment tasks outlines will be provided to students at a Year meeting during period 1 on Friday of week 5 (August 13).
5. The timing for the completion and submission for these tasks will be distributed across weeks 7, 8 and 9 to spread student workload and allow students appropriate time to work with their teachers and plan to submit their response by the due date.
6. All assessment tasks will adhere to the guidelines established by NESA in response to the current COVID environment.
7. Teachers will be providing clear instructions and prescriptive marking criteria upon which each task will be assessed.
8. Throughout weeks 7, 8 and 9 teachers will be available online during each timetabled lesson for students to meet with, to answer questions and provide feedback for the completion of tasks.
9. Teachers will schedule check in points that students must engage with throughout this period, to monitor progress and provide individual feedback.
10. Students will be required to follow the normal procedures for illness and misadventure if illness arises impacting on them completing any task.
11. Penalties associated with the non-completion of a task by the submission date will be as per the College's Assessment Policy.

We are aware that students may be experiencing a great deal of stress due to the uncertainty that currently exists. It is hoped that the information outlined in this plan may relieve some of the anxiety being experienced about sitting the Trial Examinations. I have purposefully provided this advice today to encourage students to take a break from study over the weekend. Take some time to relax and refresh, finding activities which fall within the stay-at-home guidelines to take care of their own well-being.

Mr McCauley and I have scheduled a meeting to occur on **Monday morning at 9.15am**, to provide further clarification regarding the final assessment and the timeline for the remainder of the term. Students can access this meeting via the Teams link established for Year meetings in their Canvas Pastoral page. The webinar scheduled for Monday evening will still be delivered as planned. We will take the opportunity to answer the questions that have been raised, clarify our approach to the final assessment and answer any other questions that parents, and students may now have.

Our approach to decision making throughout the pandemic has always been to follow the health advice of the time to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. This has been a very dynamic process in which we have had to continue to adapt and respond and I thank parents and students for their ongoing support and patience.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on 4321 6400, or at [principal@stedwards.nsw.edu.au](mailto: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

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College Principal



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