

NSW Catholic Schools Position Statement:

Safety, Certainty and Learning

Catholic schools are committed to providing students with high quality holistic learning and development opportunities, consistent with a Catholic ethos and concern for the whole person. We do so while ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of students and staff is secured. Respect for the life and dignity of every student and staff member, the dignity of work and the call to fraternity for serving the common good, underpin the Mission and purpose of Catholic Education.

Acknowledging that the pandemic continues to surprise, we need to provide as much certainty and clear guidance as possible for school operations, teacher planning, student participation and family support. The ongoing discussions and co-operation with Government and Independent sectors has been a strength of the school sector's response to the pandemic. We commit to working cooperatively with government and across school sectors to respond to the unfolding crisis. This advice is intended to provide greater clarity to parents and students about the operations of Catholic schools in severely COVID affected areas.

Having regard to health and other government advice, the following guidelines detail the approach for the rest of Term 3 and into Term 4 of NSW Catholic schools in COVID affected areas subject to public health orders and level 4 restrictions, such as Greater Sydney*:

Plans for Terms 3 and 4

HSC Students

- The Premier's desire for early support for HSC students is strongly supported by Catholic Education; so too is the guidance from the Premier that a uniform policy is not needed, and responses should reflect "what is happening in their [local] communities".
- Catholic schools are firmly committed to our students receiving an HSC award in 2021, including safe participation in the scheduled, public HSC examinations in a written format.
- Noting the Trial HSC Examinations are not a mandatory form of assessment, decisions regarding Trial Examinations are devolved to individual schools and Systems, who will determine what alternative assessment or student activity will be implemented, these decisions will have regard for NESA's HSC assessment advice.¹
- Consistent with the Premier's advice that school responses should reflect local circumstances, in the case of Catholic schools situated in Greater Sydney and areas for which school attendance generally is not advised by NSW Health, HSC students will not participate in any Trial HSC Examinations onsite at schools, and will not return to school for normal onsite learning in Term 3 until all students have been cleared to return, allowing remote learning to continue as an acceptable alternative.

¹ It is also noted that local decisions with respect to the implementation of the CSSA Trial exams should take into account the following choice available to schools, being the alternative implementation options of:

- i) the CSSA Trials as a formal HSC Assessment Task within the time frame of the secure period of the published CSSA exams timetable; or
- ii) the CSSA exams as non-assessable practice tasks after the secure timetabled period for the CSSA Trial Exams has expired.

- Consistent with the Public Health Order, HSC students, for whom it is necessary to attend school will be supported to do so. Students will be supported to meet assessment requirements for their major works, performance rehearsals and oral exams, where applicable. Our schools are well positioned in this regard.

Kindergarten to Year 11

- More definitive advice on whether face to face teaching can resume in Term 3 after 28 August will be issued as health advice is updated. Noting that Term 3 continues for some weeks into September, we seek the earliest possible advice from the government about this matter.
- Parents should be assured that Catholic schools are preparing for the contingency of remote learning for the remainder of Term 3, with only those students who need to attend school doing so. This can be delivered and will enable teachers to plan remote learning interventions with greater certainty.
- Term 4 will return to onsite learning for all students, contingent on government advice and in a manner reflecting health guidelines.
- Catholic schools will develop plans for assessment and reporting for K-11 that address the constraints of Term 3, including the Record of School Achievement and HSC 2022 activities for current Year 11 students.

Expectations of NESAs

- Catholic Schools NSW and NESAs will work to ensure the integrity and equity of the HSC credential. The NESAs COVID-19 Response Committee will continue its work to this end.
- NESAs will publish COVID-safe exam protocols for students to undertake the 2021 public HSC written examinations.
- NESAs will continue its work to ensure that measures will be introduced to protect the standing and equity considerations of students disadvantaged by their circumstances.
- NESAs provides prompt advice on curriculum and reporting requirements for K-6 to guide semester 2 reporting.
- NESAs should provide all advice and guidance in a consistent and timely manner to support implementation.

* Working assumptions

1. The public health suppression and containment measures will continue to moderate the spread of COVID.
2. By the commencement of Term 4, the vaccination rates and coverage for teachers and the HSC students will allow for a return to on site schooling.
3. The scheduled public HSC examinations will be able to be held and form part of the 2021 HSC.
4. NESAs's COVID-19 Response Committee will continue to monitor and make necessary adjustments to HSC related assessment and schedules in support of delivering a quality end of school leaving credential for 2021 HSC students.