

14 May 2020

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**THE
GEELONG
COLLEGE**
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Dear Parents and Carers

Further to the announcement on Tuesday morning by the Premier about the transition to normal school operations for Victorian schools I am writing to confirm the approach to be taken by The Geelong College. I apologise at the outset for the length of this letter. It is significantly longer than normal and is hopefully a "one-off".

For the balance of Term 2 the typical routine will be significantly modified in ways that are age appropriate to enable our students to return normal classes at school. I anticipate sport (including after school training) and other co-curricular activities (including Music ensembles) will not resume this term. The initial focus in this transition period is upon curriculum related activities and daily routine to enable students to attend the school site.

There is an underlying assumption that the situation regarding COVID-19 continues to improve. I hope we do not have to deviate from this plan but I am prepared to do so if required to ensure the health and safety of our community.

Sequence of Student Return

The unique layout of the three schools of The Geelong College means our transition to normal operations can vary slightly from the sequence described by the Premier. Our transition will follow this sequence:

- **Friday 22 May** – A designated "low tech day" with all students engaging in remote learning without the expectation of co-ordinated teacher engagement on platforms such as MS Teams;
- **Monday 25 May** – A pupil free day enabling teachers to co-ordinate planning together for the remaining weeks of Term 2;
- **Tuesday 26 May** – Onsite classes return for all students in the Junior School (EL to Year 3), Middle School students in Years 4 to 6 and Senior School students involved in VCE subjects (predominantly in Years 11 and 12 but also students in Year 10 who have accelerated VCE courses but only in those subjects). Remote Learning will continue for students in Years 7 to 10 until Friday 5 June; then,
- **Tuesday 9 June** – Years 7 and 8 return to the Middle School and, Years 9 and 10 return to the Senior School for onsite classes.

Once a year group has returned to school it is expected the students in that Year will attend school as normal. Remote Learning modes of delivery will not be supported as they have been in recent weeks. Support of students absent due to illness will follow the normal procedures. For senior students in remote or international locations, individual arrangements will be made to all for them to engage with their learning and teachers.

The return of boarders will require separate communication directly with boarding families. In short, we will be staggering their return in line with the year levels. We are planning to have our 13 international students currently in Australia return to the boarding houses by 26 May regardless of their year level.

Information specific to each of the three schools

There is significant information to be distributed by each Head of School in the coming days. This information will provide details of the arrangements relevant to each school relating to travel arrangements, adjustments to arrival and departure of students, access to College grounds and other procedural matters. Any changes to normal procedures will apply until further notice.

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Ongoing precautions

It is important to note that the Chief Medical Officer of Victoria has advised that students will not be required to maintain physical distancing at school. However, enhanced cleaning of facilities used by students and staff as well as great vigilance around personal hygiene are all a part of the overall strategy to maintain the safety of everyone.

If your child is feeling unwell or presenting with flu-like symptoms they must remain at home and seek medical advice. Also, if an immediate member of your household has a positive test for COVID-19 it is important you notify the College by email principal@geelongcollege.vic.edu.au or by telephoning the relevant Head of School directly.

Testing for people with flu-like symptoms can be arranged through the Barwon Health COVID testing clinic on 4215 4445 or online: www.barwonhealth.org.au/coronavirus/

An additional precaution and positive action is to download the COVID Safe app on your mobile telephone. Tracing of cases has been recognised as a critical component of managing the risk of further spreading of the virus. The health advice actively supports participating in this initiative.

Other relevant information

Students in Years 7 to 10 who cannot be supervised at home between 26 May and 9 June will have access to the Supervised Spaces we have had in place this term. Arrangements for access to this service will continue in the same way, with notification of participation during the week prior to attending.

We are very fortunate at The Geelong College to be able to have this sequence in our transition to normal operations. This is enabled by the dispersed nature of our students within each school and the distance between each of the three schools. Working with senior colleagues and informed by health advice I have carefully considered this approach with the College Council and we have planned to ensure we are able to maintain the safety of staff, students and our wider community at this time.

Thank you

I would like to thank all members of the College community for the very positive approach taken in recent weeks. The transition to Remote Learning was a necessary and significant step for us when the decision was announced on 18 March. The last eight weeks have been very trying for everyone with varying levels of difficulty and experiences for each of our students. Remote Learning has also provided great lessons for all of us, especially the teachers who have been both brilliant and diligent in their approach to all the challenges faced.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the support staff who are the unsung heroes of the last eight weeks. The Information Technology team have been outstanding. The willingness of all support staff (health staff, teacher assistants, cleaners, rec centre, community relations, grounds, catering, bus drivers, maintenance and administration) to keep the place running in the absence of students but in anticipation of their return is something quite extraordinary. The good grace with which they have all approached this has been greatly appreciated.

The transition to normal school operations will take some time and is a process embarked upon with some sense of trepidation. The challenge now is for us all to continue to be patient, careful, kind and generous as we have been to each other over the last eight weeks. The seemingly familiar terrain we believe we are heading towards may have a few surprises we have not yet anticipated.

It will be wonderful to have some students back on 26 May. The life and joy they bring to this place is something from which we all draw tremendous positive energy. I am deeply grateful for their presence and I speak on behalf of all my colleagues on the staff when I say how much we long for their return.

Yours sincerely



Dr Peter Miller
Principal

