



## ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

### Covid-19 - Information for University and College Admissions Teams

During the past 2 years, our students have been greatly affected by the global pandemic Covid -19 as well as adverse localized physical conditions. Please find below specific details on how our students were affected:

**Predicted grades:** External Cambridge (CAIE) examinations in Advanced Subsidiary/AS courses were written in May/June of 2021 and inform our predicted Advanced Level grades for these courses. For WJEC courses, the students were allocated Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) in place of examinations last spring. These were determined through a portfolio of evidence which included end of unit tests, a mock examination and at least one final examination. During the 2020-2021 school year we were in the very fortunate position of being able to base the TAGs on a significant amount of evidence, which was moderated to ensure that the grade was an accurate reflection of how the student would have performed on external examinations.

#### **Teaching time:**

**2020:** During Year 11 (IGCSE), students were first impacted by an earthquake, of 7.7 magnitude, during their January mock examinations, directly affecting those papers being written. As this was of large magnitude, fears of a Tsunami began and students were taken higher rooms, and many students were emotionally affected by this event. When Covid was first detected in Cayman, the country was put into lockdown and the school was closed from March 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of our academic year, 14 weeks of school. Students attended distance learning lessons when possible if internet was available. For some subjects, like languages, the lack of in class lessons meant students were extremely far behind, particularly in oral work and spontaneous speaking. Practical subjects such as Sciences, Drama and Music were also severely disrupted as they were not able to practice the key practical elements of their subjects due to restrictions and Art & Design students were not able to access the resources they needed whilst in lockdown. External Cambridge examinations were eventually cancelled, and grades were based on teacher predictions. School reopened in September however in October and November 2020, the school was once again closed with the passing of Hurricanes Delta, Eta and Iota.

Throughout all this time, the Cayman Islands borders have been closed to all but returning residents. This created further stress for students whose parents were made redundant, especially those in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Furthermore, the increase of mental and emotional health issues surfacing in our students, due to the 5 significant events, was massive and many students struggled to get back into the 'normal expected work ethic' due to the many disruptions.

**2021:** During Year 12 (AS level courses) students were able to attend school daily due to the continued border closure, eventually ceasing community spread of Covid. This meant that students were able to take Cambridge external examinations in May/June of 2021. However, students in other parts of the world who were taking the same courses, but who were unable to write the examinations, were graded on

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teacher predictions rather than external papers. Some boards even provided sample assessment materials for teachers to use, and these were also made available to students in advance. In addition, teachers were permitted to assess only on portions of the course rather than the entire course, meaning that our students were disadvantaged as their grades are considered equivalent to those students who did not write an external examination and/or were not assessed on the entire course.

Now in Year 13 (A2/Advanced Level) our students are suffering significant disruption to their studies due to the reintroduction of community Covid transmission, as our country has relaxed the quarantine rules, meaning many students are having to quarantine and self-isolate for significant periods of time due to Cayman Islands' Government Public Health requirements. We are now finding ourselves in the position that most countries were in March of 2020. We have considerable community spread, which is increasing daily, and students are being removed from classes for isolation periods of up to 2-4 weeks either because they are infected, or they have been identified as exposed through contact tracing. Families in isolation are again suffering from a lack of income and the added stress on students due to fear and missing school is once again surfacing. We currently do not have access to rapid lateral flow tests and so students can be isolated for extended periods of time.

The Cayman Islands' Government intends to fully open the border on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and with this reopening the Covid spread and disruption to the students' studies is only going to get worse.