



ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Covid-19 - Information for University and College Admissions Teams

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

Teaching time:

During Year 12/Advanced Subsidiary, 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 16th to the end of our academic year, 13 weeks of school. Students attended distance learning lessons when possible beginning March 18th. These lessons consisted of many live Zoom lessons, recorded lessons, and assigned work. Teachers took the opportunity to be creative and encourage a greater degree of independence from students. There was continued formative assessment; however summative assessment was less reliable. For some subjects, like languages, the lack of in class lessons has meant students are extremely far behind in part of their A2 course, particularly oral work and spontaneous speaking. Practical subjects such as Sciences, Drama and Music have also been severely disrupted as they have not been able to practise 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.

Generally, attendance to online sessions was very good, although some students lacked reliable Wi-Fi or laptops and therefore were not always able to attend live lessons. External Cambridge A Level examinations were cancelled later than other boards. At this point, some subjects continued to cover the AS specification more slowly -while others moved on to A2 work. Staff worked hard to maintain a rich learning experience throughout, but online learning cannot replace the experience of the classroom where skills can be rigorously developed and misconceptions addressed and so we are working hard on the recovery curriculum throughout this autumn term. Some subjects studied have not had any alteration to their courses, such as a reduction in curriculum content or in how they will be examined, so essentially they are doing the same exam as 2019 but with a lot less time to cover the material which will inevitably impact the grades achieved. In October 2020, the school was once again closed for 2 days with the passing of Hurricane Delta.

Throughout all this time, the Cayman Islands borders have been closed to all but returning residents. This has created further stress for students whose parents have been 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 3 significant events that have affected the island is massive and many students are struggling to get back into the 'normal expected work ethic' due to the many disruptions we have had.

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Disruption to normal university application processes:

Our normal UCAS launch and initial support days were undertaken virtually, but we are now able to support students in the normal way, however they are much further behind where previous cohorts would be at this point. Students have not been able to take part in university presentations, mentoring programmes and work experience which they would normally be encouraged to undertake. Support with Personal Statements has been done using Unifrog with our guidance teacher. Since the guidance teacher is also involved in Sixth Form admissions and timetabling, she was required to organise “AS taster lesson” class lists and schedule. This involved interviewing students, taking time away from university guidance for the current A2 cohort.

Predicted grades

Since external AS examinations were cancelled, UCAS predicted grades were based on previous attainment, mock exams and staff professional judgement. In languages, whilst staff are doing catch up sessions on a weekly basis, the lack of face to face learning has inevitably impacted their current oral mark and future prediction.

Year 13 were put at a disadvantage as they lacked the opportunity to learn independent study skills that come with a formal examination period. Those students who are completing ‘retakes’ are having to learn a lot more than they would if it was a usual retake session.