

# DESMOND COLLEGE UPDATE

## Coronavirus Covid-19 February 2021

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February 2021 - Post Midterm Break

### Website Notice to Parents and Guardians/Students

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

I hope all students, parents/guardians and staff enjoyed a break from Remote Learning over midterm - it is hard to believe that the school community has all worked remotely since Christmas. While Remote Learning is no substitute for face to face interactions of normal school-life, it is the best we can all manage working together to ensure learning and teaching can continue in the midst of high levels of Covid-19 in our communities.

We will recommence after midterm in this Remote Learning space once again, but we expect an announcement next week on a phased return to school for students which is dependent on Public Health advice and how the virus evolves. We appreciate everybody's commitment to working with us to keep the learning going while schools are off-limits to regular attendance and we will be very happy to see students and staff back at school as soon as the Department of Education recommends this step.

When the decision is taken to allow students and staff to return, we will require your cooperation in the completion of a 'Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration' as recommended by the HSE. This will be an on-line form that you can complete simply via your smartphone or tablet/laptop/computer.

#### **Resumption of Remote Learning from 22 February 2021**

Our staff will recommence with Remote Teaching from Monday, 22 February and this will continue until the Department of Education instructs schools to allow students and staff to return. Certain year-groups or students may return at various stages but we will have to await further advice on this. We will be in contact with students and parents involved pre their return to the school building.

As was the case before midterm, we will focus our efforts for the next few weeks of Remote Learning on teaching, learning and the provision of effective feedback to students.

Your child will continue to have a blend of on-line 'live' classes, 'flipped learning' lessons, assignments and homework. Teachers will communicate this information to students.

We advise that students get up early in the morning and connect with their learning as per their school timetable.

It is also important to ensure students get exercise and take a break from schoolwork and study. Additional advice on strategies to look for personal wellbeing are available on our website.

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## **Leaving Certificate 2021**

The Minister for Education Norma Foley TD announced on Wednesday 17 February that every Leaving Certificate student will be entitled to avail of either or both of the following;

1. Sit the established Leaving Certificate examinations including, where applicable, her/his performance in the completion of additional assessment components (coursework, orals, etc.) associated with particular subjects. The additional assessment component/s will be corrected externally by the Stated Examinations Commission (SEC).
2. Receive a State Examinations Commission Accredited Grade (to be called an SEC Accredited Grade) in each subject, based on the school's estimate of the student's likely performance in the conventional examinations (had COVID-19 not disrupted teaching and learning in schools) involving and subject to a national standardisation process.

### **The Leaving Certificate Examinations**

1. The written examinations will:
  - a. Operate in accordance with the normal timetable that has been published on the SEC website and will commence on 9 June 2021 and be conducted, subject to public health advice and will provide, as far as possible, access to the examinations for very high-risk students.
  - b. - Leaving Certificate Established Timetable: <https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-46337197.pdf>  
Leaving Cert Applied Timetable: <https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-97312473.pdf>
2. Additional assessment components – marked by the SEC – Leaving Certificate

Students who wish to sit the established Leaving Certificate (i.e. sit the written examination in a subject), additional assessment components such as orals, practical performance tests and coursework will run, subject to public health advice during Easter or shortly after Easter (details to follow).

Some additional assessment components in certain subjects will not run for public health reasons such as practical examinations.

Teachers in our school will not be required to assess their own students for any element of the traditional Leaving Certificate option.

### **SEC-Accredited Grades system**

An Accredited Grades system, to be operated by the State Examinations Commission, will be available whereby Leaving Certificate students can opt to have grades in some or all of their subjects issued to them at the same time as the Leaving Certificate grades/examination results.

The SEC-Accredited Grades will involve the following:

- The professional judgement of a student's teacher/s will not be subject to appeal
  - A form of in-school alignment to ensure fairness amongst students at school level will take place
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- A process of standardisation at national level to ensure as much fairness as possible amongst this year's students will be applied
  - The SEC-Accredited Grade and Leaving Certificate Examinations outcomes will have regard to the pattern of results in 2020, and previously, with more details of the process to be determined having regard to advice from the SEC
  - Provision will be made, insofar as practicable, for out-of-school learners and students studying one or more subjects outside school to apply to receive SEC-Accredited Grades through the devising of an appropriate and practicable process

### **Leaving Certificate Results 2021**

- If a student opts to sit the Leaving Certificate examinations (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components) and not to receive any SEC-Accredited Grades, then s/he will receive Leaving Certificate results/grades in the usual manner.
- If a student decides only to receive SEC-Accredited Grades and not to sit any Leaving Certificate examinations (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components), then s/he will receive SEC-Accredited Grades.
- If a student opts to sit the Leaving Certificate examination (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components) in one or more subjects and also to receive SEC-Accredited Grades in one or more subjects, then s/he will receive the best combination of the Leaving Certificate grades and SEC-Accredited Grades achieved.

We are awaiting further information and clarification on the process and will communicate this to you in due course.

### **Important information for Third Year Students - Junior Cycle 2021**

The Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD announced on 17 February 2021 that a decision was made to cancel the written Junior Certificate examinations, which were due to take place in June 2021. Third Year students will complete their Junior Cycle on 28 May 2021 along with all other students.

*It is very important to note that all students in Third Year will be required to continue to work hard for the assessments that the school will be undertaking with them for their formal school report.*

Each Third Year Student will receive a Formal School Report on their learning achievements in each of their subjects and short courses over the last three years. A whole-school approach will be undertaken to report on your child's achievements. Teachers will carefully analyse your child's learning, development and the outcomes of assessments over the three years of study at our school.

The Junior Cycle Formal School Report grades will include past academic achievement, acknowledge student engagement and measure performance in upcoming May Assessments. There needs to be some variation in assessment, because of the nature of different subjects. Subject Department teachers will inform students of the exact details pertinent to their subject area in the coming weeks. The formal school report will also include the descriptors awarded to Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) and other Areas of Learning (OAL).

Third Year students are still required to continue to work with their teachers and submit work that will be taken into account in the results students will receive in their school report. The schedule of this work includes;

- *On-going engagement with Remote Learning*
  - *End of Year Assessments in May 2021 on learning over three years*
  - *Assessments in each subject via online assessments as directed by each teacher*
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- *Assessments in each subject which are project, practical or report based*

This process worked very satisfactorily with our current Transition Year Students last year.

### **Presentation of Certificate of Completion**

Our school plans to celebrate your child's achievements with a special presentation ceremony for students to receive their Department of Education Certificate of Completion in Autumn 2021. This will allow for students to experience an event that marks their achievements and to acknowledge their transition from Junior Cycle to Transition Year/Senior Cycle.

### **How we will support your child/children over the next few weeks**

We appreciate how challenging the Covid-19 crisis has been for families, and particularly students. Please rest assured that we are working hard to support all students and parents/guardians in our school community as the pandemic evolves. We have learned a lot since March 2020 and this will stand to us all as we work through the next few weeks.

We are learning considerably from your feedback, that of our staff and our interactions with students about best-practice strategies to support teaching and learning and student care while we are out of school. All students are very comfortable with the school's excellent Learning Management System (LMS) - G Suite for Education (Google).

### **Assessing Teaching and Learning in our School**

Our School's Digital Learning Hub, which students are familiar with, is the main portal for accessing on-line classes and feedback from teachers. Our staff has received support and guidance from Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board on the most effective strategies to manage on-line learning. Our staff continue to be appraised of the relevant advice, guidance and peer support on managing learning, teaching and assessment in the current pandemic and we are hopeful that this will help to mitigate the loss in class contact time and 'Face to Face' time while the school is closed.

### **Wellbeing including physical activity**

Our staff have developed excellent strategies and ideas to promote wellbeing across our school community. NEPS, the Department's National Educational Psychological Service, has developed advice and resources for keeping Children and Young People well during Covid-19. These resources aim to support children and young people's learning and wellbeing at this time.

In the context of wellbeing, NEPS has included a reference in its advice for young people and for parents of young children for the need for physical activity as part of everyone's daily routine while schools are closed.

There is an excellent range of supports available on [www.loveparenting.ie](http://www.loveparenting.ie) specifically for parents to help with this. These resources have been created specifically for parents to use with their children and cover these areas;

- Having the chats
- Routines
- Managing your child's anxiety
- Parent Self-Care
- Maintaining Routines

For information, the relevant text can be found at the following links:

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Advice for Young People: <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/advice-to-young-people-while-schools-are-closed.pdf>

Advice for Parents: <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/guide-for-parents-supporting-children.pdf>

### **Supporting Students with Additional Education Needs**

The National Council for Special Education has developed resources for parents of children with additional needs who may benefit from specific advice during the period of school closure. All resources are available on the NCSE website and publicised through education partners and Twitter. The NCSE visiting teacher service continues to provide direct telephone/skype support to families and students. The NCSE resources can be accessed at: [www.ncse.ie/online-resources](http://www.ncse.ie/online-resources) and include;

- resources for parents and teachers such as class\age level activities
- practical advice on how to take care of Assistive Technology in the Home and a suite of Occupational Therapy and
- Speech and Language Therapy resources (including a social story animation on attending a Covid-19 test Centre prepared by the HSE).

### **Contacting the School**

Please do not hesitate to contact us at the school via this email address [info@desmondcollege.ie](mailto:info@desmondcollege.ie) and we will do all we can to address your query as soon as possible. In the meantime, please follow the advice of the HSE and the Government;

### **Additional Information**

A considerable number of announcements regarding schools will all be available on [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) as well as regular updates from us in the school.

Thank you for your continued support of our school and we look forward to being in contact with you soon again.

Vourneen Gavin-Barry

Principal

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