



Friday 8 May 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Geelong Grammar School,

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) – Update #26 as at 4.00pm on Friday 8 May

RE: Anticipated Phased Resumption of On-campus Learning and Living

Current Context

In anticipation of the Victorian Government's scheduled announcement regarding its review of the State of Emergency on Monday 11 May, we are excited by the prospect of resuming on-campus learning and living. Our Executive and Leadership Team have completed significant and detailed work in preparation for the planned return of students and staff at each of our campuses, in order to identify, manage and mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19; several of these risks are unique to our context as Australia's largest coeducational boarding school.

Last night our School Council approved the Executive and Leadership Team's draft Action Plans for a phased resumption of on-campus learning and living. The timing and significance of this meeting was referenced in [Update #20](#) on 8 April 2020. Pending the Victorian Government's consideration of the easing of State of Emergency restrictions, **we will publish more detailed information by 6.00pm on Monday 11 May.**

Three Essentials to Resume On-campus Learning and Living

Each Action Plan depends upon 3 essentials for a return to on-campus learning and living, being:

1. **The authoritative Victorian State Government medical advice that schools are reasonably safe environments for both staff and students.**
 - We anticipate this advice being provided on 11 May at the Victorian Premier's scheduled press conference at 9.00am.
 - If the State Government advice is that it is safe for schools to resume normal operations, it will be reasonable for our School to do so provided we follow recommended risk mitigation measures.
 - We are hopeful the State Government will provide clearance for a staged return of students (initially, this is most likely to include early Primary and Years 11 and 12).
 - If Years 9 and 10 are not captured in the Government's phased plans, we will continue to seek an exemption from the State Chief Health Officer for Timbertop and Corio, based on our Action Plans.
 - We anticipate that return dates will provide a minimum of one week's notice; however, GGS return dates will be dependent on campus specific risk mitigation strategies.
 - Regrettably, to date, there has been no indication of State guidelines for boarding. Since late March I have been actively communicating with various levels of the Federal and State Governments to seek advice and a review of the School's proposed plans for return to boarding. I remain hopeful that greater clarity will emerge from the State Government about boarding next week.

2. The School is able to comply with any applicable guidance material regarding minimising COVID-19 risks for staff and students on campuses, and testing for asymptomatic individuals is available; and
3. The School has warned members of our community about the risks of on-campus learning, and the measures enacted to reasonably mitigate such risks.

Essentials 2 and 3 involve numerous strategies that are outlined in the following section.

Minimising COVID-19 risks for staff and students on campuses

We have already introduced a range of health, safety and wellbeing measures in Term 2 to enable the on campus supervision of Remote Learning@GGS. These measures reflect the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) guidelines about how staff in schools can protect students and themselves, manage social distancing requirements and safely care for and supervise those students who have been on campus.

As part of our ongoing preventative management of COVID-19, our plans to minimise risk include:

- closely monitoring and screening student and staff health through daily self-reports and temperature checks;
- carefully managing drop-off and pick-up of students;
- consistent highlighting of the importance of hygiene to prevent the spread of germs and viral illnesses;
- intensifying food handling and cleaning protocols;
- recommending strongly all students and staff to have a flu vaccine;
- encouraging strongly all staff, parents/guardians and students (where age appropriate) to download the COVIDSafe app to assist with more accurate and timely tracing of exposure to COVID-19; and
- minimising numbers involved in any co-curricular activities and gatherings on site.

Parents will be required to provide informed consent to COVID-19 specific Conditions of Return to On-Campus Learning and Living. These conditions will include acceptance of:

- planning continuing at all levels within a two-week cycle;
- pre-return conditions (as noted above, as well as the self-isolation and testing protocols for our Corio and Timbertop campuses);
- vulnerable staff being unable to initially safely return to teach and supervise students;
- the removal of students from campus for the remainder of Term 2 (Corio and Timbertop) if they breach guidelines;
- the immediate removal from campus of students with flu like symptoms;
- the School's published COVID-19 Outbreak Response Plans; and
- the School's Action Plans representing a combination of in-class and remote learning experiences acknowledging that each Action Plan represents competing risks.

Resumption of On-campus Learning at Bostock House and Toorak Campus

We anticipate our Primary students on these sites will commence in alignment with the State's timeline.

Resumption of On-campus Learning and Living at Corio and Timbertop Campuses

The Executive's draft Action Plans include campus specific risk assessments for re-opening boarding at Corio and Timbertop. These include comprehensive risk mitigation and risk management steps in order to lower the risk of transmission and promote positive health, hygiene and physical distancing within our

residential facilities with reference to [AHPPC guidelines for re-opening boarding schools and school-based residential colleges](#), in consultation with the DHHS and our Senior Medical Officer,

Pending the State Government's advice, we will provide families with detailed information about the resumption of boarding at GGS to enable a clear understanding and documented agreement around the assessment, analysis and mitigation processes to manage the risk posed by COVID-19.

Given our unique context as a predominantly boarding school, we must avoid the infection and reinfection cycle at all costs. Agreed mitigation steps will include the following requirements:

- **An initial 14 day self-isolation period** at home ([please see Victorian guidelines](#)) for students (Corio and Timbertop campuses – day and boarding students). **We recommend strongly that if it is not your child's current practice, they commence self-isolation immediately;**
- Australian citizens or residents residing overseas will need to **quarantine for 14 days upon return to Australia as required by the Department of Home Affairs;**
- **A COVID-19 test** for day and boarding students (with written confirmation of receipt of a NEGATIVE result) **within 48 hours of the published date of return to campus;**
- A further on campus **14 day 'internal group isolation'** within each House or Unit for boarding students (Houses or Unit groups will operate independently of other House or Unit groups for this period);
- Following the 14 day internal isolation period, there will be **no student exeats, no visits to students on campus by external parties and students will be unable to leave the campus (except for medical reasons) until the end of Term 2;** and
- Day students will be screened upon arrival on campus each day and the day student Houses will participate in a programme independent to the boarding students.

Overseas Students

We continue our advocacy to both the Federal and State Governments in seeking an exemption for our Overseas Students to return to Australia to resume on campus learning and living. In the interim, we reiterate our commitment to continue Remote Learning@GGS to support these students.

Thank you

We are grateful and proud that our students, staff and families have embraced Remote Learning@GGS in such a constructive way. This has been a challenging period yet one which has also promoted progression and growth. Our Remote Learning@GGS programmes evolved through consultation and collaboration between students and teachers, across campuses, and with schools all over the world; building our students' capacity to work independently and to navigate change and complexity. We welcome the return of face-to-face lessons and social interactions and look forward to integrating the best of remote learning to new ways of being once back on site.

We appreciate the support of our community to help us balance the educational and medical needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our decision-making will continue to be guided by our [key principles](#), which prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and their families, as well as seeking to achieve equitable access for all students across our School.

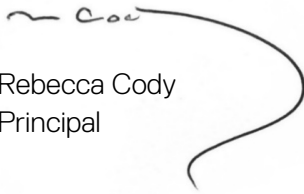
Update #27

My next Update will be posted on the evening of Monday 11 May. Until then, please be assured and confident that it is our intention, once clearance is provided by the Premier and Chief Health Officer, for GGS to proceed to a phased recommencement of on-campus learning and living, as directed. Such recommencement is contingent upon:

- community acceptance of multiple levels of risk and layers of protection;
- informed consent from families by acceptance of COVID-19 specific Conditions of Return to On-Campus Learning and Living (re-enter willingly and enthusiastically within a number of constraints); and
- ready availability of ongoing asymptomatic testing.

Our world has undoubtedly changed and out of necessity, so too will our customs and practices as we return to on campus learning and living; we value deeply your understanding and acceptance as we endeavour to keep our community safe.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Cody
Principal