

7 May 2020

Dear Parent/ Carer

I hope that all is well with you and your families and that you are managing to cope with the various challenges that we each face during the current lockdown.

I wanted to write to give a short update on HSDC and how we are working, and indeed what plans we are considering for the future.

There continues to be good engagement by students with their learning although we recognise that it is not without its difficulties and is not the same as the live interaction between peers and teacher in the classroom, workshop or laboratory. Nonetheless we know our students have always benefited from effective online platforms to facilitate their learning at HSDC. Feedback from students throughout the academic year has been very positive regarding this. These platforms have enabled the College to continue with effective teaching and learning during this period of time.

I know that considerable work is being done by staff to continue remote teaching, together with guidance and enrichment activities.

The current climate of school and college closures came very abruptly and we are aware of how the world has changed for our students; to not only lose the social side of their lives, but also the social side of coming to, and enjoying college life. Our students suddenly find themselves in a position to learn and engage with teachers purely online.

This is of course the same for our teaching staff. Teachers thoroughly enjoy interacting with students on a daily basis in person delivering the subjects they are so passionate about. For many teachers, this is also a whole new world; suddenly moving all teaching and learning on-line. This new approach does come with some challenges and as a College we are working together to ensure teachers can access the necessary training and resources to engage students in this manner. This highlights the need for teachers, students and parents/carers to work together to make this period of time a success. We are working hard to ensure our students can remain active with teaching and learning, not only providing them with a valuable focus during this time, but also to prepare them for their next steps with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to make their mark.

May I also take the opportunity to say thank you for your support and encouragement of your son/daughter to keep accessing and working with staff. I know how difficult it can be, no matter what ages they are.



Mike Gaston, Principal & CEO

HSDC

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Your son or daughter will have recently received a letter from Jon Myers, Vice Principal, Student Services. In that, he reminded students that results will be published as previously intended on 13th and 20th August. As you now know, these grades are being calculated by exam boards from a range of evidence and contextual information which includes their teachers' judgements. We must also stress that we cannot communicate these grades with students or parents or enter into any discussion about what these grades might be.

We are also busy putting plans into place for what we believe may be a phased return for some groups of students. We will be very much guided on balancing immediate need with the health and safety of both students and staff. It is clear that the transition back to a 'normal' college day is likely to be a slow one. Staff, students and indeed you as parents need to feel comfortable and confident with the learning environment, and that is completely understandable. It will be my job to try and negate some of that concern and anxiety.

We are therefore presently in a planning stage to consider how best we may introduce any phased return and identify what group of students would be a priority, e.g. possibly students who may need a practical assessment as part of their 'licence to practice'.

Our planning is considering options including limiting access, change to timetables, and redesigning parts of our working and learning environments to facilitate social distancing that could remain a restriction for a long time to come. There is also the need for us to look at transport and how feasible it is for students to travel to learn.

I hope you appreciate that there are many logistics to overcome. However, we will be clearly doing everything to minimise risk before asking staff or students to return even in a phased stage.

The Board of Governors and I believe that the health and safety and well-being of our students and staff is paramount.

When we have more details, following any government guidance on schools, we will of course share our intention with you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mike Gaston

Principal & CEO

