



The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health

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2 September 2021

Dear Year 12 student,

I'm writing to thank you all for your extraordinary efforts and patience as we grapple with coronavirus (COVID-19) and the challenges it brings.

You have done an amazing job in adapting to these strange and difficult times. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank your parents, carers and families - for being your support squad, all while dealing with the effects the pandemic has had on their own lives.

I recognise that this year and 2020 have been school years like no others, and the disruptions have been profound. This is especially the case for you as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) Class of 2021.

Victorian students, and their parents and carers, are rightly concerned about you completing your school years and graduating with a VCE or VCAL to mark the significant achievement of completing your schooling.

As you know, we announced a vaccination booking blitz dedicated for final year school students, their teachers and for VCE exam supervisors and assessors.

The blitz will begin on 7 September and continue until 17 September. During the blitz, final year students, their teachers and VCE exam supervisors and assessors will have access to a dedicated appointment booking hotline and priority timeslots to attend their vaccination appointment at a vaccination centre.

Final year students will also be able to book their second dose via the dedicated phone line, dedicated just to you which will help you book in faster and minimise disruption to your studies. Details will be sent on Friday with the number and bookings will open on Monday 6 September.

To help if you have questions, the Department of Health is hosting a live webinar for final year high school students, their families and educators to provide information on COVID-19 vaccination. You can join the free webinar on Friday 3 September, 4.00-5.00pm via this [link](#) (no need to register).

Topics covered include:

- Vaccines, development and safety
- Accessing and consenting to a vaccination
- How to book an appointment
- Q+A with the panel

This event will be held via Microsoft Teams Live. For access information, see [here](#). Vaccine eligibility for all Victorians aged 16 years and over has now opened and thousands of students have already booked appointments.

I also know that you want to be reassured that we will recognise the challenges you have faced both in 2021 and in 2020 in delivering fair and equitable VCE results and Australian Tertiary Admission Rankings (ATAR) and support our VCAL students to complete key studies and Vocational Education and Training programs.

I completely understand any stress and anxiety you might be feeling and want you to know that the Victorian Government is taking significant measures to ensure all our students are treated fairly.

Every Victorian VCE Unit 3/4 student will be assessed through the Consideration of Educational Disadvantage process and VCE scores adjusted as necessary, to account for any impact this pandemic has on your results. These adjusted scores will also be used to determine your ATAR.

This means no VCE student will be disadvantaged by the effects of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) will again use the Consideration of Educational Disadvantage process to calculate VCE scores using the same approach that served us all so well in 2020.

This will take into account any disruptions to your learning caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Importantly, you will have the opportunity to provide your teachers information about how the pandemic has impacted you through the submission of a Students Statement. Your school will use this, along with what they already know about your circumstances, in providing information on your expected performance had you not been impacted by the pandemic.

This may include significant impacts such as:

- school closures
- long absences
- dealing with substantial extra responsibilities at home
- impacts on your personal health and wellbeing and/or your immediate family
- ongoing issues with remote learning
- mental health challenges.

The VCAA will consider a range of data, including:

- information provided by your school about your school based assessments results as well as your expected achievement had you not been impacted by the pandemic
- the General Achievement Test (GAT)
- External examinations results and information provided by your school on your expected achievement had you not been impacted by the pandemic

These measures will mean that you, and every VCE student, can go into your exams with confidence knowing you won't be disadvantaged, and that your final scores will take into account both your exam performance and your individual circumstances.

For our VCAL students we will once again be using Special Consideration processes, including for students undertaking VET as part of their programs. The VCAA has provided detail on these processes

to your school and teachers and you can rest assured we will all work together to support you over these final months of your schooling.

I know that you will continue working hard, and trust this brings you some peace of mind which will allow you to focus on and put your best efforts into completing your school work and preparing for your exams. We will be supporting you the entire way.

Thank you again for persevering in these challenging times.

Take care, stay safe, and good luck.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Merlino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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