

COVID-19 Q&As – completing VCE written examinations

1. Do students have to have a COVID-19 test prior to sitting a VCE written examination?

No. Students who have no COVID-19 symptoms have not been asked to have a test prior to sitting a VCE written examination. If students are feeling unwell and have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should not attend an examination and should contact their school immediately to seek further advice. If students who are feeling unwell or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 have been tested and are awaiting a result they should not attend an examination.

2. If a student has a COVID-19 test and the result is positive, can they attend their VCE written examination?

No. Students who test positive cannot attend an examination(s). They should follow the instructions provided by the Department of Health and isolate to prevent transmission of COVID-19. They should contact their school and advise them of the test result immediately. A school's VCE COVID-19 Manager/VCE Coordinator will be able to assist students with any questions they have. Student will be eligible for a Derived Examination Score (DES).

3. If a student has tested positive but is vaccinated, can they attend their VCE written examination?

No. Even if a student is fully vaccinated, if they have tested positive they cannot sit any VCE written examinations until they have completed their 14 days quarantine and have tested negative to a COVID-19 test taken on day 13 of their quarantine period. The student will be eligible for a DES for any written examination they have missed during this period. The student's school's VCE COVID-19 Manager/VCE Coordinator will be able to discuss these arrangements with the student.

4. Can students sit a VCE written examination if they are a Primary Close Contact (PCC)?

Yes. PCCs will be permitted to leave quarantine to get a COVID-19 test and to attend a VCE written examination. A school's VCE COVID-19 Manager/VCE Coordinator will be able to assist students to sit their written examinations if they are deemed a PCC by the Department of Health. A school's VCE COVID-19 Manager/VCE Coordinator will be able to discuss these arrangements with students.

5. Why are PCCs being allowed to leave quarantine to attend a VCE written examination?

VCE students have worked very hard during the year and every effort will be made to allow them to sit their written VCE examinations. The Department of Health has determined that with the appropriate health and safety controls in place, PCC students will be able to safely sit their VCE written examinations.

6. How long does a student who is a PCC have to quarantine during the VCE written examination period?

If fully vaccinated and **not** identified as a household PCC, these PCCs will need to quarantine for 7 days. Students who are PCCs and are not fully vaccinated need to quarantine for 14 days.

If **not** fully vaccinated or identified as a household contact, PCCs will need to quarantine for 14 days.

7. Do students have to do additional COVID-19 testing if they are a PCC?

PCCs who are fully vaccinated

- If fully vaccinated and **not** identified as a household PCC, these PCCs will need to quarantine for 7 days and are required to undertake additional COVID-19 tests at day 2, 4 and 6 and will only be allowed to sit examinations if they comply with all requirements, including only leaving quarantine for initial testing; testing on the required additional days; and do not return a positive result or develop symptoms.

PCCs who are not fully vaccinated or are identified as a household contact

- If **not** fully vaccinated or identified as a household contact, PCCs will need to quarantine for 14 days and are required to undertake additional tests at day 2, 4, 6 and 13 and will only be allowed to sit examinations if they comply with all requirements, including only leaving quarantine for initial testing; testing on the required additional days; and do not return a positive result or develop symptoms.

8. If a student is a PCC, will their school require them to show evidence of a negative test before they can attend a VCE written examination?

A student's school may ask PCC students for evidence of a negative test. If they have evidence from their most recent test, then they should provide it, however, if they are still waiting for the result, the school will allow the student to complete their examination with the appropriate health and safety controls in place.

9. If a student is a PCC, what are the reasons for which they are allowed to leave quarantine?

If a student is a PCC, they are permitted to leave quarantine to get a COVID-19 test and to attend a VCE written examination.

10. What is the role of the School VCE COVID-19 Manager and how can they help students?

The role of the VCE COVID-19 Manager is to support any students who have tested positive or are considered PCCs. This responsibility may rest with your VCE Coordinator or another school staff member directly involved with the administration of VCE written examinations at a school.

The VCE COVID-19 Manager will contact students to ensure they understand their testing obligations and for any students deemed a PCC they will outline arrangements for completing VCE written examinations.

The VCE COVID-19 Manager will maintain a list of all COVID-19 positive students and PCCs and liaise with those students to provide support to them and information to ensure they are able to comply with the requirements for sitting VCE written examinations.

11. Where will PCCs sit their VCE written examinations?

PCCs will be required to complete their VCE written examinations in a designated room, separated from other students, with specific health and safety controls in place. This will either be in a room by themselves or with other PCCs. A school's VCE COVID-19 Manager will outline these arrangements with any student deemed a PCC.

12. What additional health and safety controls will be in place for PCCs sitting a VCE written examination?

In addition to sitting the examinations in a dedicated room, the following infection control measures will be in place for written examinations for any student considered a PCC:

- There will be a separate entrance to the examination venue for PCCs
- Students will be spaced out with a density quotient of at least 4 square metres or more per student
- Where available, air purifiers will be prioritised for these rooms

- Where possible, windows and doors will be open
- Students will wear a mask at all times
- Staff and supervisors will wear a N95 mask and eye protection
- Rooms will be cleaned after each examination
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser will be placed at every student and supervisor/staff desk

13. Will supervisors of PCCs sitting written examinations receive additional training?

Yes. The Department of Health will partner with the Department of Education and Training to run a number of webinars for school staff who will be supervising PCCs during the written examinations. This will include information about what personal protective equipment the school staff will be required to wear and how to safely put this on and off. It will also include information about the COVIDSafe practices that need to be in place at the PCC written examination venues, eg. separate entrance, physical distancing, etc.

14. Do PCCs have to sit their VCE written examinations?

Schools will work with PCCs to try and ensure they can complete their VCE written examinations. If arrangements cannot be made for one or more of a student's examinations, they will be eligible to apply for a DES for any examination they are not able to attend.

The DES will be determined based on the student's school-based assessment and examination results as well as a range of additional data provided by the school to assist the VCAA to ensure all students receive fair and reliable results in 2021.

15. If a PCC's written examination is at a non-school venue, e.g. a function centre, is the student allowed to sit their written examination?

Yes. Where schools have organised for examinations to be held at non-school venue, they will work with the venue to ensure the same arrangements are in place for PCCs sitting written examinations as in school venues.

16. Why do schools have to keep a seating plan of VCE written examinations?

Schools are always required to maintain a seating plan. This year it is even more important for schools to keep a seating plan in order to quickly assist with contact tracing should an exposure occur at a written examination.

17. Do students have to check in with QR codes at examination sites?

Students do not need to check-in with a QR code for examinations held at their home school site.

At non-school examination venues, QR code check-in is mandatory for both school staff, supervisors and students. Venues are required to use electronic record keeping that connects with the Service Victoria QR code.

By entering the examination venue, students are acknowledging that they do not have any COVID-19 symptoms, are not a PCC, and are not awaiting a symptomatic COVID-19 test.

18. Do students (non-PCCs) have to wear a face mask at the VCE written examination?

Yes. Everyone attending an examination needs to wear a face mask at all times, unless they have a legal exemption.

19. Who is allowed into the VCE written examination venue?

Only students, examination supervisors and school staff will be allowed into the VCE written examination venue.

20. What should a student do if they have a disability, illness or other circumstance that makes them vulnerable to COVID-19?

If a student has a disability, illness or other circumstance that makes them more likely to become very sick with COVID-19, they should discuss any Special Examination Arrangements with their school. This may allow them to sit their written examination(s) in isolation on school premises with appropriate health and safety controls in place.

21. What should students do if they are unwell in the week of, or on the day of an examination?

Students **must not attend** an examination if they feel unwell or have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, including:

- loss or change in sense of smell or taste
- fever, chills or sweats
- cough, sore throat or runny nose,
- shortness of breath
- in certain circumstances headache, muscle soreness, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea may also be considered as symptoms.

Students should contact their school and remain at home pending further advice.

If they display any COVID-19 symptoms on arrival or if they become unwell during an examination, they will be asked to wait in a separate area and their parent or carer will be called to pick them up.

If they are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms on the day of an examination, they must not attend their examination. They should get tested and stay home until they receive their results. If they are not able to attend an examination, they will be eligible to apply for a DES.

22. Under what other circumstances should a student not attend an examination?

In addition to feeling unwell on the day of an examination, students **must not attend** a written examination if they have tested positive to COVID-19. In these circumstances, they will be eligible to apply for a DES.

23. What evidence do students need to apply for a DES due to COVID-19?

Students will be eligible to apply for a DES if they are prevented from completing an examination or their performance is significantly impacted because of COVID-19.

Evidence requirements include:

- supporting letter/incident report from the school.
- evidence of testing for COVID-19 – such as a medical certificate from an independent health professional recommending testing.

School closure due to COVID-19

If a student's school is temporarily closed because of COVID-19 and as a result one or more examinations cannot be conducted, their school will work with the VCAA to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

24. What mental health and wellbeing support are available for students?

Feelings of general stress and anxiety can be felt by students and their family during the VCE assessments period. Some students may draw motivation from these feelings, but others may need additional support, from family, friends, a trusted teacher or a medical or mental health professional. If they have had a relationship with a medical or mental health professional in the past, now may be a good time for a 'check-in' to refresh strategies to actively manage any concerns that they or their family, friends or school may have.

There are range of supports available, such as:

- [Mental health toolkit \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/education/mental-health/mental-health-toolkit)
- <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/quick-guide-to-student-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources.pdf>

25. How else can students stay safe before their assessment?

All Victorians aged 12 years and older are now [eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine](#). Getting vaccinated is the best way students can protect themselves, their family and our school community from further outbreaks and the spread of COVID-19.

Vaccination is not mandatory for examinations, but it is highly encouraged except where a student's medical practitioner advises otherwise. Students should speak to their doctor if they have any questions about vaccination and their own individual health circumstances.

All students are encouraged to book in for their first dose before their examination. It is recommended they do not get your first vaccine on the day of an exam, or the day before an exam – to avoid feeling common but mild side effects such as tiredness, headache, muscle pain, fever and chills and/or joint pain during their exam.

Students should also ensure they have evidence of vaccination status should this be required for contact tracing.

For more information, visit the Department of Health website: [Vaccination information for children and teenagers | Coronavirus Victoria](#). This includes translated information: [Translated information about COVID-19 vaccines | Coronavirus Victoria](#)

26. What resources are available for parents/carers?

It can be difficult at times for parents to know how best to support their children. Resources for parents and carers include:

- [Tips for parents to support their child's health and wellbeing](#).
- [Raising Learners Podcast Series](#).

27. Where can students find further information?

For further health advice students can contact the 24-hour COVID-19 hotline on 1800 675 398, their GP or visit the Department of Health website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19#what-are-the-symptoms-of-coronavirus-covid-19>