

# Guidance for students completing 2021 VCE written examinations

You should read the following information along with the advice relating to VCE written examinations contained in the [2021 VCE Exams Navigator](#). Please pay close attention to the sections relating to [Approved materials and equipment for VCE external assessments](#), [VCAA rules](#), [2021 VCE examination timetable](#) and [Special Provision](#).

*While this information is directed at students, it is also provided to ensure families/carers are aware of the procedures that will be in place to ensure assessments are conducted in a COVIDSafe environment.*

While VCE written examinations play an important part in determining final results for the VCE, if you are unable to complete any of your VCE written examinations due to COVID-19, you will be able to apply for a Derived Examination Score (DES).

A DES is calculated using your moderated school-based assessments, any other external assessments in the study, your General Achievement Test (GAT) results, and a range of additional data provided by your school.

The VCAA has established processes in place to ensure you receive fair and reliable results.

You should ensure your school has provided you with the following:

- a copy of your personalised **Student Examination/Assessment Timetable** listing the date, time and location for each of your examinations, as well as the final dates for submitting a DES application for each examination; and where relevant
- a copy of your **Special Examination Arrangements Advice slip** for any examination where the VCAA has approved Special Examination Arrangements.

## What measures will be in place to make VCE written examinations COVIDSafe?

VCE written examinations will be held at your school or at another venue as advised by your education provider. All Victorian schools and other senior secondary providers are required to have a COVIDSafe Plan in place.

A range of safety measures approved by the Department of Health will be put in place to make sure the examination environments are COVIDSafe for the wellbeing of all students, supervisors and school personnel. These safety measures include:

- a registration process on arrival;
- setting up the venue in a way that supports physical distancing requirements, maintaining a density requirement of one student per 4 square metres; and
- disinfecting desks and chairs before and after each examination, as well as other high-touch surfaces regularly throughout the day.

## What do I need to do to be COVIDSafe?

### You must:

- Wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth, in line with current guidance for Victorian schools, unless you have an exemption due to a disability or medical condition. You must keep your face mask on at all times, including as you arrive, throughout the examination, and as you leave.
- Perform regular hand hygiene, including on entry to, and exit from, the venue, and
- Maintain physical distancing, keeping at least 1.5 metres away from other people at all times.

## What should I do if I have a disability, illness or other circumstance that makes me vulnerable to COVID-19?

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

## What should I do if I am unwell in the week of, or on the day of an examination?

You **must not attend** an examination if you 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.

Contact your school pending further advice if you have any of these symptoms. Get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible and stay home whilst the result is pending. Inform the testing site or collector that you are a VCE student, as VCE students have been given priority test processing to allow the fastest result time that is possible.

You must not attend if you are waiting a result of a **symptomatic** COVID-19 test

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

**If you are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms on the day of an examination, you must not attend your examination.**

You should get tested and stay home until you receive your results. If you are not able to attend an examination, you will be eligible to apply for a DES.

By attending a VCE written examination, you are confirming that you do not have COVID-19 and do not have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

## **Under what other circumstances should I not attend an examination?**

In addition to feeling unwell on the day of an examination, you **must not attend** a written examination if you have tested positive to COVID-19 or if you are waiting a result of a **symptomatic** COVID-19 test. In these circumstances, you will be eligible to apply for a DES.

## **What if I have been identified as a Primary Close Contact (PCC)?**

The Department of Health has confirmed that students who are identified as a Primary Close Contact will be able to sit their written examinations in a dedicated room at their school.

Each student who is identified as a Primary Close Contact will need to follow the directions of the Department of Health and their school will contact them to ensure they understand the arrangements they must follow, including:

- quarantine and COVID-19 testing requirements whether fully vaccinated or not fully vaccinated; and
- travel and health and safety requirements on each day they have written examinations

## **What evidence do I need to apply for a DES due to COVID-19?**

You will be eligible to apply for a DES if you are prevented from completing an examination or your 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 your school is temporarily closed because of COVID-19 and as a result one or more examinations cannot be conducted, your school will work with the VCAA to ensure you are not disadvantaged. You will not have to apply for a DES if this happens.

## **What mental health and wellbeing support is there for me?**

Feelings of general stress and anxiety can be felt by you and your family during the VCE external assessments period. Some of you 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 you 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 you, your family, friends or school may have.

There are range of supports available for you, 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>

## How else can I stay safe before my assessment?

All Victorians aged 12 years and older are now [eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine](#). Getting vaccinated is the best way you can protect yourself, your 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 your medical practitioner advises you otherwise. Please speak to your doctor if you have any questions about vaccination and your own individual health circumstances.

All students are encouraged to book in for their first dose before their examination. It is recommended you 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 your exam.

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](#).

All students are encouraged to be as COVID-Safe as possible in the days and weeks leading up to your written exams, to avoid being exposed to COVID-19. This includes avoiding high-traffic public areas, busy places, or public transport if possible.

## 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](#).

## Where can I find further information?

For further health advice you can contact the 24-hour COVID-19 hotline on 1800 675 398, your 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>.