



GONZAGA COLLEGE SJ

From the Headmaster

24th February 2021

Dear Parents,

We are delighted that the government has announced the reopening of schools. It is, perhaps, slower than we would have liked but we understand that there are important public health considerations at play nationally.

Return

Students will return to school on a phased basis. Before returning, each student will have to complete *Return to Educational Facility Declaration Form* which will be distributed online ahead of your son's return.

The indicative dates are subject to review and confirmation will follow closer to the time:

6th Year – 1st March

5th Year – 15th March

1st – 4th Year 12th April

The following procedures are in place:

1. Normal **school uniform** and procedures for laundry should apply.
2. **Entrance** to the building will be via the brown Library doors only. The Luas door won't be open in the mornings.
3. Students will have **lockers** but access will be less than normal so good organisation will be key.
4. All classrooms have been set out to allow for **separation of desks** and chairs so that all students are separated by a minimum of 1m, in accordance with the guidelines. Double desks have been removed from classrooms.
5. **Extra cleaning** has been put in place with support staff now present all day and increased hours after school. In addition, we are all responsible for cleaning our own work spaces.
6. Students should come to school with a **supply of face masks and hand-sanitiser and wipes for their desk areas**. They will be required to wear masks when 2m physical distance cannot be maintained. Effectively, this will be at all times in indoor spaces when not eating.



7. **Corridors** The school will have a one-way system. It is important that this is observed. There'll be 'road markings' on the corridor to remind us. The Department of Education COVID-19 Response plan says "Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions." Students should not congregate on corridors, but should move promptly to their destination.
8. The **Dining Hall** will operate but with much reduced seating and students are encouraged to eat outside. When not eating, breaks will be spent outside unless the weather is particularly inclement. Breaktimes will be staggered. Patience will be required!
9. It is our intention to restart all **co-curricular activities** where possible. This will be under constant review. There will be no showers until further notice.
10. **Sports** -Schools are following the guidelines set out by the pertinent national sporting associations, eg the IRFU Guidelines for rugby.
11. We expect many more students to walk and cycle – a pattern that has grown in Dublin and other European cities in recent months. To allow students to physically distance, they will be allowed to walk and cycle on roadways. For safety reasons, there will be **no vehicle access to the school grounds**.
 - a. Between **08:00 - 09:00 & 15:00 – 16:00**
 - b. We would ask you not to congregate or park further down the avenue. This is merely moving the risk to another area.

For Students:

1. When you move classrooms you should sit next to the same people
2. When you move classrooms, you'll start in the new room or lab with a quick wipe-down of the desk and chair, and the same at the end of class.
3. We will all avoid sharing personal items. Bring your own belongings - copies, pens, pencils, rulers, erasers, geometry sets etc.



Handwashing

All toilets have hot water installed. Gel dispensers are being put on corridors. In addition, bring the following to school each day as a personal hygiene kit:

- Small bottle of hand sanitiser
- Tissues
- Clean, sealable bag for used masks
- Wipes for your desk

You should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outdoors
- When your hands are physically dirty
- When you cough or sneeze

If feeling unwell

You know the symptoms of Covid (High temperature, cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties, loss of smell, of taste or if things tasting odd). If you feel unwell during the day, **tell your teacher**. You'll wait in a room and a parent will be called to collect you, and from then on you'll be following medical guidelines on what happens next and when you are back to school.

Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

If you or any member of the household has any of these symptoms, the student in the house should not come to school. Note the HSE's advice that, 'Most of the time, you do not need to phone your GP if a runny nose or sneezing are your child's only symptoms. Talk to your pharmacist instead.'

Good Respiratory Etiquette

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze.



Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

Visitors

- Visitors to school during the day should be minimised as much as possible and by prior appointment and will be received at a specific contact point.
- Visitors should perform proper hygiene on arrival at school and wear a mask.
- Visitors should maintain 2 metres physical distancing from students and staff while in school.
- Visitors should sign a contact tracing log which each school is required to keep.

6th Year

We have received the following information which will be further clarified and refined in due course.

1. It is **our unequivocal clear advice that all students sit the Leaving Cert examinations in all subjects.** – They will get the best of either accredited grades or the examination and that means doing both. The accredited grades process is uncertain and there are many factors including the use of algorithms, and national standardisation process which can affect the data inputted by the College. Examination remains the best route to ensure success for students. Students should not be tempted to mix and match Accredited Grades and examinations. No one knows until results day which six subjects will be counted.
2. Traditional exams commence from June 9 - students will need to fully engage with orals / coursework and other practical assessments.
3. Nationally students have had uneven access to tuition due to lack of IT infrastructure etc, hence the need for a dual process. This is not the case in Gonzaga and is one of the reasons we feel examinations are the best course for all our students.
4. Accredited grades and examinations are two entirely separate processes.

Accredited grades are based on:

- a. Teacher Professional judgement
- b. Based on formative and summative assessments over the course of 2 years
- c. Short tests can be set between now and May 14th to supplement the data
- d. Canvassing of teachers will be prohibited by law
- e. Oral and coursework and practicals are not part of accredited grades



Coursework & Orals:

- a. Conducted by teachers
 - b. Orals marked by State Exams Commission
 - c. Orals conducted face to face (in accordance with health advice)
 - d. Timeframe – Easter & after – not during school day -could be weekends, evenings etc.
5. An estimated grade will be generated for every student in the system based on the last 2 years of work and teacher conducted assessments from reopening until 14th May. This estimate will be subject to a standardisation process. Students will have to work hard for these months in every subject. Choosing an accredited grade alone will not mean sitting back to concentrate on other subjects. This will likely lead to a lower estimate.
 6. Subject specific guides will issue shortly giving details of the new arrangements for orals / and other practical / coursework components.
 7. We hope to run mocks around Easter as students still need examination practice. The Mocks will not inform estimated grades. We are still working on the details.
 8. Indicative dates:

KEY DATES	EXAM COMPONENT	
8 th March 2021	Student Portal Opens	Decision of Students
29 th March 2021	Oral Exams	School Administered
14 th May 2021	Collection of Evidence – Accredited Grades	Coursework Completed
28 th May 2021	School Term Ends for Students	One Week Early
4 th June 2021	Accredited Grades Process Completed	Accredited Grades Submitted by Schools
9 th June 2021	Leaving Certificate Written Exams Commence	Normal LC Timetable 9 th June – 29 th June 2021
Mid-August 2021	Leaving Certificate Exam Results Issued	Normal Timetable for CAO offers etc

3rd Years – Junior Cycle

1. Every student will get a State Cert of Completion
2. In addition, each student will get a school report based on school examinations in May
3. 3rd Year return date (April 12th) – mocks are cancelled as the summer examinations will follow on soon after the return to school.



1st – 4th Year

All other students are estimated to return on April 12th. Until then online teaching will continue as per the pattern since Christmas. The normal timetable will be followed.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back to school and making a fresh start after the disruption of last term. Wishing you all every blessing for the new school year.

Yours sincerely,

Damon McCaul