



9 April 2020

Dear Families and Whānau

Kia ora koutou

Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Preparing for Online Distance Learning

Our thoughts have been with our students and families during the New Zealand-wide lockdown. I would particularly like to acknowledge the essential service workers in our community who have been steadfastly continuing their important work while New Zealand is taking shelter. To each of our essential service mums and dads, and members of the community, thank you for all you have done and continue to do!

We have commenced a new phase of New Zealand's response to COVID-19 and it is very different than anything most of us have ever experienced. Our school staff and Board of Trustees will continue to be available to support your teen's learning and wellbeing in the next weeks. The team at Waimea College have been busy during the holidays to re-orientate our organisation of 1660 young people and close to 200 staff to an online distance learning provider.


Waimea College is well placed as a school to continue to offer distance learning opportunities to our students.

What will Online Distance Learning at Waimea College look like?

Our distance learning programme will involve a combination of online learning, working from textbooks, and practical tasks as appropriate.

Our teachers' main portal for communicating with students and delivering curriculum content will be Microsoft Office 365, specifically the [Microsoft Teams application](#). Other online learning platforms may also be utilised by specific subject areas. Students will be advised of these in due course, if they have not been already.

Logging on to Office 365:

1. Open your web browser and enter [office.com](#) in the address bar.
2. Sign in with your **school email address and password**.
3. Look for the  icon and open the application.
4. From here you can navigate to each of your Class Teams.
5. Note that from your Office 365 home page, you can access the full Microsoft Office suite including Outlook for emails. This suite can also be downloaded to your computer if you have not done so already (look for the **Install Office** button).

Expectations for Online Distance Learning at Waimea College

- We do not expect that our students are engaged in distance learning for a full five hours of each day. However, we do recommend that you develop a timetable of study to implement healthy routines.
- **Junior students should expect a maximum of 2 hours of study per subject, per week.**
- **Senior students should expect approximately 3 hours of study per subject, per week.**
- Please ensure that regular breaks are built into the day; just like they would be at school.
- Most tasks will be brief and straightforward although longer projects may be set depending on the subject and year level. A calendar to keep track of due dates may be useful.
- We appreciate that devices may be shared between family members and our teachers are aware that there will need to be flexibility with online meetings and submission times.
- Our teachers will endeavour to provide the best possible distance learning experience, however there will inevitably be limitations to the level of individual help that can be offered. Please be patient and kind. This is new to all of us; teachers will do their very best to reply as promptly as possible.

- Teachers have been advised against undertaking assessments via online distance learning while we seek advice and guidance from NZQA. Updates regarding NCEA Assessments will be shared as they come to hand.
- We encourage students and families to check the [Waimea College Distance Learning](#) webpage regularly.
- The Ministry of Education has launched a distance learning website to support parents and students ([Learning from Home](#)). This will be updated on a regular basis.

Guidelines for Online Face-to-Face Learning

Teachers may use video-calls to maintain a connection with their students, promote group discussion and answer questions. If students are invited to a meeting, it is recommended they attend.

- Teachers will let students and caregivers know in advance if a class/group video call is being scheduled. If a student is unable to attend, they should inform their teacher.
- Ensure the location and background are appropriate for school interactions. Choose somewhere quiet and use headphones/headset, if available.
- All students participating in video calls must be appropriately dressed. School uniform is not required.
- The camera should always be on, but microphones should be muted when not speaking to minimize background noise.
- **Behaviour and language expectations are the same** as if the students were at school. Students who fall short of these expectations may be removed from the meeting.

The Ministry of Education has developed a webpage with [guidance for parents and caregivers for helping children and young people while they are learning at home](#) that may be helpful in supporting your teen.

Government Learning from Home Package

The Minister of Education has announced details of a package of support and resources for learning from home. Details of this package can be found on the [Beehive website](#). This package includes support to increase the number of students who have access to the internet and devices, the funding of two television channels to broadcast education-related content, and a commitment to providing online resources for parents that will be available through the [Learning from Home](#) website. Our teachers will augment this material into our programmes of learning where appropriate.

Communication

Due to the lockdown, our main school telephone switchboard is currently unavailable, however we are working with our school telecommunications provider to allow remote access. We will provide updates about this once we have established remote telephone access however in the meantime we will continue to monitor emails and the [Waimea College Facebook page](#). Please email inspire@waimea.school.nz if you need support or require further information. If you would like to contact one of your teen's teachers, the school email address format is firstname.lastname@waimea.school.nz. If teachers become ill, they will contact their classes and alternative arrangements will be made to allow students to continue with online distance learning.

Important updates and information will be shared via parent email, the [school website](#), Facebook, and the Waimea College App.

Please keep up to date with developments across the country at <https://covid19.govt.nz/>

Wellbeing & Student Support

Along with the teaching resources that will be made available, we want to ensure that students are well supported in terms of their wellbeing during this difficult time.

Our Guidance Team is also available to provide support. Students or families can e-mail directly to arrange further contact.

Email addresses of Guidance Staff:

Stuart Newby – stuart.newby@waimea.school.nz

Alison Browning – alison.browning@waimea.school.nz

Simon Goodwin – simon.goodwin@waimea.school.nz
Danni Taylor – danni.taylor@waimea.school.nz
Louise Pawson – louise.pawson@waimea.school.nz
Jayne Keys – jayne.keys@waimea.school.nz

Students can also call the following organisations for support:

[Whats Up](#) 0800 942 8787

[Youth Line](#) 0800 376 633 Txt 234

Parents need support too. [Parent Help](#) 0800 568 856 is a free parenting helpline for all issues and all ages. The Ministry of Education have also published a webpage with [tips for teachers, parents and caregiver to support teens and young people](#).

Planning for Reopening Schools

While there is a lot of work happening to manage and respond to the COVID-19 alert levels in the current lockdown, the Ministry of Education continue to provide regular briefings to schools. They have indicated that they are working with other agencies and groups to plan for potential changes in the alert levels and the appropriate time to re-open schools. We will share more about this planning with you when details become clear.

COVID-19 and the impacts of our collective efforts to combat it have added a layer of stress in the fabric of our communities, and in each of us and our families. I know that some families are experiencing loss of employment; many are experiencing the stress of the whole family being underfoot day-after-day; and most are simply struggling with the challenge of a changed world of isolation and uncertainty. We are a community who knows how to come together in the face of adversity. We are resilient and we will get through together.

Thanks in advance for your support as we enter this new phase together. We've got this!

Warm regards



Scott Haines
Principal

