

## Virtual Learning in the Upper School at ISL

Since embarking on this extended period of virtual learning, the Upper School has been learning fast and we appreciate the suggestions and insights which you have provided. Students and teachers have also been sharing their experiences and ideas. Crucially, we have listened to the feedback regarding the organisation of classes, the quantity of work, the challenges of synchronous conferences and the need for everyone to take a break from their screens.

### What we have heard and understood

- Without the direct support of teachers, learning tasks and activities often take students longer to complete successfully.
- Students and families are juggling multiple demands which directly impacts on students ability to interact synchronously and complete tasks.
- Issues with home WIFI can cause challenges for students to connect at times.
- Students are finding it difficult to plan and prioritize with so many platforms to access.
- Students and families are struggling with prioritizing and planning work for the week due to constant updating of work expectations across subject areas.
- For many students, parents are their key collaborators and are the new audience of instructions. Therefore, simplicity, clarity and consistency are key. Many in our community are not native English speakers and are unfamiliar with our Schoology platform.
- Students are spending an unusually high amount of time in front of screens and we must cater for their physical and mental well-being.

These points have been discussed at length within subject departments and with the various academic and pastoral management teams, with a view to updating our practice so as to address the challenges and improve the effectiveness of our virtual learning. Effective from 20 April 2020, the following adjustments to the approach to virtual learning will take place.

### A structured and consistent approach

We appreciate that the rhythm of life in most households follows a Monday through Friday pattern. However, in order to maintain the balance of curriculum time in the virtual learning environment, the eight day (A-H) schedule continues to be the general planning framework for Upper School teachers, students and parents. Looking ahead and as a reminder, Monday 20 April is F day & Monday 27 April is C Day. In preparing all virtual learning activities, the aim for all Upper School teachers is that the amount of time it takes for a student to complete the activities in any subject shall not exceed the amount of time dedicated to that subject in the week. Also, students should only expect synchronous learning activities to take place at the scheduled lesson time according to the letter day calendar.

Teachers will present a plan for the week ahead to students via Schoology. The plan will include the following:

1. An outline of the activities the students will be doing for the week. This will be posted ideally the Friday before, but no later than Monday by 8:25am
2. The plan will include instructions for activities or projects that include easy to follow steps / scaffolding, including links to resources.
3. The estimated time for completion of activity (e.g. 2 periods).
4. Details about deadlines for assignments or projects.
5. Specific times when students are encouraged to participate in a synchronous conference. In general, this will be no more than twice a week.

6. Specific times when teachers are available via Schoology or Hangouts for help or to answer questions. These will usually be during the times according to the 8 day schedule.
7. Clarity about what is obligatory and which are extension activities.

Through using the above structure we anticipate that students will be better able to organise their schedules and meet the requirements of their courses.

### **Further guidance**

It is understood that virtual learning presents a unique challenge for parents and we appreciate the incredible work that you are also doing, juggling your own needs and work alongside supporting your children far more intimately than is usual. Please help your child to maintain as much of a routine as is possible, to establish and maintain a tidy workstation, and to take regular breaks. Having your child design a daily agenda which builds in free time, family time, physical activity, chatting with friends and so on can be really helpful. You can find a raft of guidance and activities on the dedicated section of the [school website](#).

It is essential that each of us recognises the inherent challenges in virtual learning and in learning at home. Each person's circumstances are unique and it is understood that for teachers and students, situations in the home may impact on the ability to meet all of the above expectations. As such, we seek your patience and flexibility as we continue to forge new approaches to upholding ISL's high expectations of learning and well-being.

Please remember that we are here to support. Do not hesitate to reach out if your child is struggling. In addition to teachers, we also have Counsellors and a pastoral team to help.

### **Upper School Leadership Team**

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