



Head of Senior School End of Term 2 Letter

18th June 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Senior School Students

As we reach the end of Term 2 it is worth pausing to reflect on all that we have achieved together over the course of the past nine weeks.

Our focus in Term 2 has been returning to normalcy after the rolling COVID-19 crisis of the past year. We have strived to give students access to all the myriad co-curricular activities and panoply of special events that combine to make life at Blue Mountains Grammar special. It has been a genuine joy to see our students participating so actively in our Winter Sports, Debating, Chess, STEM, Art, Music and Drama. Similarly, we have watched as our Year 12 students have grown into their leadership roles with the Student Representative Council, and our Year 11 students have prepared for their turn to take up the mantle of student leadership. In a similar vein, we have done our utmost to ensure that where many of our students missed out on excursions last year, their learning this term has been punctuated by peak experiences both inside the School and in the wider community.

In the midst of all this excitement, our teaching team have worked hard to increase the rigour of our students' classroom learning, engaging them in challenging and authentic learning activities and assessment. Throughout Term 3 we will continue this academic focus, particularly as our Year 12 students progress towards their HSC Examinations.

Staffing Changes

We are excited to formally welcome Mr. Tristan Forsyth back this coming term from his well-earned Long-Service Leave. While Mr. Forsyth re-joined us part-time in Term 2 to teach his Year 11 and 12 Studies of Religion II classes, he will be resuming his full-time role as Religious and Values Education and HSIE Teacher, and Head of RAVE and LOTE in Term 3.

We are also excited to congratulate Mrs. Leah Opie, Head of Deane House, who will be leaving us temporarily later in Term 3 on Maternity Leave.

While a more formal farewell will take place later in the year to recognise his many years of service to this community, Mr. David Rajasekar, Head of Kelley House and MIC Basketball, will be leaving the School to take up a new position elsewhere at the beginning of 2022.

School Reports

Senior School Reports will be published on the parent portal during the first week of the school holidays. A member of the School's administration team will email families once the reports are available for viewing. Should the reports prompt questions you are invited to request an interview with the teacher concerned by emailing the teacher directly who will then facilitate a meeting upon our return to school next term.

Term 3 Commencement Assembly and House Meetings

School resumes for students on Wednesday 14th July. We will begin our day with a Commencement Assembly in Cuff Hall at 8:30am followed by House Meetings until 9:25am. Classes will resume as normal from Period 2 at 9:25am. We will hold an Extended Tutor Group at 11:40am, giving students the chance to clarify organisational details for the term and to catch up with Tutors and friends after their holiday.

Uniform Focus

Our School uniform is an important symbol of our unity as a community and also a significant tool in each student's growth of self-control and focus that marks Blue Mountains Grammar School. Throughout Term 3 students will continue to wear Winter Uniform. While specific information relating to uniform requirements may be found on Page 16 of the Senior School Diary, I draw your attention to the following points.

- ONLY BMGS School Uniform items are to be worn. I recognise just how cold winter can be in the Blue Mountains, indeed as I write snow is falling outside my office window. Students are invited to wear thermals



under their uniforms, and if cold are expected to wear the jumper, blazer and the all-weather jacket or greatcoat. Note that the all-weather jacket does not replace the blazer but may be worn over the top. Uniform beanies and scarves are also available at the Uniform Shop.

- I must ask families to ensure shoe-polish is available to students please and to work with their children, this holiday period, to initiate a new weekly routine to take the time to polish their shoes. School shoes are expensive, and if they never feel the touch of the polish brush will deteriorate quickly and need to be replaced. Students and parents are reminded that school shoes must be formal, leather shoes, not sport or sneaker-style and are to be clean and well-presented.
- Additional piercings appear to be multiplying among our Senior School Students over recent months. Parents are reminded that girls are permitted ONE pair of small sleepers or studs, to be worn, one in each ear lobe. No other visible piercings are permitted for any student. While young people frequently beg their parents' permission to obtain additional piercings during school holidays, parents are reminded that at the time of enrolment parents gave an undertaking to support the School's policies, and I ask that they do so.

Year 12 Trial HSC Examinations

Our Year 12 students will be undertaking their Trial HSC Examinations in Weeks 3-4 of Term 3. While we support our students' access to tertiary studies through multiple pathways, performance in the HSC, and the achievement of the best Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) possible, remains the most straight-forward and reliable pathway to university study. Students are encouraged to devote a significant portion of their Winter Holiday to examination preparation, ensuring not only a thorough degree of mastery of their course content, but also the well-practiced examination skills needed to navigate their first set of full HSC-style exams. They are also encouraged to take some time to relax!

Year 12 University Applications

Our Year 12 Careers Program is well underway, with students having heard presentations from multiple universities and attended the Sydney Careers Expo at the end of Term 3, 2020. With early-bird university applications due on the 30th September, students are encouraged to spend the necessary time this holiday researching their tertiary education options carefully and to make appointments to meet with Mrs. Michielsen to discuss options for early entry. Each year an increasing proportion of our students receive early offers to the university degrees of their choice, with one student in 2020 being offered eight courses! Universities increasingly recognise that raw marks are not the only indication of a young person's potential success at university, and look for students who have demonstrated leadership as well as ongoing participation in sport, music, the creative and performing arts and community organisations. Our students are uniquely prepared to meet such a test.

Year 11 Leadership Applications

Blue Mountains Grammar School has a long tradition of growing outstanding young leaders, and our leadership program is both thorough and well-designed. Throughout Term 2, our Year 11 students worked collaboratively with their Tutor Groups to create a Senior School Quality Improvement Plan relating to their choice of the following community wellbeing themes:

- Enhancing relationships between Year Groups;
- Deepening engagement with the Ad Altiora Framework;
- Growing student involvement in extra/co-curricular activities;
- Improving participation in the spiritual life of the community;
- Increasing environmental awareness;
- Developing broader community connections.

Having presented their plans at the end of Term 2, it is hoped that they will continue to bear fruit in the community in Term 3, and throughout their time in leadership in Year 12. Please note the following timeline for the selection and induction of Student Leaders for the 2021-2022 year:

- Term 2 Week 3 Year 11 Year Meeting, Program Launch;
- Term 2 Weeks 3-7 Creation and Conduct of Community Wellbeing Plans;



- Term 2 Week 8 Presentation of Community Wellbeing Plans and Progress, Distribution of Student Leadership Applications;
- Term 3 Week 1 Student Leadership Applications Due;
- Term 3 Week 2 Staff review/feedback on Student Leadership Applications;
- Term 3 Weeks 2–3 Student Leadership Interviews and voting processes;
- Term 3 Week 5 Induction Ceremony and Morning Tea;
- Term 3 Week 6 Student Leadership Induction Day.

As the threat of COVID-19 continues to recede, it is hoped that we will be able to invite parents to our Leadership Induction Ceremony and Morning Tea. If your child is among those selected for student leadership, please look for your invitation soon.

Years 8-10 Subject Selection Processes

Students, parents and carers will now have received information relating to subject selection for the 2022 academic year. While Year 10 students attended their Year 11 Subject Selection Evening late in Term 2, subject selections for Year 8 students will be held in Week 2 of Term 3. Year 10 students, parents and carers are reminded that subject selections for Year 11 2022 are due to Mrs. Gaynor MacKinnon by Wednesday 14th July.

Start-of-Term Year Group Zoom Meetings

One of our many learnings from the COVID-Crisis in 2020 was the utility of start-of-term Year Group Meetings for students and parents. We will be holding Zoomed meetings for all years on Friday 9th July at the times listed below, and students and parents are warmly invited to participate. In the meetings we will be addressing priorities for Term 3, upcoming examinations and assessment blocks, and the pastoral program. In addition, we will be helping both students and parents access the new Portal effectively and answering any questions that arise. Please click the following Zoom link to join the meetings: [ZOOM Link](#)

- Year 7 - 9:00am
- Year 8 - 9:30am
- Year 9 - 10:00am
- Year 10 - 10:30am
- Year 11 - 11:30am
- Year 12 - 12:00am

Whole School Information

I draw your attention to the Whole School section of this communication, that Mr Cockington and I have co-authored, that addresses three further topics and provides the Whole School Dates for Term 3. Please note that parents can now locate the 2021 and 2022 Term Dates on our School website.

Final Greetings

It is my hope and prayer that your family will enjoy a restful break this Holiday, and be refreshed for the coming School Term.

Yours Sincerely,

Owen Laffin

Deputy Headmaster – Head of Senior School



From the Heads of School – Whole of School Information

A New Student Portal and Parent Dashboard

Over the past six months, a great deal of 'behind the scenes' work has been taking place in preparation to launch our new online school management system. This is a complex and multi-faceted task, bringing together the functions of multiple software systems that have operated at Blue Mountains Grammar School over the past many years. We expect that our new system, known as Mezzo, will make the lives of students, parents and staff significantly easier, facilitating communication and a range of processes that are currently paper-based. While parents will receive more formal communications from the School with all the information they will need to make use of Mezzo shortly, Senior School students will receive briefings and the relevant training from our first day back in Term 3. Junior School students will not be needing to engage with the new systems but parents of Junior School children will. We look forward to seeing the positive difference our new system will make in the life of the School.

Wellbeing Focus Years P-12 – Compass

We have always prided ourselves as a School on the holistic approach taken to pastoral care and the strength of relationships within our Junior School classes and Senior School Tutor Groups. Throughout the course of 2021, however, Blue Mountains Grammar School is undertaking a thorough review of the School's Wellbeing Program as part of the NSW Association of Independent Schools' Compass – Navigating Whole-School Wellbeing initiative. Under the leadership of Mrs. Alicia Michielsen (Director of Wellbeing and Inclusion) and Mr. Nigel Cockington (Head of Junior School), the Wellbeing Team have engaged with experts from the AIS and across the Independent Schools sector to bring the latest research and a best-practice approach to our own Wellbeing Program. We look forward to seeing the benefits of this renewed focus for our students.

Ongoing COVID-19 Precautions

At this time twelve months ago, our community was just emerging from the depths of the COVID-19 crisis and returning to School. A year later, despite many in our community now vaccinated, it remains vital that we continue to take sensible precautions to manage the risk this virus poses. I commend the School's [COVID-19 Guidelines](#) to your reading, and draw your attention to the following specific points:

- Students experiencing even the mildest cold and flu symptoms must remain home and be tested. Students demonstrating cold and flu symptoms whilst at School will be immediately isolated in Sickbay and sent home. Parents with such symptoms are asked not to attend the campus.
- All in our community are asked to continue to practice good hand-hygiene. Throughout Term 3 students will continue to be asked to sanitise their hands at the beginning of each lesson. Senior School students will disinfect desks at the beginning and end of each lesson. Desks in the Junior School will be disinfected by the cleaners at the end of each school day.
- Parents and students are asked to adhere to the School's published guidelines and follow the instructions of our COVID Marshals at all School events.

