

Frequently Asked Questions

Information for Agents and Prospective Families considering Australian schools during COVID-19

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Are schools changing their AEAS testing requirements at this time?

AEAS has not been advised by any Australian school of changes to AEAS testing requirements at this time.

Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, AEAS testing, with the exception of China, has continued with minimal disruption. We implemented stringent health and safety procedures during the early stages of the outbreak and have worked closely with test venues and Test Administrators to ensure the safety of students and staff at all times. At this stage, regular testing continues to take place in key markets. Please check the AEAS website for session dates and times, as these are subject to change.

Testing in China resumed in small numbers in Beijing and Shanghai last week, and we will add further cities and test sessions where government regulations permit this.

Australia's top independent schools choose AEAS testing for their enrolment and commencement procedures because of the rigorous security measures we implement to maintain test integrity. In times of great uncertainty, our long standing partnerships with Australia's top schools have meant they continue to trust in our testing regime as the best indicator of suitability for students applying to their schools.

Have schools changed application processes or timelines in view of the current circumstances? Should families continue to apply now, or are applications temporarily on hold?

Although the methods of application may have changed slightly, most Australian schools have not made significant changes to their application processes or timelines.

Some schools have indicated that in cases where AEAS testing has not been available, such as in China, they are willing to accept application paperwork while test results are pending. Similar exceptions are being made by some schools for students unable to supply academic reports from their current school due to closures and extended holidays. We must stress however, that wherever these exceptions are being made, they are done so on the proviso that documents are supplied and testing is undertaken as soon as is practicable. While submitting an application without supporting documentation may help to reserve a place on waiting lists, schools have advised AEAS they will not progress applications any further until all documentation requirements have been met.

Please be aware that the Easter holiday break (9-14 April) may result in a short delay in processing of applications, as school staff are unlikely to be working during public holidays. Please be assured, they will respond to enquiries upon their return.

What place availability will schools have for 2021 and beyond?

The clear advice AEAS has received from Australian schools is that their admissions staff continue to work and process student enrolment applications at this time, irrespective of any physical school closures or mandated shutdowns. Effectively, this means that normal enrolment procedures continue to be in operation.

Recently, AEAS has launched the [Australian Schools Information System](https://australianschools.aeas.com.au) (ASIS). You can view ASIS at australianschools.aeas.com.au. This comprehensive online portal provides agents and families all of the information they need about applying to Australia's top schools in the one handy location. With a focus on consistent presentation of school information, ASIS enables families to make easy comparisons between schools, and make contact with key decision makers. Importantly, the system provides users with real time information on place availability, making it even easier for families to apply.

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Australian schools are very keen to continue receiving applications from international students and will work with families to accommodate their individual needs. Some schools have indicated to AEAS that now is the perfect time to submit their applications, as place availability can change quickly.

Have schools reviewed or adjusted age requirements for specific year levels given the likely disruption to the school year, both in Australia and overseas?

AEAS is not aware of any schools having changed their age and entry year level requirements in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. In most cases, age requirements are mandated by the Education Departments of each state and territory.

Families choosing Australia as their preferred destination for education for their child will benefit from the timing of our school year. With best estimates suggesting that most of the world will be dealing with this pandemic for at least the next six months, students coming to Australia for their education in 2021 and beyond will face significantly less disruption than those studying in other destinations. In countries such as the US, Canada or the UK the application process, and indeed the commencement of the new academic year – generally August or September - is likely to be severely impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Are schools providing online learning opportunities, and will these be available for international students currently unable to travel or return to Australia?

Many Australian schools have already implemented alternative study and assessment arrangements that maintain the academic integrity of their programs and courses, while providing students with continuity of study during this time.

Students studying in most Australian private schools will have access to devices and teaching and learning platforms which enable them to undertake their studies remotely.

In response to the travel restrictions currently in place in Australia and many other countries, Australia's education regulatory bodies have relaxed the usual restrictions on the method of delivery for international school students. CRICOS recently advised schools and providers that institutions which have the capacity to offer online or distance education opportunities, are now able to allow overseas students to opt into these academic programs either while the student is still onshore and not attending (either due to self isolation or as personal preventive measure) or while a student is offshore. AEAS understands that further measures will be considered as the situation develops.

Education Departments in each Australian state and territory are working through procedures and policies to support students in the final years of their education. Schools will communicate with families about these arrangements as necessary.

Have changes been made to the student visa (500) application process?

With travel restrictions currently in place, the Australian Department of Home Affairs is prioritising visa applications required for urgent travel and only for individuals eligible for an exemption. In most cases, future international students will not qualify for an exemption.

Despite this, it is still worth applying to Australian schools, as they can issue a Certificate of Enrolment (CoE) subject to a student's ability to meet all other requirements. The Department of Home Affairs has advised they will resume processing of student visas as soon as changes to the current travel restrictions allow this to occur.

For further information on the lodgement and processing of student visas, please refer to the official advice provided by Australia's Department of Home Affairs here: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/student-visa/australia>