



ST GEORGE'S COLLEGE

One of the World's Leading Independent Schools



HEADS-UP! September 2025 Newsletter - Volume 12: Issue 7

FROM THE HEAD'S DESK

The term officially started on 9 September. However, the week prior to the school opening, public examination candidates attended revision lessons in each of their subjects. Thank you to all staff who gave up a week of their holiday to assist their students with their examination preparation.

There was a celebration of music at our Music Evening on 11 September. Thank you to Ms Mtero and her musicians for treating us. Thank you also to students from Prince Edward and Chisipite for making this a very special event.

Imperators' Breakfast is always a wonderful celebration of student achievement. It was good to see familiar faces, but especially those for whom it was the first time to attend.



Students who were selected to be part of the Imperators' Breakfast.

The first two weeks of term were packed with so many cultural and sporting events, reports from which have been recorded elsewhere. The highlight of the month was the Academy and Prize-Giving ceremony on 24 September.



Key Moments from this year's Academy & Prize-Giving ceremony.



Our Guest Speaker was Dr Allen Chiura OG 1983, himself a recipient of four Colour blazers whilst at the College. His speech contained some very prescient comments concerning evolving technology and jobs that our current students will be applying for in the future.



Guest of Honour: Dr Allen Chiura OG 1983

Our U6 Leavers' Service and Lunch is always an emotional event for all involved, students, staff and of course parents.



U6 Leavers' Service & Lunch

We wish all our students who are now sitting their examinations all the very best. AMDG.

Mr John Farrelly (Headmaster)

SGC@ 129 years

In this issue:

- Evening of Music.
- Imperators' Breakfast.
- Academy & Prize-Giving.
- U6 Leavers' Chapel Service and Lunch.

Key dates to note:

- 17 October: Study Leave.
- 18 October: Fixture Free.
- 21 October: Form 1 Parent / Teacher Conference.



Examinations Room, circa 1952

HISTORY ARTICLE: Public Examinations - Historical Reflections on this Annual Challenge.

Students at St George's College have been writing public examinations for close on 127 years, with three entering for what was known in 1898 as the School Elementary Certificate.

In those early days, before the establishment of an Education Department in 1900, the syllabi in use in the few schools that existed here were those of the Cape Colony.

Continued on page 3,

Cherished Memories from the U6 Leavers' Service and Lunch.





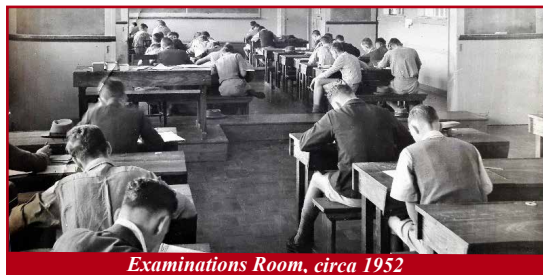
History Article continued:

The exams were taken in December, with the results appearing a month later and, as may be seen in the adjacent photo, a School Higher Certificate was awarded by the University of the Cape of Good Hope to Albert Bisset in 1900. Together with another St George's boy, Woodford Gilbert, he went on to become the first recipient in this country of a Rhodes Scholarship in 1902. Thereafter, the Higher Certificate qualification appears to have morphed into what was called a Junior Certificate (JC), while results also began to appear for Matriculation exams from 1902.

These two levels of public examination then continued to the late 1930s, with the local Education Department having taken over the setting of the JC papers, while the Matric papers continued to be managed from South Africa by the Joint Matriculation Board of the South African Universities. As an aside, the then Prefect of Studies at St George's, speaking at the first Prize-Giving to be held on the Hartmann Hill site in 1927, rather upset the Education authorities with some blunt remarks about the poor work ethic of the school boys of the time, as well as the questionable value of the Matriculation examination.

Then, in October 1937, the Government announced that the JC exam would be abolished and that, beginning at the end of 1939, it would be replaced by a Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate School Certificate. Two years later, the Matriculation exam appears to have been replaced by a Higher School Certificate exam, set by the same Cambridge body, and these two sets of public examinations prevailed until the end of 1963. It is worth noting at this point that right from the earliest days at the College, public examination didn't start until mid-November at the earliest, and lasted, on average, for two and a half weeks.

Even after 1963, when St George's, along with all the government schools, had switched over to the London Associated Examining Board 'O' and 'A' Level exams, these didn't start until around the second week of November. To give a specific example, in 1966 the 'O', 'M', and 'A' Level examinations started on 1 November and continued until 2 December, and there was no such thing as study leave prior to the start. As recently as 2006, the Cambridge exams only began on 16 October, but in the last 10 years or so the start date for the public exams, as dictated by the examining body, has been creeping inexorably forward.

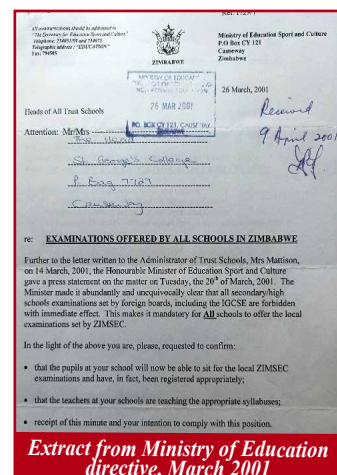


Examinations Room, circa 1952

Public exam practices have also changed in other ways. Back in the 1930s the JC and Matric candidates would write trial papers in October, some of them set by their teachers, rather like our mock exams these days, but in the mid-1960s, given the change in examining body, past papers weren't available! In addition, there were no set recommendations as to relevant text books, and there were no such exam preparation aids as mark schemes, or workshops for teachers run by the examining board.

As a further aside, a few teachers still on the staff, as well as those students in Form 4 in 2001, will remember that year as an "annus horribilis"! Faced with the challenge of a new Cambridge IGCSE syllabus, pupils learned at short notice of a directive from the Ministry of Education that they had also to write the 'O' Level exams set by the local examining body, ZIMSEC! This totally untenable situation, occurring at a time of rapidly increasing economic inflation, also caused panic among parents, with quite a number considering external education options for their children. Fortunately, the matter was resolved within the year.

As a final note, until the late 1970s the end of term exams for those students not writing public exams used to take place in the last week of term, ending the period before break on the last day. This meant that the teachers spent the first few days of their holidays marking papers and writing school reports which were then mailed to the parents. Students who knew that they hadn't performed well used to watch anxiously for the arrival of the postman before then disappearing for several hours on their bicycles, so as to give their parents time to cool down!



Article written by Mr John McCarthy (College Archivist)