

St Constantine's does it again!

The international school's students attain 100% passes for all British A level and AS level finals

While some institutions in East Africa simply closed their doors when the deadly Coronavirus pandemic engulfed the world, impacting just over 87% of the world's student population, others chose to transform their daily instruction to virtual platforms and forge on.

Despite the many challenges that went with this move - and for the second year running - the A-level students of St Constantine's International School in Arusha triumphed with 100% passing. Not to be outdone, the Year 12 AS students also achieved 100% passes with multiple students awarded the top A* mark.

"We are absolutely delighted with the examination results achieved by our students this year as they are quite outstanding, said Headmaster, Mr Tony Macfadyen. "For 100% of our AS and A level students to pass is a great achievement. For Year 13 students it means they can take up their place at top universities around the world and for the Year 12 AS students they are now in a very strong place to move forward into their final year," he said.

"At Year 11, the recognised international benchmark of success is the number of students who achieve at least 5 A*- C grades. Our Year 11 IGCSE results produced multiple distinctions with almost 80% of students gaining top grades, including in English and Maths," he said, "which is especially impressive as we are a non-selective school catering for students of all abilities and languages."

Mr Macfadyen gave credit to the school's "outstanding staff" for their hard work in supporting these super young people to such success.

For top A* performing student, Huseina Sulemanji, this has enabled her to pursue her greatest ambition – to succeed in life through her own merit and capabilities and to become the pride and joy of her parents Murtaza and Tasneem Mussaji, of Arusha - and by winning Awards for Economics, Accounting, Computer Science and Business Studies, she is well on the way.

With three brothers (the elder attending St Constantine's before her and her two younger brothers attending now), it is Huseina who was voted by her classmates as the most likely to be a successful businesswoman. She is going on to further study at Sunway University in Malaysia to study computer science.

St Constantine's is known for its non-denominational, gender-inclusive environment, with all students encouraged, no matter what their curriculum choices are. Zehrabanu Ladak, winner of the King Constantine Award and the Round Square Leadership Award, is continuing her studies to become a specialist doctor. When asked where she saw herself in 10 years' time, she laughed – "Cutting people open because I enjoy it. Surgery, not mutilation. Surgeon, not serial killer," she said.

Other award winners included Charlotte Sinare, a boarder, who was not only appointed as Head Girl, but won the Chemistry Award; Hannah Joshua - Leadership Award; Lars Wallasch - Democracy and Environmentalism Awards; Lisah Nsanzugwanko – the Nolan Kishe Award for The most Innovative and Ambitious student; Tarif Msussa - Leadership Award and Floresse Kpaossou - Physics Award.

Two strong themes that ran through discussions amongst the top students were the importance of Round Square and the benefits of boarding for those that lived in their home away from home.

“My best memories are of the East African Model UN,” said Lars, “and I feel strongly that believing in and reinforcing the Round Square IDEALS is the best tradition the school could have”; while Tarif, Lisah and Charlotte praise the discipline of the boarding house and “the constant love and dedication from the matrons/boarding parents, especially in tolerating us!” Charlotte said.

Head Boy, Shehzadali Virjee, with three strong A levels to his name, said if there was one day he would like to relive it would be “walking into St Constantine’s school on my first day in Year 4” and credits “perseverance” with his success. Shehzadali’s favourite quote is from American singer/songwriter Gerard Way: “One day your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it’s worth watching,” and he believes St Constantine’s has given him the start he needs to be a successful businessman leading a multi-million-dollar company in the future.

Proponents of the British Cambridge Curriculum, St Constantine’s developed a unique three-pronged approach to its ongoing instruction during the school closures – the Cambridge remote teaching plan, the Round Square integration, and its own online teaching plan that nurtured a great relationship between the teachers, parents and the students working from home. “For our part we made the remote learning tasks as age specific and appropriate as we could Mr Macfadyen said. “Every teacher, educator and trainer had to be a Tech-Savvy teacher.” One important part of the teaching and learning was to ensure that students were able to interact with their classmates through such things as online seminars, interactive presentations and online challenges to gather feedback and assess understanding.

“The Cambridge programme was strongly aware that online courses required more self-direction and stronger commitment with students having to be more responsible in getting work done on time, although they may have more flexibility with learning online,” said Head of Secondary, Mr Clem Nderitu.

For Secondary students, especially those looking to advance into universities world-wide, the cancellation or postponement of final exams in June left them stressed and confused about how they would prove their level of attainment. So they could get on with their educational journeys, Cambridge decided to use evidence-based decisions for each candidate in each subject. In developing a new process to assess students and provide grades, they engaged with different entities worldwide, including other awarding bodies, governments and universities to ensure international acceptance. They also engaged with the UK government’s Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which developed a similar process for the GCSEs and A Levels.

“St Constantine’s teachers were fully engaged in this initiative to ensure the year 13 students had their strongest profile available so they could achieve the grade their hard work over 15 years deserved,” said Mr Macfadyen. “It was important that students continued to develop skills for their future working life, while at the same time completing their schoolwork,” he said.

St Constantine’s students received additional great news in an update issued by Cambridge Assessment after the school submitted its assessment results, declaring that the predicted grades sent in not only stood, but in some cases was even higher from the Cambridge assessors, showing that the school had not over-predicted and had been even-handed and fair in its student assessments. “Being accurate, honest, and reliable was really important to us” said the Headmaster.

As the first Round Square School in Tanzania, St Constantine’s is also faithful to the Round Square IDEALS, while sharing a commitment to character education and experiential learning built around the six themes.

“In order to keep these flowing through the school during the remote learning period, a number of challenges were devised, each posing a Big Question to students. They were accompanied by activities and reflective exercises designed for students to do at home and catering for a broad range of ages from 13 – 18 years,” said Mr Macfadyen. “This gave students the opportunity to share something with their peers across the global Round Square community via social media.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT LEONIE TRUBSHOE

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Captions:

- 1) Year 13 graduating students at St Constantine's celebrate their winning results
- 2) Top A* performing student, Huseina Sulemanji