ADVANCED PLACEMENT 2020

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Every year, millions and millions of students sit down worldwide to write their SAT, ACT, IELTS, TOEFL, and AP examinations. This serves as the basis for their admissions into various colleges across the world and is a vital component of the global education industry. However with a pandemic raging across the world and more than 3 million people having been infected with the coronavirus, one of the industries that has taken the biggest hit around the world is the education industry. With the administration of tests being economically, politically, and bureaucratically impossible around the world, millions of students around the world were faced with the daunting task of fulfilling the testing component of their application, colleges decided to implement test optional policies and go full in on their holistic admissions review.

This doesn’t mean that those scores will not be considered - far from that. It implies that out of the pie of your college application, standardised testing will now comprise a smaller share of the pie than it previously did. It will still be your academics and your essays that will be the behemoths when it comes to your application. However, this is a major turning point in the future of standardised testing. There were many colleges even before the pandemic who had implemented test optional policies including prominent ones like the University of Chicago. There were widespread concerns regarding the racial and economic inequalities that affected scores of different students. The pandemic has laid bare these already deep rooted concerns and have proven that colleges can continue to be extremely selective and display their academic integrity and prowess without requiring standardised testing. This is not to mean that the future of standardised testing is grim. The industry will continue to be a huge revenue generator for College Board and other organisations. However, it is certainly true that many colleges may decide not to rescind their test optional policies post the pandemic and decide to go full in on the holistic admissions review. This has already been proven by the University of California public school system (representing the best public universities in the world and overall some of the top universities in the United States). The UC system has declared their policy of continuing to be test optional for at least the next 3 years and have brought forward the possibility of starting their own testing system.

Although this policy of going fully test optional is a good step towards achieving true holistic review, this will not make much of a dent in the millions who take these examinations each year. The simple reason is that students will look at these standardised tests as a way to prove their academic prowess and gain an edge in their admissions. This will create the bandwagon effect and every student who can afford to take these examinations will certainly do so unless facing the most strenuous circumstances.

Standardised Testing is not all that bad - it provides even the poorest of students an opportunity to display their academic strength when they probably cannot afford to undertake extracurriculars. It remains to be seen how these tests will be conducted in the age of the covid-19 pandemic. The Advanced Placement examinations have already been successfully conducted but the more looming challenge remains in organising the ACT, SAT, IELTS, and TOEFL online or through a safe socially distanced physical testing system. College Board and other organisations have already declared their intention for continuing to conduct the SAT physically August onwards but it remains to be seen how they will take upon this herculean challenge when the curve doesn’t seem to flatten in most of the countries including major markets like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and India. Only time will tell which direction the winds will blow in and the future of standardised testing this year looks uncertain