

O-level results: Student missed school for a year because of cancer but graduates with classmates



St Hilda's Secondary School student Caleb Lee had attained two distinctions out of six subjects. ST PHOTO: JOEL CHAN

Sherlyn Sim

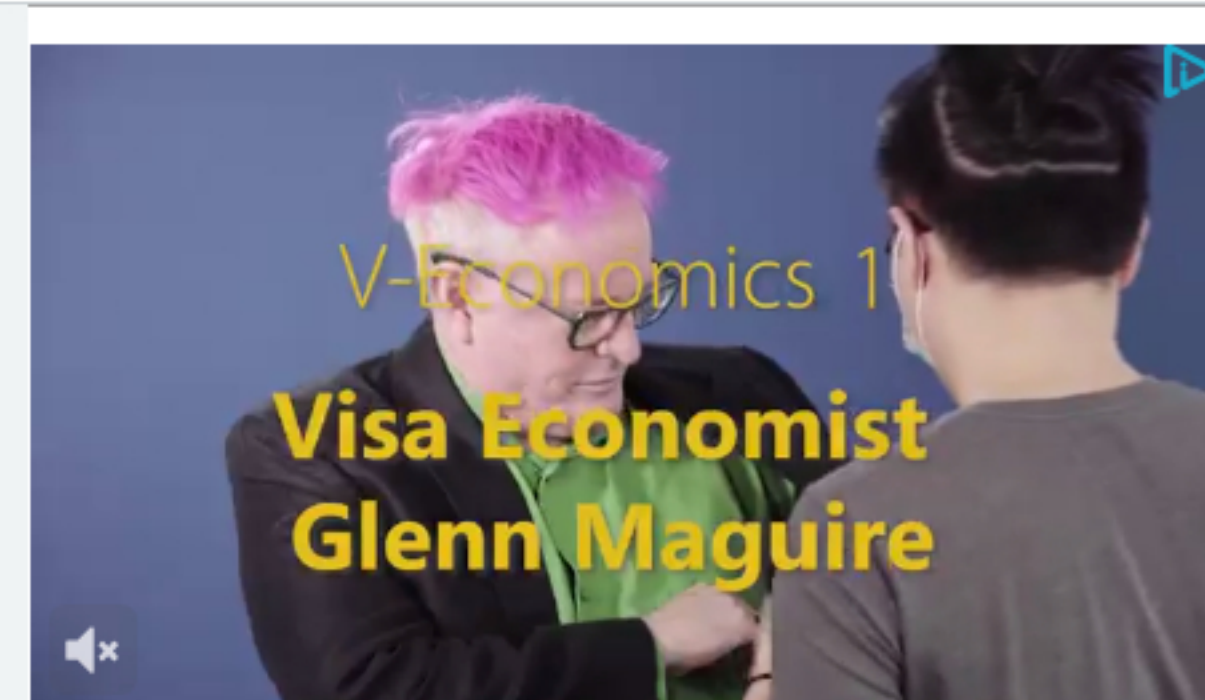
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SINGAPORE - When Caleb Lee was in Secondary 2 in 2018, he woke up one morning to jolts of pain in his thighs that were so excruciating that his mother had to take him to a polyclinic.

He was referred to KK Women's and Children's Hospital that same day, where he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, a type of cancer.

The St Hilda's Secondary School student told The Straits Times: "Everything went downhill so fast and I was warded immediately. When the doctor told my mother (the diagnosis), she came out of his office crying."



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"I thought 'What did I do to deserve this?'. I was also crestfallen because there was not much I could do to change my condition."

Chemotherapy was intense, and he was out of school for a year.

He returned to join his classmates in Secondary 3, and with the help of his teachers and the extra lessons they provided, he was promoted to Secondary 4 last year.

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On Monday (Jan 11), the 16-year old was elated to find out that he had attained two distinctions out of six subjects.

"I am very happy with my results and grateful to everyone who has supported me in my journey," he said.

Caleb was hospitalised four to five days a week during the most intense period of his treatment and often cried before he slept.

"(Before the diagnosis), I was actively participating in the student council.

"When I could not attend school for a year, I was lonely because I saw pictures of my friends in school on social media, but I was in the hospital or at home," said Caleb, who has a 19-year-old sister.

His family, teachers and friends supported him throughout his recovery.

Caleb was also determined to take the O-level exams to graduate with his classmates.

His teachers regularly organised home visits and sent him worksheets to help him catch up with his studies.

He also received extra help by attending the Children Cancer Foundation's schooling programme Place for Academic Learning and Support.



In 2018, student Caleb Lee was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, a type of cancer. ST PHOTO: JOEL CHAN

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His cancer has been in remission for the past four months. Caleb now hopes to follow his mother's footsteps and become an accountant. His father is an engineer.

Caleb has secured a place in the Diploma in Accountancy and Finance programme in Temasek Polytechnic through the Early Admissions Exercise.

On what kept him motivated, he said: "Even though the journey was long and arduous, I always tried to be positive and know that this is part of life which is full of ups and downs.

"This experience has also made me stronger and taught me to live my life with no regrets."

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