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Mahmood's biggest test yet to come

By Rebecca DiGirolamo

Mahmood Musavi is among 3500 Catholic secondary school students completing their South Australian Certificate of Education this month.

The Year 12 St Ignatius' College student has been busy juggling his revision timetable to ensure he gets the best score possible to gain entrance to nursing.

Last month he sat exams for Persian and this month he will be tested in chemistry, maths, and physical education.

What sets him apart from his peers is Mahmood's remarkable story of survival and community spirit.

He is a 23-year-old Afghan asylum seeker currently on the 30,000-long waiting list for processing for temporary protection. He might have to wait three years to know of his future.

It is possible that his bridging visa conditions will mean he will have to enter university as a full-fee paying international student.

He has very little money. He received a scholarship at the College due to his ability to help others through his love of learning.

Mahmood fled Iran, where he was living with his mother, eight siblings and his fiancé, in 2012 after Iranian authorities

identified him as the director of an underground school for Afghan children and adults.

He arrived in Australia by boat and was detained for about 60 days at Christmas Island and Perth before being settled in Adelaide in 2013.

Mahmood, who can speak seven languages, set up an English language school for asylum seekers in Adelaide 18 months ago in response to a cut in the Federally-funded Adult Migrant English Program at Thebarton.

Three times a week he tutors about 20 men and also helps Year 10 students with science and maths.

"I don't know if I'm going to be here tomorrow or the day after tomorrow so I try to make as much of a difference as I can," says Mahmood. "I can't live without being helpful."

Mahmood's dream is to practice medicine. He has sat his UMAT test for entry into medicine.

He says the idea of not being able to study further would be disappointing but he needed to concentrate on the good in his life right now to avoid the deep depression caused by uncertainty affecting many of his friends on bridging visas.

"I could be in their place but I'm trying



POSITIVE: St Ignatius' College student Mahmood Musavi, an Afghan asylum seeker, is sitting his final year exams this month and plans to be a doctor.

not to because I'm amongst lovely people at the college and at least I'm trying my best."

St Ignatius' College rector Fr Rob Davie SJ says Mahmood has made a significant contribution to the College. "Mahmood's unfailingly positive attitude and friendly

manner are greatly appreciated by staff alike," he says.



story, told so openly and recent assembly, has also made him well respected and admired by all at St Ignatius."