

Dear Parent / Carer,

Last week was an incredibly busy week – with Covid-testing for all year groups and official College announcements regarding exams. However, it was amazing to see the Sixth Form buzzing with life again and students (& staff) were clearly very glad to be back in College – although we all missed the small commute! The final test is today in school, Tuesday 16th March and testing kits for home-use will be distributed on Friday.

We put up banners and personalised name signs for every Sixth Form student as a surprise for their first day back – unfortunately the blue tac did not like the heat emitted from the two radiators beneath and it has been quite amusing to watch certain students slowly drift and slide sluggishly down the wall! (Some said it was an apt metaphorical representation of their reaction to the early mornings). 😊



We know there is a very busy few months ahead, so here is some quite detailed information regarding exams, UCAS, Accommodation, Student Finance and other Sixth Form Information.

Take care,

Mrs McMillan

A Level Grades and Assessment Windows

All students attended an Assembly delivered by Mr Lowe last week and received a hard copy of an Assessment Window 1 booklet, which was emailed to you also on Friday. This provides comprehensive and thorough guidance regarding the future A Level assessments, along with suggested resources and revision strategies. Students were very grateful for this and I saw many students clutching well-thumbed copies on Friday!

Students seem to be content and reassured with this arrangement – any form of exams bring inevitable pressure and stress but we have worked hard to make this process as transparent and manageable as possible for our students. We really are in a positive position having had minimal disruption to our learning prior to lockdown – in contrast to many other Sixth Form Colleges who were operating on rota systems or offering heavily reduced teacher-contact or college time.

As you know, the Assessment Windows are as follows – there are four windows and each window is two weeks long. In that time, subjects can do one or two assessments each. However, most A Level subjects are doing 4/5 assessments per subject, in total, so all of these assessment slots **will definitely not be filled**. Three of the assessment windows are after Easter, leaving more time for revision.

Window 1	Window 2	Window 3	Window 4
22 nd March- 1 st April	19 th - 30 th April	3 rd May-14 th May	17 th May-28 th May

Teachers will let students know when their assessment slot is and the key topics being assessed beforehand – but obviously not the precise questions. The Option block letter relates to students' class codes on their timetables. Mr Martin was careful to ensure that students will only have one assessment on any one day – other than the final Thursday when students could have two and the precise dates are on the next page.

Year 13 Window 1						
Week	DATE	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
2	MONDAY 22nd March		Option D			
	TUESDAY 23rd March		Option B			
	WEDNESDAY 24th March	Option C				
	THURSDAY 25th March		Option E			
	FRIDAY 26th March			Option A		
1	MONDAY 29th March		Option B			
	TUESDAY 30th March	Option D				
	WEDNESDAY 31st March	Option C				
	THURSDAY 1st April		Option E		Option A	

We really have tried to do what is best for our students in very difficult circumstances.

UCAS: Year 13

There is no doubt that we have seen a cautious and more tentative approach by universities this year, with hardly any unconditional offers and a very competitive climate. Universities such as Durham actively encouraged deferrals last year, affecting 2021 numbers, and the Oxford admissions round was even more competitive this year with nearly seven applicants for every one undergraduate place (for some courses the ratio was 19-1 making places extra difficult). There has also been a marked increase of 20.9% of Medicine applicants at UK universities, compared to last year. The consequence of this rise in applications is that the selection criteria universities have used in 2021 are likely to be stricter than those used in 2020.

Offers certainly slowed after the Government’s cancellation of summer exams and there are 15 students STILL waiting for offers. (Warwick, Bath, Bristol, Southampton, University of the Arts, London, MMU are all late). The director of admissions at University College London, stated: “Most universities have been quite cautious and circumspect with their offers this year because of what happened in 2020. We usually try to work out how many students we need based on years’ worth of historical data such as how applications convert to offers, acceptances and intake. We’ve not been able to do that because last year was so different and everything is up in the air this year.” This year group also has a high birth rate nationally, so it really has been a more competitive year than ever – well done to our students for the high quality offers that they have and are considering.

Amending your offers or swapping courses, after a change of heart

Once students have made their five choices by the January deadline, that is it. They cannot add new choices until they are in Clearing on Results Day, where they can self-release and apply to new institutions. Students can apply to new universities through UCAS EXTRA – but only if they have been rejected by everyone. (Thankfully this is not relevant for anyone in Year 13!)

HOWEVER, students CAN swap course at a university **they have already applied to**. This amendment is not done through us, or UCAS, but has to be arranged between you and that specific university. For example, one student recently wanted to swap to ‘Law and Criminology’ from straight ‘Law’ and successfully managed to do that for two of her universities, through liaising with the admissions teams herself. This is of course dependent on:

- The course entrance requirements being comparable
- the university’s willingness to accommodate the request
- if there is space on the course.

Students should chat through choices with you, and let us know, before making this important decision. This decision must be made by the **10th June** – the date has been extended due to the pandemic. The five choices are reduced to two: the FIRM choice is the most desired destination and the INSURANCE choice is the second choice university (ideally with lower entry requirements):

Useful, generic UCAS Advice regarding University offers:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/ucas-undergraduate-types-offer>

Accommodation

As soon as you are comfortable to do so, students can make their choices and begin finance and accommodation applications. Many universities open accommodation in March, with a July deadline for the guarantee - however, halls can get full, so it is a tricky balance between not rushing but acting promptly to get the favourite hall of residence. Research the hall carefully and think about the following:

- **Catered? Self-catered?**
- **En-suite or shared toilets and shower facilities?**
- **Shared kitchen and living space in the flat i.e. lounge / TV area?**
- **Close to campus?**
- **Close to city and amenities?**
- **On campus?**
- **Number of people on each floor?**
- **Number of people in the hall itself?**

Many halls also allow students to give a 'Bio' about themselves so they can read about the people on that floor – what they are studying / hobbies etc so it is possible to choose like-minded people. Halls also have social media (most often Facebook) that allows students to connect with people before starting university – this can really ease nerves and forge friendships before they even begin, so look out for this. Being pro-active certainly makes that first day so much easier!

Student Finance

Students will need to apply for student finance so that it is in place for the start of the course. We had booked a speaker from Manchester Metropolitan University who we use every year – she is part of the university's outreach team and her knowledge of student finance is outstanding, but this year MMU has made the following advisory and informative resource, in place of live visits, which is excellent. It is 18 minutes in length and **I really would advise watching**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p3Fg9xP1IM&feature=youtu.be>

There are also webinars this **Wednesday 17th March**, all day, on many post-18 matters (Careers, apprenticeships and university) including student finance at the **UKUniversity Search** event which may be of interest to students and parents. You have to register then can attend live: <https://ukunisearch.vfairs.com/en/webinar-timetable>

EPQ Students and Congratulations

Well done to all the Year 13 EPQ students who are completing this qualification this week. Every student has received a reduced UCAS offer based on their EPQ, which involves filling in a detailed production log, producing a 5000 word report and delivering a presentation, on a topic that is outside and entirely separate from their A Levels.

This year, we have a record 11 students doing an EPQ – especially impressive considering this year group has been significantly affected by the pandemic throughout, and the qualification requires such resilience and independent study. We really do teach some incredible young people! Here are their topics- amazing work:

- **Anna Crayston: Economic effects of Veganism**
- **Nathan Partington: Effects of Climate Change on Insurance Markets**
- **Laura Critchley: International Law/The 1951 Convention & 1967 protocol – does it offer effective protection for Refugees?**
- **Nina Walker: Should the NHS be privatised?**
- **Abi Pawlett: The MAOA gene and its significance in criminal convictions / sentencing**
- **Emily Milburn: Effects of dance on teenage physical and mental health**
- **Phoebe Nation: Effects of social media and the spread of extremist propaganda for young women**
- **Zoe Phillips: Medical Ethical issues presented through the Covid pandemic**
- **Abi Woosey: Enduring appeal of Dystopian Literature for a teen audience**
- **Grace Clisby: Impact of introducing safety helmets in snow sports**
- **Holly Steward: Comparison of French and US military experiences in Vietnam**

Good luck to all! The Sixth Form Team