

8th July 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Year 12 Update

I hope you are well and looking forward to the summer holidays – with a break from the intensity of remote learning. Thankfully, we are all back in September, following the normal timetable....the co-heads will be writing to all parents about the full reopening of the school next week.

Review Grades

As always, we send out review grades on Sims App at this time of year to round off the end of Year 1 of A levels.

These grades reflect your son/daughter's totality of performance over the whole year and not just the recent PPEs. They take into account the PPEs in June and the progress made since the January PPEs, but also classwork, home learning, other assessments, and attitude to learning. This is the grade your son/daughter is most likely to achieve at the end of the course if they continue to study in a similar fashion. By taking on the feedback from staff on how to achieve their very best, students are able to secure or improve on these review grades to meet or exceed their target grades. Between September and May 2021, there is plenty of time for students to make up for any gaps in knowledge from their remote learning and teachers will incorporate this into their teaching programme.

Your son/daughter will sit more PPEs in Year 13, the week after the October half term and in March 2021. These allow students to consolidate their knowledge and understanding, practise their exam technique and most importantly to use the feedback from their teachers to flourish and strive to achieve their very best in the summer.

UCAS Grades

The UCAS grade is different to the review grade. Your son/daughter's teacher will write these grades on the UCAS form. When you compare the UCAS grade with the review grade, you will notice that it may be higher. The UCAS grade is the best-case scenario. Your son/daughter could achieve this optimistic but realistic grade if everything goes in his or her favour. If your son/daughter is disappointed with their UCAS grade, they need to talk to their subject teachers. In this case, teachers are most likely to say that they will review the UCAS grade following the October PPEs. These grades will be posted on your Sims App by tomorrow.

Shortlisting undergraduate courses, universities and personal statements

On Monday, Mrs Hart organised a UCAS day on TEAMS with live presentations from representatives from four universities on what to include in a personal statement. 73 students from Year 12 attended one or more sessions so thanks for nudging your son/daughter!

It would be good if your son/daughter has at least a draft version of their personal statement before the end of term but they may need help from you, as we cannot give the support we would have normally provided in school through academic mentoring sessions and through the seminar programme. The basic format for a personal statement is

- Why do they want to study a particular course? What experiences/books/people have inspired them?
- What are their favourite topics in the three subjects they study and why? Relate to the subject they want to study at university. Incorporate any books read/conferences attended/films watched/speakers etc.
- What have they learnt from extra-curricular activities/sports/volunteering. This is not about lists but describing particular experiences/the soft skills have they learnt/applying theory to the real world
- Finally – any career plans/what they hope to gain from going to university

The idea is to make the statement as personal as possible so your son/daughter's character comes out...admissions tutors read hundreds of them so they need to be concise, pacy and interesting. They want to read that your son/daughter will be an interesting person to have on their course and will be as excited about studying the subject as they are! All the personal statements go through plagiarism software so don't be tempted to pull out a sibling's personal statement and copy and paste the odd paragraph...it will be spotted!

If possible, please you could you sit with your son/daughter and up to an hour to answer the above questions. Another tip is to chat through the questions and as they talk, you write down what they say...this often leads to a very natural prose. Tell them to write/speak from the heart and you can ask further probing questions. It might not be well constructed in the first draft....there are normally three or four drafts ...but it is the ideas and thoughts that are important to jot down. Once your son/daughter has a draft they should send to their personal tutor in the next week. Obviously, this needs to be before the middle of next week so tutors can return them by the end of term. Otherwise, have the draft ready for the start of term – Friday 4th September. We have advised students to send their personal statements to their personal tutors and not to numerous member of staff as this leads to duplication of work and very confusing personal statements. Students can have three or four attempts and then personal tutors will agree with your son/daughter to send it to UCAS. Although important, we have learnt that students can spend a disproportionate time on personal statements to the detriment of their studies.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I hope you have a lovely relaxing summer and thanks again for all your support during the lockdown period.

Best wishes

J. Bellis

Jo Bellis
Head of Sixth Form