

21 April 2020

Dear all

I hope that you and your families are safe and healthy and coping with life in lockdown. I appreciate how challenging it can be to maintain routines at a time when there is no structure; weekends, week days and holidays seem to have become one and the same thing. School is strange too – just a few staff and students maintaining something of a routine. It all seems quite removed from what we see on the news.

As the Covid-19 situation has developed, we've been considering the best way to support and manage your journey through the A level courses. For the past few years, many students have used the May exam week to measure progress and determine next steps. Typically, after that week, students would have considered their progress in light of their future plans. With the significant delay to your assessment week, these answers will come too late, so we are happy to consider you dropping to three subjects with immediate effect. **You will need to complete and return the attached form to me so that I can work with you – via email or on the phone – to make sure this decision is the best for you.**

Please read the guidance below carefully:

- Most students study 3 subjects from the start of term 6 through to the end of year 13.
- A few continue with 4 and are welcome to do so. If you have coped well with the workload and demands of the A level courses since September and you wish to study all 4 subjects, this is fine. There is no evidence to suggest that students of similar ability perform better if they drop to three. **If you wish to continue with four subjects, please confirm this with me.**
- If you are considering specific university or apprenticeship routes, it is likely that you know already the essential subject(s) for study i.e. the one(s) that you must study in order to be eligible to apply for the course e.g. chemistry for medicine.
- Once you have ticked off the essential subjects, the general advice is that you add in the subject(s) in which you are likely to gain the highest grades at A level. To explain this, I'll use two examples:
 1. A student is studying physics, maths, French and chemistry in year 12. She wants to study physics at university. Her dream course is asking for AAB at A level. She must study maths and physics A level but is better studying French as her third A level because she has been working at a grade A during year 12, compared with the grade C she is projected in chemistry.
 2. A student is studying biology, psychology, PE and art. He is looking to apply to study Sports Studies so must choose PE A level. He must then decide which two from biology, psychology and art are projected the highest grades. Even though it might seem that biology is the logical choice, ultimately the actual subject is less important than the grade. So, a B in psychology would open up the doors for the sports course whereas a grade C in biology would close it.

Also bear in mind:

- Just because you find a subject hard, doesn't mean you'll do badly. However, our progress measures over years and years, shows that the results in the more demanding subjects (in terms of complexity) are as good or better than others. For a subject that is more accessible, it could be harder to gain a high grade.
- Year 13 looks different for each subject. Students studying art, English and history, for example, will be expected to manage large independent coursework units in tandem. This can be quite a challenge for those who struggle with chunking down work. I have seen many cases in which the coursework has been the weakest module for a student – this shouldn't be the case.

As you can see, there's a quite a lot to think through, hence the request for you to complete the form and have "a conversation" before you finalise your decision. We have considerable experience of supporting students to make these choices.

I hope that you are managing to cope with the work being set by school. Over the next three weeks, staff will continue to set the consolidation and revision work that will stand you in great stead for your A levels. You have been afforded the chance to revisit and build upon all the work covered in year 12. When we rearrange the assessment week, whether this be in July or September, your results will be used to determine the predicted grades that will accompany your references. At this stage, an hour spent on each subject each day (Monday – Friday) is recommended. If you are struggling to organise your work and/or your time, please drop me an email and I'll do my best to help.

Later this week, I'll send out a bulletin which will include recommendations about a range of super-curricular and extra-curricular activities you could consider over the next few weeks.

I hope you are staying in touch with family and friends using whatever platform works for you! If you and/or your family are struggling or you're worried about anyone, please let me know. We'll do whatever we can to help.

Take care.

Miss Khan

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