

27th November 2020

Dear 2nd Year A-level students and parents,

I hope that this email finds you well and looking forward to the seasonal festivities.

With just under three weeks until the end of the Autumn term I would like to take the opportunity to thank all students for the fortitude and commitment they have shown during this challenging term. Adapting to blended learning with its mix of onsite and distance learning has demanded an impressive dedication. Progress Review 1 grades have shown that students have risen superbly to the challenge. Where students need to further their progress, I trust that discussions with tutors during Progress Review Day and subject teachers during this week's Parents Evenings have provided clear aims and a path forward.

The government have remained committed to a full examination series in summer 2021 albeit with a three-week delay to the start of exams. We are conscious that due to the first lockdown students did not have the opportunity to sit their Transfer exams. Transfer exams provide an opportunity at the end of their 1st year for students to experience preparation for formal assessment sat under exam conditions. To ameliorate the loss of the Transfer exams students sat an Induction test during the initial weeks of the Autumn term. We hope that these Induction tests gave students an opportunity to test themselves with a substantial assessment and receive valuable feedback. Next term, we will be providing students with an additional opportunity to experience assessment sat under full exam conditions. All 2nd Year A-level students will be sitting exams in their A-level subjects during an internal Mid-Year exam week held during the week of Monday 25th January to Friday 29th January 2021. The Mid-Year exams will not only provide students with valuable exam experience but will also afford students vital practice in managing their preparations for formal exams*.

Each A-level subject will be setting an exam paper ranging from 1.5 to 2.5 hours sat under full examination conditions. Students with exam access arrangements (extra time, separate accommodation, use of a scribe or reader etc.) will be fully accommodated. A schedule of dates and times for the Mid-Year exams will be published in the first week of January.

During the week of Monday 25th January to Friday 29th January all 2nd Year A-level lessons will be suspended to allow for students to focus on their exams. All other qualifications will continue to deliver lessons during this week. Where a student is following a mixed programme of A-levels and BTEC or GCSE they should endeavour to attend their BTEC and GCSE lessons unless they are occupied by sitting an A-level Mid-Year exam. Teachers of BTEC and GCSE qualifications will be sympathetic towards students on mixed programmes during the Mid-Year exam week.

Please be assured that the same level of COVID safety will be in place during the Mid-Year exam week as has been in place onsite since September. Safety measures will include:

- 1st and 2nd year students will be kept separate
- students attending exams are allowed onsite only when attending an exam.

- students attending exams will not be able to use the canteen facilities so should bring food/lunch with them.
- students who have two exams in one day will have a dedicated social/study space that they may occupy between exams.
- hand sanitisation on entry and exit to the exam halls.
- exams halls and rooms will be well ventilated.
- students have the option to wear face masks in exam halls and rooms.

The safety of our community at Collyer's is our priority. More detailed safety guidance will be communicated to students closer to the Mid-Year exams.

Mid-Year exams will be marked internally, and results will be released to students on the 22nd of February, allowing a good amount of time before the summer exams for students to take stock and focus on areas for improvement.

The main purpose of the Mid-Year exams is to provide students with the opportunity to experience assessment under exam conditions following a "mock" exam approach. The Mid-Year exams may also provide a robust piece of evidence of student performance should the government choose to consider teacher assessment in awarding of A-level grades in summer 2021. However, if this should be the case, grades achieved in the Mid-Year exams will sit amongst a wide range of other evidence gathered over the course of the A-level. The grade achieved in the Mid-Year exam will not be the sole evidence base of teacher assessment. It should be emphasised that the government are committed to a full examination series in the summer 2021 and have not indicated that teacher assessment will be considered in awarding of final A-level grades.

Students following BTEC and T-Level courses will not be sitting Mid-Year exams as explained above since most vocational courses already have public examinations in early January each year.

Whilst students will be keen to prepare as best they can for the Mid-Year exams, please do ensure that a decent amount of the Christmas holidays is given to relaxing and recharging.

Kind regards,

Rob Hussey

Vice Principal (Curriculum)

**a small number of A-level subjects do not lend themselves to the confines of a 1.5 to 2.5-hour exam. Students in these subjects are assessed on an ongoing basis, and therefore exams will not be sat in these subjects. Students will be made aware of the subjects that will not be sitting an exam during the Mid-Year exam week by their teachers.*