

23 January 2020

DH/YE

Dear Parent / Carer

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on a number of issues with regards to Year 13 students.

Mock Examinations

Year 13 students will be sitting formal mock examinations in A Level subjects and some BTEC / CTEC subjects during the week commencing Monday 24 February. These are important examinations and we hope that your son / daughter will make the most of the half term break to prepare. A mock examination timetable is currently under construction and when complete will be posted on the homepage of the Sleaford Joint Sixth Form schools. The results of these examinations, together with the Year 13 report, will be posted to parents / carers during the week commencing 23 March 2020. If you have any current concerns regarding your son's / daughter's progress then do contact the form tutor or Mr Pickard, Head of Year 13.

Attendance

The time between now and the start of the summer examination season will be crucial in ensuring that students achieve their true potential. Attendance will continue to be vital throughout Year 13. Students are expected to register in the morning with their tutor and be in all lessons. **We would be very grateful for your support in helping us to maintain a high level of attendance and hope that you will continue to contact the school to let us know if your son / daughter will not be in school.**

It has come to our attention that some students are spending a significant amount of time on paid work. National data indicates that more than 8 hours of paid work each week will have an impact on the final results of a Sixth Form student. I understand that students want the independence of part time work and the money that goes with it, but it is also important to consider the effect that it will have on studies. Please work with us and encourage your son / daughter to limit the number of hours of paid work to 8 hours per week or less.

Career Plans

Year 13 students are currently in the process of making decisions about their future. The purpose of the following section is to let you know what needs to be done and what support we can provide. Much of the following information refers to students who have applied to university but if your son / daughter has not applied they are advised to liaise with Mr Pickard, Mr Scholefield or their tutor if seeking employment or apprenticeships or gap year opportunities. We have arranged for the **ASK Apprenticeship Service** to give a presentation and workshop to help students who are considering submitting applications for apprenticeships, including higher degree apprenticeships. We strongly encourage students considering this route to attend this presentation on **Friday 31 January 2020 at 9am** in the main school hall.

Some students do decide that they would like to submit a university application after the official UCAS deadline of 15 January 2020. It is still possible to apply after this date but students will need to be aware that they would only be considered for an offer of a place if the university had places still available on the course. For those wishing to apply for deferred entry to University for 2021 entry, the school is willing to help with UCAS applications. Your son / daughter should contact us at the beginning of the next school year, in September 2020.

Unconditional Offers

A recent trend has been an increase in unconditional offers made by some universities. In this situation it usually means that it does not matter what grades a student achieves in their A-Levels because the university will still give them a place on the course. In the majority of unconditional offers the university will expect the student to choose them as their firm acceptance (CF).

While this can be an appealing safety net for students, I would only advise students to take an unconditional offer if the course and university is the one they most wish to pursue. They should, of course, continue to work hard to get the best possible grades as these are the grades that will have to be declared on a CV or job application for the rest of their life.

Choosing which university offers to accept

By the beginning of May, all offers for 2020 applications to universities should have been made and students informed.

Students will need to decide which university offer will be their firm acceptance (CF) and which will be their Insurance (CI). The student's decision will be made on-line through 'Track' (www.ucas.com). Every student will be given a personal reply deadline date by UCAS which they will need to meet. Failure to reply by this specific date, which is usually in May, will result in them losing their place. It is important, however, that your son / daughter does not rush to make their decision before the deadline date if they are unsure. Students may wish to seek advice from me, Mr Pickard or their tutor at this stage.

The **firm acceptance (CF)** should be made for the Institution that your son / daughter wishes to attend most and for which they can meet the grade conditions of the offer. This should be both realistic and aspirational.

The **insurance choice (CI)** should, in most cases, be a lower offer at a university that your son / daughter would be happy to attend if their grades did not match up to those of the first choice Institution.

As these choices cannot be changed in the UCAS system it is crucial to get this right. The insurance offer should not be higher than the firm so a few students may decide not to have an insurance choice.

All other offers should be declined.

Adjustment

If your son / daughter achieves higher grades than required for their firm offer and wants to consider another Institution, they can - for up to five days from when the place is confirmed - look for an alternative course whilst still retaining the original choice. Should they wish to do this, they must register through 'Track' on the UCAS website. NB. Please remember that accommodation and finance may be more difficult to arrange with last minute changes.

UCAS Extra

If students are unfortunately without offers or wish to change their course, there is a process called 'Extra' which allows further choices (one at a time) to be made. This facility operates from 25 February to early July. **Courses which still have vacancies will be listed on the UCAS website with the annotation 'x' after the course title.**

Please note, not all courses are available in 'Extra', and students should research availability directly with the Universities and Colleges.

Student Finance

You should apply for Student Finance earlier rather than later, using the website <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance> Applications are now open and the **deadline usually being 31 May** to be guaranteed the money at the start of the course.

A-level Results Day: Thursday 13 August 2020

School will be open from **8am** for students to collect their results. At approximately 8am they will be able to find out from the UCAS Track if their **CF** or **CI** place has been successful.

Students who do not get the grades they need will be automatically placed by UCAS into an electronic Clearing System. Vacancies at Universities are listed in The Independent newspaper and on the UCAS website. Clearing now opens in July, so we strongly recommend that any students who think they may have underperformed in the summer examinations, or who want to consider an alternative course, browse through the list of vacancies and speak to Admissions Tutors before results day so they have a good idea of where to start. This means they enter 'Clearing' at an advantage, knowing what and where they want to study. Rest assured this only happens to a few of our students each year, but it does occur across the ability range.

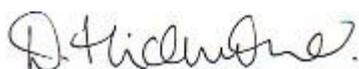
Students should be available at this time to speak to universities, confirm choices and attend interviews where applicable.

We are in school to advise, support and help but the student will need to contact the Admission Tutors directly to discuss their options and suitability for any alternative courses and the possibility of attending an interview. Students will need their UCAS number so that the institution they are considering can view their application online.

If accepted, the University notifies UCAS and the student receives confirmation of their place.

I hope the information above is helpful. If you would like further clarification please contact me at school. You might also like to know that there is a very helpful Parents' Section on the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/parents-and-guardians> where you can download guides about applying, finance and clearing as well as sign up for a monthly newsletter.

Yours faithfully



Mrs D Hickmore
Director of Sixth Form (RCT)