

Ysgol Harri Tudur Henry Tudor School

Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow Dysgwyr Heddiw, Arweinwyr Yfory
13th May 2020

Dear Sixth Form Student (& Parent/ Carer), I hope you are well,

In these unprecedented times, it is important that students understand how the school is working hard to ensure that Year 12 can confidently transition into Year 13, and the outgoing Year 13 are supported in making the step into higher education, further training, apprenticeships or employment.

We have endeavoured to keep students up to date with decisions made by Qualifications Wales and other agencies, through Google Classroom, individual and group emails and the school website (I trust students have been checking these and passing on relevant information to parents and carers).

I know from contact with numerous students that many Year 13 are frustrated at not being able to sit the exams and assessments you have worked diligently towards, whilst Year 12 may feel some anxiety over progressing into Year 13 when their on-site Year 12 experience was curtailed by the school closure and subsequent lockdown. Nevertheless, we are optimistic that both year groups will progress successfully in to the next phase of their education and beyond and we will continue to support them.

Senior leaders at the school are receiving and responding to daily advice/information given by Welsh Government. Even though we are working remotely, we are in regular contact with each other. Be assured that we are working closely with your subject teachers and acting in the best interests of every single student whilst ensuring we fully comply with the expectations of us as an examination centre.

Ysgol Harri Tudur staff are currently working on predicting grades for students in Year 12 and 13, in readiness for submission to WJEC and other exam bodies. Please be assured that we are determined that no student will be unfairly disadvantaged when being awarded their qualifications and wish to support all pupils to follow their chosen pathway.

We are following strict advice from the Welsh Government, WJEC, Pearson, EdExcel and Cambridge in this process to ensure that our centre assessment grades reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the most likely grade each pupil would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment.

To ensure fairness to all pupils across Wales, WJEC will then standardise the grades that are submitted to them, using a method they are developing in conjunction with Qualifications Wales. Therefore, we are not allowed to discuss/share predictions with parents/carers or students. The grades will be embargoed until Results Day.

Below is the web link from the WJEC which contains some answers to some questions you may have and guidance on awarding of grades:

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/en/home/supporting-teachers-and-learners-during-coronavirus/>

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Results Day. Currently there is no indication from Welsh Government that Results Day will be moved from its current date of Thursday 13th August. Details will be emailed and posted on Classroom closer to the date to confirm arrangements therefore it important that departing students do not delete these accounts. Whilst there will be an appeals procedure, the details have not yet been released by exam boards.

Year 13 Specific Information:

On Tuesday this week I participated in a UCAS Wales video conference with UK UCAS executives, Qualifications Wales and all Welsh universities. I raised a number of points put forward by our own students and was reassured that universities across the UK intend beginning the next academic year as planned, whilst also preparing contingencies for social distancing and awareness.

Therefore, all students intending on advancing to university should be confident that the student experience they were hoping for will be ready for them. Student Fees/Loans/Grant queries should be raised with Students Finance Wales directly - their website is live and their office is open for calls.

Whilst most students are committed to taking up their university places in the Autumn, some students have enquired about not taking up their place this September due to anxiety over moving away from home when some Covid-19 restrictions are still in place; this was discussed at the meeting and the advice from universities is that students should not make any withdrawal decision so far ahead of the new university year, there is plenty of time to reflect and contact choices for advice. I strongly echo this advice and even if students do feel unable to take up their places, they should request a 12 month *deferral* in order to give themselves more thinking time and gain extra life experience. A *deferral* allows students to be accepted and shelve that acceptance without having to reapply in 2021 - this is always advisable, especially the current Year 12 is the largest student cohort nationally for a number of years so competition will be harder if they choose to withdraw and reapply. Nevertheless, universities do not always offer *deferrals* simply because students want to earn some money or go travelling, they want to know the experience will benefit you academically / experientially when you take up the course the following year - so start thinking of opportunities! Whilst UCAS reported a small increase in *deferral* enquiries, most students appear to be planning to take up places as usual. Students can continue to contact me via email with UCAS enquiries at any time until September.

For students who have not made a UCAS application, please continue to liaise with Mr Owain Rhys, Careers Advisor, for further information on employment / training.

Sixth Form Clearance: Prior to leaving Year 13 formally, students are required to return all school resources lent to them by the school. I have attached the form and essential Clearance instructions to this letter in students' emails - please read it carefully as there are consequences for unreturned forms / loaned items and texts.

Year 13 EMA: payments will cease on Friday 26th June in line with the Clearance Form deadline.

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ROA: It is obviously disappointing that Year 13 have left the school without a formal celebration of their achievements at the school. Students who have excelled deserve to be recognised and rewarded and we are considering ways in which the ceremony can be postponed; one option is to try and hold it in December when many students will return home from university prior to the school Christmas holidays. This may be a very opportune time for friends who have been away at university or who have entered employment or traineeships to get back together. This will of course be dependent on multiple factors and we will update students once a decision has been made.

Year 12 Specific Information:

I have been very impressed with the way many Year 12 students have continued to work diligently, even during 'lockdown', and this has been observed by many other teachers. The work you are continuing to do is **essential** as even though your exams this year are cancelled, there is a necessity that vocational qualifications (Applied Science, ICT & Sports Studies) continue with all their modular assessments and teachers of most academic qualifications may still advise students to sit AS units alongside A2 units next year if they feel this is the best way to maximise students' success. I advise students to be guided by their teachers in this respect as they know their own subject's exam specifications and students' abilities and potential very well.

Regrettably, however, there continue to be examples of a minority of students who are not engaging with learning through virtual school Google Classroom. This is very disappointing as not only does it mean that teachers are having to stagger learning and continually repeat content in an already limiting on-line teaching scenario, but more so it will ultimately mean that students will be disadvantaged when assessed on work that some simply have not participated in. I understand that some students are sharing laptops with siblings or parents who have been working from home and this has led to understandable challenges, but many of these students, to their credit, have still found opportunities to engage and submit work, whilst other students are not participating in virtual lessons or submitting any work for marking. To my knowledge, no Year 12 student is now without access to a device to engage in teacher led lessons and independent work, yet some teachers have said they have had no contact with a small minority of students since the school closed; **this cannot be sustained**. Students must attempt to engage with work or communicate with teachers / myself if there are issues preventing you from doing so. Students should not be confident of automatically entering Year 13 in September if little or no work has been completed in the interim. Whilst some subjects have completed AS teaching, students should continue to research topics and consolidate their learning; all other subjects will complete AS teaching by Friday 22nd May.

EMA for all Year 12 continues to be paid to all eligible students and will continue to be paid until the end of the academic year on Friday 17th July. However, linking to the previous point, EMA is usually paid where students are actively engaged in learning and I have a meeting with Student Finance Wales on Thursday next week where I expect the level of engagement to be discussed as a criterion for ongoing payments.

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As part of Year 12's transition into Year 13, students usually undertake a Summer Programme in the June/July half term. Even given the unparalleled situation we find ourselves in, the Summer Programme will continue to go ahead from June 1st (the Sixth Form will observe the May half-term break from 22nd May - June 1st).

The Summer Programme normally includes four key elements*:

- A2 Subject Induction (start A2 courses / transfer of AS knowledge to A2)
- Welsh Baccalaureate (Mr McLoughlin consolidates Year 12 WB learning)
- UCAS/University & Careers Research Task (run by myself)
- **Work Experience Week*** (scheduled for wc 29 June - now cancelled).

Whilst the **Work Experience Week** has been cancelled in line with school closure, students should still undertake careers research at the appropriate time. I also ask that where students have already confirmed a work placement they now contact the provider to confirm that it will not be going ahead.

A2 Subject Induction: This will include an introduction to A2 subject specification content and initial tasks to build on prior learning. Specific Induction tasks will be set for completion by the end of term.

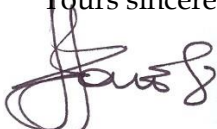
Welsh Baccalaureate: This is one subject where student engagement has apparently been particularly low, reportedly more so in Mr Smith's classes. All Year 12 topics need completing / Yr13 tasks begun.

UCAS/University & Careers Tasks: These include a spreadsheet research task set via Google Forms. The task requires students to research a university course at 5 different universities. Students will need to compare details such as entry requirements and course content, as well as practical issues such as distance from home, travel costs, accommodation, and social life aspects. Other tasks include designing a Curriculum Vitae (CV), comparing careers and setting up a LinkedIn profile (universities and employers are increasingly using LinkedIn profiles instead of searching for applicants via Facebook).

The UCAS task would normally include university open day visits and a private tour of the Swansea Bay Campus, however, due to current school and university closures this is not possible. Instead there will be a series of webinars and online presentations prepared by university staff which will be circulated via Google Classroom. In addition to this I have already circulated, and will continue to do so, university links via email for virtual campus tours, online summer schools and wider opportunities.

To conclude, I hope you and your families are well. I wish you all the best of health and good fortune. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email with any enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



Mr J. Jones
Leader of Key Stage 5 & Director of Expressive Arts

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