



# Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

Whitburn, Sunderland, SR6 7EF Principal: J E Crowe B.A. (Hons)  
Telephone: 0191 529 3712 Facsimile 0191 529 5569 E-mail: office@whitburncofeacademy.org

*'Excellence for All'*

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

## Advice for Year 13 students following cancellation of examinations

Dear Student,

We would like to let you know that we share your disappointment at the cancellation of A Level exams and we appreciate you will be worried about the awarding of grades and the potential impact on admission to universities. I personally feel I have worked hard to prepare my students and was looking forward to seeing how they performed so I can only imagine this loss is magnified for you.

### What we know so far:

The best summary of all questions and answers can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

Points 2 and 17 are relevant for those who have been in touch about coursework. All coursework is likely to be considered in the awarding of grades so it might be particularly important that you complete it to the best standard you can. Teachers are working from home and are not 'off' so can be reasonably expected to assess it. Point 17 brings some uncertainty about coursework that has been started but not completed so it is possible that only coursework completed up to the point of closures is considered. This is frustrating and we will clarify if we hear anything new.

Your grade can be appealed and there will be an option to sit an exam if you are unhappy with the grade. There is much uncertainty over when this will take place and the timeline for awarding of grades if you do choose to sit the exam. The assumption is that it will be Autumn term and there was a suggestion Universities may be asked to allow a late start. I think in reality, courses with limited places (due to placements, space in labs etc) may not be able to accommodate this and a Gap Year may be the only option if you are unhappy with your grade and wish to sit the exam.

I don't think completing 'additional' work to try and impress staff at this stage is a good use of your time. Any 'say' staff get in the awarding of grades will be based upon what we have seen up to this point.

Some students recently 'dropped' EPQ or made other changes to their timetable. If you have done this, please make sure you have notified UCAS via their '[Request to amend qualifications form](#)'.

PTO

Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



Whitburn Church of England Academy is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (Company Number 07465520)  
Registered Office: Whitburn Church of England Academy, Whitburn, Sunderland, SR6 7EF

X:\Letter to Year 13.docx

A small number of you did not manage to achieve a grade in your mock exam and will be worried about the awarding of grades. Point 5 in the document linked above confirms that mock exam grades will not be used on their own, but you must be realistic about the evidence staff have for you. The current system of 'comparable outcomes' means exam boards are committed to ensuring the same proportion of students are awarded each grade, each year. This means they will be looking to award a U grade to *some* students. To safeguard students who failed to get a grade in the mocks, we 'double entered' you for both AS and A level to buy us more time to make the final decision (this will show on your exam timetable). We are not clear at this stage whether you will get two grades or whether we will be able to submit evidence for the one in which you are likely to earn most UCAS points. We will obviously continue to make the best decisions for our students.

### **Progression to University**

The majority of you have a live application via UCAS. The advice we are getting from all sources at the minute is not to rush in with Firm and Insurance choice decisions and not to be easily swayed by a tempting Unconditional offer. As always, do your research and ensure the course and university you choose has good employability statistics. You may have seen this recent article on BBC news, which highlights how important doing your research is:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51676530>

For research about employability, we would guide you to the 'careers library' section of Unifrog which will help you to consider Labour Market Information (LMI) regarding availability of jobs in your chosen sector.

Now is a good time to ensure you have started your [Student Finance application](#). You can start now and if your university or course changes later it can be amended. This is definitely one to do with parents or carers as you will need some of their information.

Some of you will have lost the opportunity to attend an offer-holder or Post-offer day at your chosen universities. These can be reassuring as you are intending to spend three years of your life there, not to mention the financial liability. As almost all have ceased face-to face activities, watch out for 'virtual' alternatives (Durham got in touch about theirs this morning). Don't forget that UCAS hosts '[virtual tours](#)' of many universities.

For those considering an overseas adventure, or as a back-up option, we have worked with A Star Future to provide information and they have sent the following: "Last week we took the precaution of recording one of our school presentations. We have made this available on [YouTube](#) for the duration of the current situation. The video lasts for about 32 minutes and if I were able to edit it professionally there are a couple of parts I would have taken out but in general it gives a fair impression of our regular presentation".

Do not hesitate to get in touch with myself or Mr Moore for advice and guidance. We both have families, so usual working hours please if you expect a quick reply.

### **Progression to non-University routes**

Mr Moore is the guru when it comes to the options outside of the UCAS system and most of you considering this route have been working closely with him. This support continues and you should maintain regular contact so he can support your searches and applications. Unifrog is a good resource with their Apprenticeships tool and you should, by now, have registered with the [National Apprenticeships Service](#).

### **PSHE Activities**

There were a couple more activities we had planned to support you moving out and starting to live independently. We would really encourage you to complete both of the PSHE activities linked to our website (<https://www.whitburncofeacademy.org/sixth-form/next-steps-ucas.html>) and also available via O365/SixthFormStudentResources/PSHE

## **Leavers' Events**

At the time of writing we do not know whether we will be able to get back in before the summer or whether August 13<sup>th</sup> will remain as 'results day'. We will send out further instructions for issuing results, Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing when these things become clear.

We are continuing to plan leavers' events and will try to host something ideally, before (some of) you go away to uni. If not, we will look at our Certificate Presentation Evening in December and maybe extend that to incorporate a Prom, awards etc.

I will contact Alice and Matthew about student awards as I usually would and we will issue the leavers' questionnaire after Easter as normal. Hoodies are due to arrive shortly and we will contact you about arrangements for collection. I may have to drive around the region and leave them at the bottom of your driveway! Either way, we will ensure you get them.

Apologies this has become rather a long letter but there is a lot to communicate. I'm sure I will get to speak to you again soon so I won't say too much but you must know that we have loved every day working with you. You don't deserve your time to end like this and we are well aware you were the first to suffer the 'new' GCSEs; you must be thinking 'Why us?'. We are very proud of what you have achieved, and the young people you have become. I am of course speaking on behalf of the Sixth Form team in saying this.

Finally, many thanks for the kind messages of thanks you have sent to myself and the rest of the team. Thanks also for the 'likes' and 're-Tweets' as we have tried to make sense of recent event and your support has helped spread the messages.

Please continue to watch the school website and our official social media channels for further updates. If you have further queries, please contact me at [lcraggs@whitburncofeacademy.org](mailto:lcraggs@whitburncofeacademy.org)

Please heed the advice and stay at home in the coming weeks. Observe social distancing and keep washing those hands!

Yours faithfully,



**Mr Lee M Craggs**  
Head of Sixth Form  
Whitburn Church of England Academy