

Reading School
Parental and Student Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 3rd April 2020

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All Years

Q: What can I do to help my son with his routine?

A: Please help your son to keep a balance in his life, and take regular breaks from study. We are encouraging staff to work within the normal school day, but for some, child care or the impact of self-isolation makes this impossible. Please ask your son to log off Microsoft Teams at the end of each school day and disable notifications if necessary.

Q: How can I help the School at this time?

A: We are grateful to the huge numbers of parents who have volunteered support in the last fortnight and apologise that we have not been able to respond to all your kind offers. Next week or, possibly in the week after the Easter holidays, we will be sending out a request for guest lectures and talks about parental career experiences which we would like to use to supplement our curriculum. We remain grateful for your partnership.

Q: What is the School doing to support well-being?

A: Our pastoral team, attendance team and student support team are making dozens of phone calls every day. We apologise that tracking activity online has so far been less accurate than we would have liked. If your son is in need of encouragement, is struggling with his emotional or mental health or would like to talk to someone, please do email:

County House: jsteadman@reading-school.co.uk

East House: nwilliams@reading-school.co.uk

Laud House: jgunson@reading-school.co.uk

School House: sallen@reading-school.co.uk

West House: jsanchez@reading-school.co.uk

Year 12: dwhitehorn@reading-school.co.uk

Year13: alloyd@reading-school.co.uk

Q: Who can I contact if I need financial or practical help?

A: Please do not hesitate to email Mr Dawes: mdawes@reading-school.co.uk or the Headmaster, arobson@reading-school.co.uk

Q: I observed that some boys were muting their teacher in one of the video calls. It may be worth checking if Admin can restrict this sort of activity for users that aren't teachers.

A: Teachers have had training in how to restrict this from happening and a reminder about expectation has been sent to individuals as well alongside a generic message to all students. Your son will have message posted on Wednesday in his whole school Teams.

Q: This may be a problem with younger years, but Teams sometimes gets heavily used as a chat room. While we totally understand that this is probably the only means for these young boys to communicate with their friends, it can also be very disruptive and can hide the important messages from the teachers.

A: Teams is not to be used as a social media platform. This has been highlighted again in a message sent in Teams to all students and staff. We do not promote other social media platforms as we have no monitoring of communications over the usage but would encourage parents to support their son to keep connected with their friends by using the numerous age appropriate platforms. Responsible use of social media and safety has been covered in the school curriculum but we would also encourage parents to take an active role in monitoring.

Q: This was suggested on a parent's group and I personally think this isn't logistically possible to achieve, I will pass on this suggestion to you. If possible, it will be very useful for overstretched parents to receive a summary of assignments on daily or weekly basis in advance.

A: We have looked into a weekly report of assignments which could be sent to parents with our network manager. It is not currently possible to produce this but may be in the future when an update is made to SDS software.

Year 7 and 8

Q: Will it be possible to have more face to face time in Year 7 or 8 online learning soon?

A: As we move into a more sustained phase of remote learning we are doing everything possible to adjust the curriculum and meet students' needs. A Department for Education briefing regarding plans for Year 11 and 13 grade calculations is due next week, and once the burden of completing these courses has passed we hope to significantly increase the contact time between junior students and their teachers.

Q: It may be useful if the boys (especially the younger years) get 5-10 minutes video class time with their form tutor at the beginning/end of their day, if possible.

A: There is a Teams group for each tutor group and tutor had a live session on Friday 3rd of April. On the first Monday after Easter each tutor will have a 1:1 meeting. We are shifting our emphasis towards younger years in the summer term, adjusting the structure to retain engagement and have a balance of work and wellbeing.

Year 8

Q: Is it possible to change a GCSE subject once you have already begun it in Year 9? For example, could you change to one of your reserve subjects?

A: Once you have started studying a subject for GCSE it is very unlikely that you will be able to change to a different subject, unless there are exceptional circumstances in the first few weeks of Year 9. Therefore, it is important that you think carefully about your subject choices and ensure you choose the correct subjects for you.

By way of reminder, the deadline for completing the online options form is Friday April 4th 2020.

Year 9 and 10

Q: What plans are in place for Year 9 or 10 lessons after Easter?

A: We hope that all Year 9 and 10 classes will revert to a full timetable of remote teaching after the Easter holidays. We are also looking at a range of independent study options which may stretch students beyond the normal curriculum.

Years 7 - 12

Q: What are Collection Exams?

A: The School now envisages that all students will be tested in September, rather than has usually been the case in May. These tests will take place in the first week of term to provide the School with some empirical data about the students' capabilities in their subjects. Students currently in Year 12 will also have online assessments in May to help gauge potential predicted grades, as well as September Collections which will be used to produce the final UCAS predicted grades for University admissions.

Year 11 and 13

Q At what point will the process of calculating grades be considered complete, at least from the school's perspective?

A In the absence of any further clarification from the Department for Education, the School has set the following deadlines for final assignments for the GCSE and A-level subjects. Following the completion of these, the School is not expecting students to have to complete any other work apart from non-examined-assessments if advised to do so by teachers. We cannot yet confirm that courses will be complete once these assignments are undertaken, but, for the sake of well-being, would advise all students to have proper break in the Easter holidays. Further details from the Government can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-update-on-2020-exams>

A Level Subject	Assignment deadline	Day	Time
French	30/03/2020	Monday	10:30
Maths	30/03/2020	Monday	12:00
Chemistry	30/03/2020	Monday	15:30
English Literature	31/03/2020	Tuesday	10:30
Economics	31/03/2020	Tuesday	12:00
Computer Science	31/03/2020	Tuesday	15:30
Spanish	01/04/2020	Wednesday	10:30
Latin	01/04/2020	Wednesday	12:00
Biology	01/04/2020	Wednesday	15:30
Geography	02/04/2020	Thursday	10:30
Physics	02/04/2020	Thursday	12:00
German	02/04/2020	Thursday	15:30
Classical Civilisation	03/04/2020	Friday	10:30
Music	03/04/2020	Friday	12:00
History	03/04/2020	Friday	15:30

GCSE Subject	Assignment deadline	Day	Time
Biology	30/03/2020	Monday	10:30
English	30/03/2020	Monday	12:00
Mathematics	30/03/2020	Monday	15:30
Computer Science	31/03/2020	Tuesday	10:30
Latin/ Ancient History	31/03/2020	Tuesday	12:00
RS/ Philosophy	31/03/2020	Tuesday	15:30
Economics	01/04/2020	Wednesday	10:30
Geography	01/04/2020	Wednesday	12:00
English Literature	01/04/2020	Wednesday	15:30

Chemistry	02/04/2020	Thursday	10:30
French/ Spanish/ German*	02/04/2020	Thursday	12:00 / 15:30
Physical Education	02/04/2020	Thursday	15:30
History	03/04/2020	Friday	10:30
Physics**	03/04/2020	Friday	13:00
Music/ Art/ Drama	03/04/2020	Friday	15:30

* Second deadline is for dual linguists

** as per Mr Stromdale's separate instructions

Q: What should Year 11 and 13 students do after the open book assessments are complete?

A: Year 11 will be provided with useful reading lists for each of your A Level choices. We always provide this bridging work, but normally not until July. Recommended reading will help students prepare for A-level study and is doubly important given the unusually long hiatus between GCSEs finishing and A Level courses commencing. September assessments for Year 12 will be based on the recommended reading.

A: For Year 13 students we are opening conversation with recent leavers studying the courses our current students hope to join in September. We aim to provide Year 13 students with lectures and resources that will prepare them for undergraduate study. This is a new initiative and will be rolled out as quickly as we are able to find people able to offer their expertise.

Q: What is the point of this extra work? Their exams are finished, what is to be gained by doing this?

A: Studying between April and June on bridging work is a realistic and reasonable expectation considering that this time would otherwise have been spent preparing for their A-levels. This still leaves them with the usual holiday they would otherwise have had. Additionally, spending these months working productively on preparatory Sixth Form work alongside a small amount of revision before the start of the year, will give them the best chance of achieving well in the more challenging arena of A-level study and facilitate a flying start to their Year 12 work. Also, it is important that students intending to enter Year 12 at Reading School know that they will be subject to Collection Exams in the first week of A-level study.

Q: If I have withdrawn from an exam previously, can I now be re-entered and be awarded a calculated grade?

A: No, we do not consider it fair for students who have withdrawn from a course to now be reinstated knowing they will not be examined. Students would not have had that option if the exam system hadn't changed. All requests for re-enrolment will therefore be denied.

Year 11

Q: What are the purpose of Collection Exams for students currently in Year 11?

A: The primary purpose of these Collection Exams is to gauge progress and enable students to showcase the progress they have made through independent study. For students currently in Year 11 they will act as a discriminator for over-subscribed subjects. With the absence of rigorous external examination, this will be important to determine which students are best suited to these challenging courses, which have high entry requirements. Collections are therefore the only mechanism for screening readiness for the course and are the fairest way of assessing who is ready for the fast-paced teaching to large cohorts of students.

Q: If you provided the grades for students, why do they need to be tested to see if they are able to complete the A-level course?

A: Knowing that GCSE grades this year awarded by the exam boards will not be based on the same robust data as in previous years, we do not have the normal mechanisms for reducing over-subscription, and currently have 120 students internally and a similar number externally calculated to achieve the entry requirements. September Collections for current Year 11 students will help us target teaching toward knowledge gaps, will boost the confidence of students who have made rapid progress through the Spring

and will help students adjust their expectations or choices if they are not in a suitable place for making progress in one or other of their choices.

Q: Will over-subscription mean there are not enough places for students in their chosen subjects?

A: Normally 72% of applicants offered places achieve the required grades and decide to come to Reading School. We do not know if this will be the case this year, due to these unusual circumstances, so the Collections are a contingency mechanism. Every year there is always an over-subscription in some subjects. In a typical year, our entry requirements mean that this is manageable, with students who do not meet the requirements required to select another subject for their A-level study, or students not coming to the School at all, having not achieved the required grades.

However, we anticipate that this issue will be greater than normal this year, with calculated grades rather than exam results being used. Entry requirements in the most over-subscribed subjects are set in order to reduce the number of students in each class in these subjects to a sustainable level. There is no fairer way of managing applications, having made our offers before the change to the grading system took place.

Q: Which subjects are likely to be affected by this over-subscription?

A: The main subjects where there would be a reasonable chance of students not fulfilling the requirements would be those where there is considerable over-subscription. This would primarily be Physics and Further Maths, although there may also be some over-subscription in Maths, Chemistry and Economics.

Q: If a student is not able to do the subjects he wants to following these Collection Exams, what are his options?

A: Firstly, he can select another subject that has capacity at the School. Alternatively, the School will help him find another setting where he is able to study the subjects he desires. Every year there are always students who make the decision to change school, often well into October. This is always an option and one that some students may decide to be the best one for them if they are unable to study the subjects they wish to at Reading School.

Q: How will external applicants manage the Collection Exams?

A: They will be sent the exact same bridging material as internal candidates, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by this process.

Q: It all feels quite uncertain about next steps for Year 11. Can you offer any reassurance about this?

A: If a student has achieved exceptional grades in July, then this provides a greater sense of certainty than would ordinarily occur in a typical year, when students would be waiting much longer for their results. Every year there is a period of uncertainty about the outcome of GCSE results and consequently where students will attend school for A-levels. This is only ever resolved in the last week of August, one week before students begin their A-level study. The system we are advocating will extend this by a fortnight, which we do not consider unreasonable given the unprecedented circumstances and our need to ensure students are fully capable of completing the courses they have selected for A-level.

Q: Will the School's calculated grades be shared with students in advance of the July results?

A: No. As these are indicative grades, with the final adjustments being made by the exam boards this is not something we will share with students, much like we do not share coursework marks, that could be adjusted by moderation, with students.