

## PARENTS' FORUM - WEDNESDAY 8 MAY 2019

*Introduction of Jon Carr (JDC) by Rachel Owens (RCFO) and welcome!*

*All parents are invited to attend the **Sixth Form Open Evening** next term on Thursday 19 September.*

***Sixth Form seems to have a vets/medics/dentistry group for Second Year & Sixth Form only. I have a Third Year who already desires a medical career.***

- ***What does the group do?***
- ***Is 2nd year 6th sufficient?***
- ***Should there be pre-6th form provision for potential VMDs?***

This is a two year programme offered throughout Sixth Form. The programme is first touched on in the Second Year and students are provided with information in Fourth and Fifth Year, but work experience is undertaken in the Sixth Form only, largely due to age restrictions. RCFO

***October half-term: The introduction of the two week October half-term break resulted in a greater volume of homework being set for the two weeks holiday - probably essential to ensure the curriculum is covered, but perhaps a little counterproductive to rely on student self-directed learning! The subsequent adjustments to the Christmas and Easter holidays, also gave less time off but with similarly high volumes of homework being set.***

***In the interest of maintaining our 'perfectly balanced' students, would you consider reverting to a one week half-term break or encouraging the staff to be more measured in the volume of work they are setting?***

Research on staff and student absence due to illness has shown that during the intense Christmas Term, workload is better managed with a longer two-week break which results in better productivity. The homework set over half term should not have been a higher volume than usual – it might well be that this was work set in the last week which was left by the students to take advantage of the extended half term. RCFO

For Sixth Form, the rule of thumb for homework is that one week is given for a major piece of work. Students are usually required to submit two written pieces of work each week which is approximately 15 hours of work each week per student, including 5 hours contact time per lesson per week. 7 x 45 minute lessons per subject. Total = 3 subjects + EPQ, Lectures, RS and supervised study & games. JDC

***The timing of the A level mock exams after the February Half Term can cause additional stress – why are they set so early?***

The mock exams are deliberately early in order to give students who perform poorly, time to improve with the help of their teachers. JDC

In light of the rise in Conditional Offers from universities, we also believe that the timing of the mocks gives students the mental 'push' to make changes to their work. In a changing landscape, there is greater competition post universities for higher grades. Some students need convincing to work hard to achieve good grades, despite Conditional Offers! RCFO

***University Research: how does the College support students (and parents!) with advice regarding universities and future careers? Are students given subject guidance?***

From May of L6 onwards, students are provided with careers information, via HE Days, 'Unifrog' etc. There are careers interviews which take place over 3 evenings in one week in June (with support of Old Georgians). Assessments take place after the Summer half term with predicted grades to guide each student with university applications. There is also continued support from subject teachers and tutors for each student. JDC

A realistic grade assessment is given to each L6 student following the summer exams. Most of our student achieve Russell Group university offers, which is an indication that we are on course for what they want and parents expect. Of course, it's important to achieve a balance between realistic and achievable grades. RCFO

***My daughter in L6 has already picked her final 5 universities – is this too narrow too soon?***

Possibly; we would encourage all students to 'think outside the box' including those universities beyond the UK in the US and Europe. JDC

***Is it really worth it to do an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification)? Currently it feels that too much time appears to be spent on EPQ instead of concentrating on good grades.***

It is increasingly common for universities to focus on EPQ but we do understand this point of view. The main advantages of EPQ is that it contributes to a university offer (it's considered half an A level). In addition, the skills acquired from doing an EPQ are significant i.e. time management, research practice and the study from the EPQ project apes the university experience. Two lessons (45 minutes each) are allotted to EPQ per week which we feel gives ample time for each student. JDC

***Unconditional Offers: How many is a student likely to receive?***

Out of 5, one is likely to be an unconditional offer. JDC

It is a changing landscape. Be aware that universities need student numbers to secure their funding and partly as a result of this there has been a rise in the number of unconditional offers. RCFO

***My daughter is in L6 and has very much enjoyed her time throughout SGC. However, I am concerned about her coursework and moderation of coursework for both GCSE and upcoming A levels. How objective is the coursework marking? What can the Head of Sixth Form and/or DH Academic do to enable better transparency within the system?***

The work is marked by subject teachers, then moderated in the department. A request for review of marking can then be made. When that happens, the script is usually asked for by the exam board for further moderation. Whilst not perfect, rest assured all of our teaching staff strive constantly to meet the criteria given by the Exam Boards. Realistically, though, some subjects are more subjective than others, and so moderation may change grades – whereas it is unlikely in more 'factual' subjects such as Maths. RCFO

There is a tight collaboration between staff – a teacher will never work independently on coursework. We feel that the training by the Heads of Department is stringent and consistent but of course any concerns should be put to RCFO or Francesca May (DH Academic). JDC

***Why is it recommended for L6 students to hold off from university research and visits until June? Some university open days have already taken place in April/May – why wait?***

Our policy is for students to concentrate on their assessments in the Summer Term which are ultimately the most important focus at this stage. However, we would, in principle, be happy for some L6th to attend weekend university events provided they don't encroach on study during the week. JDC

***What Careers Support is provided at SGC, particularly within the Sixth Form? My daughter is in the Fifth Year – when will she receive advice regarding university applications and A level choices with background for a future career in Engineering?***

The careers support has changed significantly since my arrival; a two person job-share was set up to work in-house which worked well, but sadly due to personal circumstances, both have had to leave us early this year.

Instead a new careers company, Tinker Tailor, which specialises in independent schools, has just been brought in. They will provide careers support from the end of the Fourth Year up to Sixth Form. A parents' evening is also in the pipeline to give parents the opportunity to meet with the Tinker Tailor team. [Tinker Tailor website](#)

Tinker Tailor have already visited the U6, and are due to meet with the L6 over 3 days (after the assessments) to cover CVs, interviews, UCAS Forms and meet with subject tutors. JDC

***Will the new careers team offer individual career advice and really get to know the students?***

Yes, we believe Tinker Tailor specialise in personalised contact. They will provide a direct email contact following the parents evening. There will be a Careers Administrator on-site to expedite the ground work and Tinker Tailor will also bring a team of 20 trainers with them. We have every confidence in Tinker Tailor – they are very experienced in the independent sector and well versed in independent European and US university applications. How they will progress with Careers within the College is something the Governors are very interested in too – it is a high priority. RCFO

***At the Careers Forum in October 2018, it was suggested that apprenticeships were equally as important as university applications, providing a broader experience. Will Tinker Tailor also have the same views?***

Yes, we are extremely confident in the new team – all the new career paths will be considered! RCFO

***By which date should A level subjects be chosen? Are scholarship applications required for Sixth Form, are students likely to lose them?***

The final deadline for Fifth Years to confirm their A level subject choice is in January but we are flexible and do understand that students may change their minds following GCSE results.

Current scholars rarely lose their scholarships in Sixth Form; if there is concern about a failing student, they are always given early guidance - failure to continue with a scholarship is usually due to lack of effort and choice. Applications for scholarships are not required; new scholars are awarded following assessment by Heads of Year and SLT in November. Academic scholarships are also awarded following excellent GCSE results. RCFO

***Are OGs (Old Georgians) involved with career advice?***

Yes, very much so! Caroline Long and the Development team liaise with OGs for support in specific areas and they are often very keen to help out! RCFO

The interviews week involves many OGs and they frequently are invited to come in to talk to Sixth Form. JDC

***What is the GCSE requirement for access to Sixth Form for internal students?***

There is an expectation that our Fifth Years will automatically go through to Sixth Form although we have an individual approach for each student. We will talk to parents of Fourth and Fifth Year parents if there is concern about Sixth Form options. We will also carefully consider Sixth Form entry in the event that grades are weaker than expected, although ultimately it must be what is best for the student. The external average is 7 x A\* at GCSE to ensure strong new high performing students coming into our Sixth Form! RCFO

***The Value Added outcome was very impressive last year – was is the prediction for this year?***

The same this year – consistency is essential - although we are not an academic hot-house! RCFO

***Are applications for universities outside England (i.e. Scotland) very different?***

There is no difference with Scottish university applications for our students – though competition is fierce as Scots themselves are tending now to stay north of the border! JDC

***The current A levels at SGC are largely academic based – are there any plans to broaden the choice?***

We have just recently expanded A level provision to include Psychology and Design Technology but given that most of our students' objective is to apply for competitive universities, which require solid academic A level grades, we would not consider less academic A levels at this time. RCFO

***Are there any plans to change the programme for Prize Giving in future?***

Yes, very much so! 2019 will be the last traditional Prize Giving format in September. With the opening of the new Activity Centre, Christian Kendall-Daw (DH Staff) and his team are planning a new Prize Giving programme from 2020 with new Summer Term dates. We will keep you posted! RCFO

*Thank you to all the parents that have attended the Forum this evening. Minutes of the Forum will be posted [here](#) on Firefly.*