



August 2016

Parents of Year 13

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As your son/daughter completed AS examinations this summer and is awaiting results on 18 August, I thought it may be useful to provide you with an overview of the support the school can offer once the examination results have been published. This support includes the following:

- 1 Enquiries about results to the examination board.
- 2 Careers Department/University application advice.

1 Enquiries about Results

For the first time in Wallace, all L6 students studying A Levels here this year have been entered for CCEA examinations only. (The one exception is Travel and Tourism which is provided in collaboration with Friends', this is AQA examination board.) By this stage many of our students have a very clear understanding of the Subject Level Uniform Mark Grade Boundaries and can use these to make informed decisions about whether to seek a remark of a paper or not. However, I thought it would be useful to explain this process to parents as I appreciate some may have a more in-depth understanding than others.

For each examination session, e.g. Summer 2015, Summer 2016, CCEA publishes its "CCEA GCE Subject Level Uniform Mark Grade Boundaries: Summer 2015/Summer 2016" etc. The school will tweet and post on Facebook the Summer 2016 table on results day this year. AS and A2 subjects offered at Wallace are either 4 Unit A Levels (i.e. 2 units at AS and 2 at A2) or 6 Unit A Levels (i.e. 3 units at AS and 3 at A2). For example, A Level Geography is a 4 unit subject whilst A Level Mathematics is a 6 unit subject.

In the case of a 4 unit subject, the maximum uniform marks are 200 at AS and 400 at A2 Level. In the case of a 6 unit subject, the maximum uniform marks are 300 at AS and 600 at A2 Level.

The Uniform Mark Grade Boundaries are based on the raw marks achieved by students in each paper which are then converted by CCEA to become uniform marks. A raw mark is subject to the application of a mathematical formula which allows for a rank order of all those entered in each of the papers to be drawn up. It is really the Uniform Mark, in the case of each paper, which is of interest to the candidate and parent, rather than the raw

mark as it is the uniform mark which is the determinant of the overall grade awarded at AS and A2 Levels.

On careful scrutiny of these uniform marks, if a candidate is very close to the next grade, it is quite common for a remark to be requested. This is referred to as “enquiry about results.” A remark must be processed through the school, it cannot be requested directly from CCEA. Mr Kidd is the member of staff responsible for the administration of this process. In addition to remarks, photocopies of scripts (i.e. the actual paper a candidate completed and how it has been marked and annotated) can be requested. There is a fee for both of these services which CCEA charges, the costs of which are borne by parents. The following link outlines the costs

http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/exams_officers/June_2016_Summary_Document.pdf

If your son/daughter and you are unsure whether to get a paper remarked, you can request a photocopy of the script and then discuss this with the Head of Department to see if a remark looks advisable. If this is the case a meeting should be set up with Mr Kidd on results day or the next day as deadlines are very tight. It is vital that you do not request the original script as if you do you cannot subsequently request a remark.

For AS candidates it can be helpful to see a photocopy of scripts. Photocopies of scripts can also be helpful for students in making decisions not just about remarks but resits, i.e. what can I learn from my performance? Where did I not meet the demands of the mark scheme, etc? If a photocopy of a script/scripts is requested, please ensure your son/daughter looks at it with his/her teacher.

2 Careers Department/University Application Advice

If your son/daughter has been studying 4 AS subjects, it is likely that he/she will drop one subject to try to maximise the performance at A2. Careful consideration should be given about which subject to discontinue. If your son/daughter is considering an application through both UCAS and CAO (Republic of Ireland), it is helpful to check with Mr Beaton, Head of Careers, before making this decision.

Unless there are exceptional reasons why a student should not drop the subject in which he/she has performed less well than the other 3, it is assumed that e.g. in the case of AS results of ABCC, one of the C grades will be dropped. AS results are a very reliable indicator of A2 results, if one subject out of the four subjects studied is the weakest at AS, it is likely that this will be the weakest still at A2. If anything, the A2 course is more challenging than the AS course and to try to combine a challenging A2 course with AS resits is not advisable.

However, if your son/daughter has a specific course in mind which requires a specific subject which otherwise they would have dropped, then a Careers interview will be organised. Often at this stage a slightly less competitive university or related course is worth investigating. If a young person has found it challenging to achieve e.g. a C grade in a required subject for a degree course at AS, it will be twice as challenging to essentially resit

AS modules and keep up to date with A2 work and its challenges to try to achieve an A or B grade at A2.

Careful consideration should also be given to applying to Dutch Universities and other European University courses in a range of subjects which are delivered and assessed in English. A couple of students over the past few years, with a particular talent in a varsity sport, have received offers from US universities. This is also worth consideration and research at this stage.

As these decisions are being made, it is important to remember that there has been a very significant increase in demand, since the increase in fees in GB Universities, for places in the two universities in Northern Ireland. The University of Ulster and Queen's University, over the last couple of years, have mostly required ABB or BBB minimum for any degree course.

The school has ambitious and stretching targets for this particular year group. They achieved, at GCSE, the highest ever % of grades 7+ A*-C, which was 80%. With continued hard work and careful A2 choices they should do very well. Every student should be aiming for at least a C grade in the A Levels they study. A 'D' grade has little currency even in GB universities.

Finally, each year a small number of students do not meet the criteria to return to Upper Sixth. The requirement is DDD or 8 points* across three subjects at AS level, in some other schools this is now CCC. This can be a difficult and disappointing outcome for students. However, the school will offer Careers Advice for these students. Sometimes at this stage a reassessment of career options is appropriate.

I wish every L6 student every success on 18 August.

Yours sincerely,

D O'Hare (Mrs)
Principal

*where A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, E = 1