



Dear Upper Sixth Form Parents and Guardians,

Academic Update

I hope this finds you well and that your son has found a happy and productive first few weeks of the Upper Sixth, managing their UCAS applications alongside their studies. Our teachers have loved having the boys back in class and have been pleased by the positive academic ambition of the Upper Sixth.

As we pause for the first Exeat of the year, I thought it might be helpful to look ahead to the rest of the year and the prospect of IB and A-Level qualifications next summer.

First, you may have noticed on the [Key Academic Dates](#) that we have not yet included study leave dates for the Upper Sixth. This is because there remains the strong possibility that the A-Level examinations may fall a little later next summer. Ofqual, the regulator of examinations in England, say that they are working with exam boards to agree a timetable for summer 2021 that will “maximise teaching and learning time”. As and when we know more, we will be in touch. We do not anticipate any change to the proposed IB examination dates, however, which will commence at the end of April.

We do know that some examinations will be adapted for summer 2021, in light of the disruption to teaching for many students during lockdown. Thankfully, Bedford boys continued to learn during this period so any changes should give more time for consolidation and revision in the Upper Sixth Form. The changes are outlined in the table at the end of this letter - they are rather more modest for A-Level than schools had expected, I should say, but the IBO has made a number of significant changes (given the earlier examinations).

Our key academic priority for the Upper Sixth over the coming weeks is to focus on identifying areas of understanding that may have been missed during the lockdown period. As such, your son may find he is completing more short diagnostic assessments in lessons and is set more prep tasks that focus on consolidation of material from the Lower Sixth.

I am aware that some boys have been concerned that these assessments might be used in some form of centre assessment (the process exam boards used last year to determine grades based on teacher judgements). Whilst the consensus remains that the government and exam boards will do everything possible to ensure examinations proceed next year (to avoid the fiasco of this last summer), were we to be asked to supply academic data to contribute to grading boys should know that we would use very many pieces of evidence in this process. As such, boys should be sure to give their best effort to all pieces of learning set – i.e. all class tasks and prep tasks, as well as in any timed assessments. Finally, as adults it is important that we all (staff and parents) try to maintain perspective in all this, in order to reduce any *unhealthy* boy anxiety levels – it is good to work hard, of course, but every person has different tipping points, and we will all try to work together (and individually) to make sure that boys are in as good a place mentally (as well as academically) as they can be.

We deliberated at length over whether to move the IB and A-Level trial exams earlier than January, but we felt that the start of the spring term remains the best time to allow boys to practice near-complete papers in their subjects before the final term of completing courses and revision. However, for this term, we will have a fortnight of internal assessment weeks between Monday 16 and Saturday 28 November for boys to practise short timed exercises in lessons so they have more experience of managing their time in controlled conditions. There will be no change to timetable during this fortnight, but prep tasks in most subjects will focus on revision and consolidation rather than new learning.

We will also be having a focus on effective study and revision skills across the Upper School at the start of November, to allow boys to experiment with different strategies ahead of the important period of revision for trial examinations in January.

Your son's teachers will be completing grade cards over the coming fortnight, which will be sent home at half term. If you have any questions, please do contact your son's Tutor, the [Director of IB](#) (Mr Finch) the [Sixth Form Academic Year Head](#) (Mrs Smith) or [me](#).

With best wishes,

Sam Baldock
Deputy Head (Academic)

IB

Language A (SL and HL)	Paper 2 removed
Language ab initio	Students answer one question in Paper 1; there is no listening comprehension in Paper 2; students have greater choice of stimuli in the IA
Language B	There is no listening comprehension in Paper 2; students have greater choice of stimuli in the IA
Classical languages	Paper 1 removed
Economics	Paper 1 removed (SL) and Paper 2 (HL) gives students greater choice
Geography	Paper 1 requires students to answer questions on one option only; section C removed from Paper 2
History	More flexibility in Paper 2 and Paper 3 (HL)
Philosophy	Section B removed from Paper 1
Biology	Paper 3 removed
Chemistry	Paper 3 removed
Design Technology	Paper 1 removed
Physics	Paper 3 removed
Mathematics	No change to assessment components
Music	Listening paper removed; more flexibility in performance requirements
Visual Arts	Reduced portfolio and exhibition size

A-Level

Art	Assessment will be based on portfolio only, there will not be a timed examination
Biology	Reduced practical work as part of Practical Endorsement
Business	No change to assessment arrangements
Chemistry	Reduced practical work as part of Practical Endorsement
Classical Civilisation	No change to assessment arrangements
Computer Science	No change to assessment arrangements
Design and Technology	Mock-ups and/or clear and detailed intentions of prototypes are permitted for some projects
Drama	Students can analyse the work of others through audio-video recordings rather than live performances
Economics	No change to assessment arrangements
English Literature	No change to assessment arrangements
French	No change to assessment arrangements
Geography	New guidance relating to collecting primary data for the non-exam assessment
German	No change to assessment arrangements
History	No change to assessment arrangements
Latin	No change to assessment arrangements
Mathematics (and Further Mathematics)	No change to assessment arrangements
Music	Reduced coursework requirements
Music Technology	Reduced coursework requirements
Religious Studies	No change to assessment arrangements
Physics	Reduced practical work as part of Practical Endorsement
Politics	No change to assessment arrangements
Spanish	No change to assessment arrangements