

27th March 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian

I will keep this email brief as it contains no major new announcements.

Working from home

Staff and students appear to have settled down to good routines. Staff have commented on how well students have responded to the tasks they have been set. I know it is early days and we need to maintain the current momentum for a lengthy period but it is greatly to the credit of students that they have made such a good start and I would be grateful if you could pass on my congratulations and encouragement to your son or daughter.

With almost all students and staff working from home the College is very quiet. We have a very small number of students using the LRC and about 8 staff who are providing supervision and ensuring that we can function to support everyone working from home. We are practising stringent social distancing, with any students kept far apart in the LRC and any staff asked to work individually. Please help to keep College safe for us by ensuring that your son or daughter only comes in after letting us know and in circumstances where they match the government's definition regarding key workers or vulnerable children.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Illness

If your son or daughter is unwell please ask them to let their tutor and teachers know and we will of course respond positively by extending assignment deadlines in such circumstances. Please don't be offended if on occasion we check with parents that the reason given is genuine. Similarly, even though we are working from home, we continue to expect the highest standards of behavior from our students in any dealings with College staff or other students.

IT

We had some issues with emails on Tuesday morning which appear to have been caused by the volume of students emailing large files to their teachers to demonstrate the work they had completed. The IT team resolved the issue relatively quickly and increased the storage available but please can you ask your son or daughter to avoid sending very large files, such as those containing photographs of work. We are also mindful of the problem we had with IT a few weeks ago and have plans to improve the resilience of our system as soon as hardware is again available from suppliers.

Awarding final grades

We were promised clarification of how final grades would be awarded this week. However Ofqual's latest communication merely restates the principles and outline that I have already shared with you (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-update-on-2020-exams>). They now say that we should have this by Easter and to be fair given the complex nature of this task that isn't an unreasonable timescale for the fine detail. I will of course keep you informed as soon as I know more.

Please see my previous email for the outline of what students need to do to give themselves the best chance of an accurate and fair grade being awarded.

Please stay safe

I, along with my colleagues, are missing our students and eagerly looking forward to being able to teach them at College once again. In the meantime please do everything you can to keep yourselves and your family safe by following the government's guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>). If you have any concerns about your son or daughter's wellbeing that we can help with please do get in touch with us. The Senior Leader for Safeguarding and Student Well-being is Julie Ferman (j.ferman@wsfc.ac.uk) and she and our tutors are making regular contact with students to advise them on how to cope with some of the demands placed on us by social distancing.

Best wishes
Ed Senior