

9 September 2021 – Update for GC second-year students and parents/carers

Dear all,

A very warm welcome back to Greenhead College. I hope you have had a relaxing and enjoyable summer break. In College, we were delighted to celebrate another set of outstanding results at A Level. Our best wishes and congratulations go to all our students as they start university, apprenticeships and work.

We approach the new academic year with excitement and optimism, though also with some caution. We hope that the year ahead will see minimum disruption to students' education. We will continue to do all we can to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19 but do need to be realistic about a possible upturn in transmission on the return of schools and colleges. However, we hope that with continued lateral flow testing, good hand hygiene and ventilation, and the COVID-19 vaccine, we will be able to keep all students in College.

Wellbeing

Student wellbeing is at the core of everything we do at Greenhead. Students are allocated a Personal Tutor, all of whom are pastorally experienced, mental health first-aid trained, and have extensive knowledge of support available. Our tutorial lessons include many aspects of wellbeing and cover strategies to develop resilience and good emotional health.

All students can make an appointment to see one of our dedicated College counsellors and we have a wellbeing tab on the Moodle homepage through which students can access an array of external support agencies. We will also be running Moodmasters courses in College which aim to equip our students with very practical strategies to manage stress.

The enrichment programme offers many wellbeing activities, from mindful mark making and meditation to music and sports. Additionally, our upcoming Mental and Physical Wellbeing weeks will present an opportunity to reflect and develop new skills in looking after ourselves.

Our dedicated safeguarding team are on hand for any student with safety or wellbeing concerns and can be contacted initially via email at safeguarding@greenhead.ac.uk. Alternatively, a duty safeguarder can be called by talking to the Front Office staff.

UCAS predicted grades

In this early part of the year, many second-year students will be applying to university. As part of this process, predicted grades are derived by staff at College in support of a student's progression to higher education, as well as progression to a range of other destinations, e.g. apprenticeship, employment, etc.

The following section is intended to show students and parents/carers the College's approach to deriving these grades.

i) UCAS guidelines

The College's policy on predicted grades has been written in the context of the following guidelines issued by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), ref. 'Predicted grades – what you need to know':

"A predicted grade is the grade of qualification an applicant's school or college believes they're likely to achieve in positive circumstances.

"These predicted grades are then used by universities and colleges, as part of the admissions process, to help them understand an applicant's potential.

"Predicted grades should be:

- *entered for all pending qualifications, unless the assessment method or structure of the qualification makes this inappropriate – failure to do so can lead to complications or, in some cases, the rejection of an application*
- *in the best interests of applicants – fulfilment and success at college or university is the end goal*
- *aspirational but achievable – stretching predicted grades are motivational for students, unattainable predicted grades are not*
- *determined by professional judgement – your expertise and experience are vital in informing predictions*
- *data-driven – while each school will have its own process, you should look at past Level 2 and Level 3 performance, and/or internal examinations to inform your predictions*
- *finalised by the point of submitting an application – universities and colleges are only likely to consider the predicted grades received as part of the UCAS application. While they will make every effort to accommodate genuine errors in data entry, this may not always be possible for highly selective courses*

"Predicted grades should not be:

- *affected by student, parental, guardian, or carer pressure – there are risks associated with inflating and suppressing predicted grades*
- *influenced by university or college entry requirements or behaviours – predicted grades should be set in isolation of an applicant's university or college choice(s)."*

ii) The College's policy

Although predicted grades are estimates, the College's ability to forecast predicted grades which subsequently equal students' actual A Level grades is higher than the national rate for the sector¹.

The College's policy is not to issue predicted grades based on what students would *like* to achieve or on the basis of their promise to work harder to obtain it. Put simply, a student will not achieve an unrealistic predicted grade. Neither is the College's policy to *inflate* predicted grades: this would have the impact of leading to a poorer correlation between predictions

¹ Latest UCAS predicted grade report (2018): proportion of applicants whose best three A levels were equal to their predicted grades: Greenhead College 17%, national sector 15%.

and outcomes, thus undermining the credibility of the process and would weaken the integrity of our estimates with many universities. In addition, the College's approach is never to *revise down* predicted grades once these have been issued to students.

The College's approach is based on the principle that we wish students to achieve excellent A Level grades and progress successfully to their chosen university.

In coming to an honest judgement on a student's predicted grades, subject teachers and/or Heads of Department/Subject will consider their:

- Previous examination performance at GCSE
- Attendance record
- Performance under test conditions in College
- Data drawn from homework and assessments over time
- Classroom behaviour and commitment in the subject
- Engagement in extracurricular activities and work experience (where relevant)
- Contextual factors which may have caused temporary underperformance.

They will also:

- Use their professional judgement based on expert knowledge of the curriculum, the examination, and progression by students to similar university courses in previous years, and comparative performance against standards achieved by previous students with similar GCSE performance and target grades.

Based on this criteria, above, a judgement will be formed which reflects both what the student can *realistically* achieve and what they *might* achieve.

In summary, the College's process is **holistic**, considering a range of factors; **evidence-based**, pointing to tangible data over a period of time; **realistic**, representing what this evidence tells us about the student; and draws on staff's **professional judgement**.

It is also worth stressing that universities themselves will not simply consider a student's predicted grades but a range of additional factors, including their:

- Performance at GCSE
- Personal statement
- Record of work experience (where relevant).

They will also consider the College's reference which has been written by the student's Personal Tutor. Additionally, many universities will require additional evidence in their selection process, such as a pre-interview assessment, written work, interview, etc.

Universities will often look at the context of the predicted grades presented; for example, the quality of high school provision, whether parents/carers have previously accessed higher education, the area in which the student lives and, where relevant, personal circumstances and/or challenges faced. The College includes all this information in the Personal Tutor's reference when presenting predicted grades to universities.

iii) Queries and appeals

Students are encouraged to discuss their predicted grades with their respective teachers and Personal Tutor, particularly if they are unsure how a particular grade has been derived.

However, a student may appeal to their respective teacher against a predicted grade. Appeals will *only* be considered against the criteria set out in bullet point form on the previous page. Appeals will not be considered because a student or parent/carer wishes to have a higher grade or because of a commitment to work harder.

For the appeal to be successful, the teacher will use the criteria outlined above and must be secure in their judgement that these could reasonably result in a higher predicted grade. Alterations will be made by the subject teacher who will inform the Personal Tutor of the change on the Cedar pastoral log.

In some cases, where teachers feel an improvement is appropriate, a higher grade may be given on the firm understanding that a lower-offer university is selected as the insurance offer.

Should the predicted grade be unchanged on appeal, the student may make a further appeal to the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal will review the case and make a *final* decision.

Updates to COVID-19 guidance

The following points are intended to remind **students** of the main COVID-19 guidance:

i) Attendance

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or have a positive test result, you should follow public health advice on when to [self isolate](#). Most importantly, you must not come into College if you have tested positive, have [symptoms](#) or have been informed by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate.

If testing positive, students should also email absences@greenhead.ac.uk.

ii) Tracing close contacts and self-isolation

In line with the latest guidance, we will not be undertaking contact tracing in College. Instead, close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace.

You are not required to self-isolate if you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, if any of the following apply:

- You are fully vaccinated;
- You are below the age of 18 years 6 months;
- You have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial;
- You are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

NHS Test and Trace will let you know if you have been identified as a close contact with a positive case and advise you to take a PCR test. We strongly encourage everyone to take a

PCR test if advised to do so. There is no requirement to self-isolate while awaiting the PCR test result, so you can attend College as normal.

iii) Face coverings

Face coverings are currently not mandatory for students and staff, either in classrooms or in communal areas. Although the government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law, it recommends they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where an individual may come into contact with people they do not normally meet.

As a College, we want to keep all our students and staff as safe as possible and would **strongly recommend** the continued use of face coverings, both moving around College and in classrooms. No student will be denied education on the grounds of whether they are, or are not, wearing a face covering. However, in order to minimise risks as far as possible, you may be asked to wear a face covering when conducting practical experiments in science subjects.

If we have an outbreak in College, the Local Authority may advise us that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas and/or classrooms by students and staff, unless exempt. Therefore, I will update students and parents/carers on this as the term progresses.

iv) One-way system

The College's one-way system will not be in operation when term starts. However, we have decided to keep our signage in place in case we have to use this to manage the number of cases of COVID-19 in College in the future.

v) Hand and respiratory hygiene

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. You should continue to ensure that you clean your hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser. We will ensure that our hand sanitiser dispensers are regularly topped-up in College.

vi) Ventilation

We will continue to ensure that the College site is well-ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

I will explain any further adjustments we may need to make to the site in order to manage cases of COVID-19 as the term progresses. In the event of an increase in the number of positive cases reported, we will seek additional public health advice from the Department for Education and/or the Local Authority.

vii) Testing

Further education providers are expected to offer all students two on-site lateral flow device tests, three-to-five days apart, in the autumn term. Students and staff should then continue to test twice-weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed by the Department for Education.

Details regarding this process, which remains voluntary, can be found in the letter I sent to students and parents/carers on Monday, 16 August. The [consent form](#) can be found via this link.

If you receive a positive LFD test result, you will need to self-isolate in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#). You will also need to get a [free PCR test to check if you have COVID-19](#). Whilst awaiting the PCR result, you should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within two days of the positive LFD test and is negative, it overrides the LFD test result and you can return to College, as long as you don't have COVID-19 symptoms.

Those with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend College.

viii) Vaccination

Finally, can I remind students and parents/carers that a pop-up vaccination clinic will be running in College on **Friday, 10 September** between **11.00 am and 3.00 pm** on the top-floor of Rostron building.

No appointment is necessary – students can just walk in providing they are not in a lesson. Students should discuss having the vaccine with their parents/carers beforehand.

At the time of writing, NHS England hasn't stated its intention to offer second doses for 16-17-year-olds. Second vaccination doses will be available eight weeks after the first dose for students who are eligible – this is currently students who are over the age of 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ years.

To conclude, I very much look forward to welcoming our second-year students back for the start of term. I hope they will enjoy their final year of studies at Greenhead College, and am confident they will achieve outstanding results and progress to excellent destinations in a year's time.

Best wishes,

Simon Lett
Principal