

# Saint Ambrose College

State-funded Independent Catholic Grammar School

Principal: Mr D. Rainey B.Ed (Hons)



## Year 13 Students

25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Since the last correspondence, information has been circulated by UCAS and I also think it is appropriate to share guidance on how exam grades will be arrived at given some questions that have come through. I will keep asking for information with regards to apprenticeship requirements and changes for those who've applied for that route.

It was a difficult and emotional day last Friday as we said 'goodbye' to the gentlemen of the Upper 6th, at least temporarily. It was particularly difficult for them given the unprecedented circumstances which have brought their studies at St Ambrose to a premature end. Students understandably feel a sense of injustice at not getting to sit their exams in the usual timeframe and will no doubt feel anxiety surrounding how the grades will be arrived at. We will continue to support and update where we can. For all of us, there are still a considerable number of unknowns. However, as I promised them during assemblies on both Thursday and Friday, when we get to the other side of this pandemic, we will bring the year group together again to celebrate and give thanks for all they've achieved and contributed to the college.

UCAS have provided the following update:

*'The Government has asked universities to stop making unconditional offers or amending existing offers for two weeks. This is because they're worried you'll feel pressured to accept these offers over others you might be better suited to. Our advice to students who have received an unconditional offer is always to consider whether this is the right provider and course for you, before you make any decision.'*

*To give you time to make your decisions – and to understand more about how qualifications will be awarded this summer, we've extended:*

- our May's offer deadline for UCAS Undergraduate applicants
- the rolling decision dates for UCAS Teacher Training applicants and providers

*If you're affected by this extension, we'll email you your new decision deadline once it's set.*

*During this time, it's important to remember that places are not decided on grades alone. Information in your personal statement and reference are part of the decision-making process along with your interview, portfolio, audition, and any other information that's relevant to your potential to succeed on an undergraduate course.*

*At UCAS, we will continue to support you through the application process and keep you up-to-date as more announcements are made.*

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With regards to queries about how final grades will be arrived at, it must be clear that the grade will ultimately be arrived at by the Exam Boards and that this this stage, although teacher input will be significant, we are no clearer as to what methodology to apply to predicted grades. The following bullet points help to explain the situation:

- To produce a predicted grade, teachers will be asked to take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment. **Clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges soon.**
- **Exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student**, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.
- Regulators and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising the approach, to ensure that it's as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.
- The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July.
- In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years.
- Exam boards will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students aren't disadvantaged.
- Students will be able to appeal their grades if they don't believe the right process has been followed.
- There will also be an option to sit exams early in the next academic year for any students who wish to. Students may also choose to sit exams next summer.

I advised students to keep working hard and keep routines and structure in place. It is difficult in the circumstances but at the very least, they should be ensuring they keep on top of work set, particularly in subjects relevant to their third level courses. Education is about so much more than grades. The students have chosen A levels that they love and that they know are necessary for their careers so their learning and passion should remain.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Yours faithfully

Mr D Rainey  
Principal

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