

Monitoring Progress and Raising Achievement

**A Guide for Parents and Carers of
Full-Time Students**

INTRODUCTION

This guide sets out to explain the ways in which the College regularly checks on student progress while also attempting to raise standards of achievement. We feel it is important that parents know about the systems and procedures we use since the critical factor for students' success is the effective working together of students, teachers and parents/carers.

We aim to give students a real sense of responsibility for, and involvement in, their own learning. In doing so we provide them with support and information and we ask them to regularly assess their own performance and set targets for improvement.

STUDENT SERVICES AND THE PERSONAL TUTOR

Your son/daughter will have weekly contact with a personal tutor whose job it is to help students manage their own learning. The personal tutor is responsible for matters relating to progress and welfare so that if your son or daughter is encountering any difficulty, whether of a personal or academic nature, you should immediately contact them.

Personal tutors collect regular information on progress from subject tutors so that they have the full picture; they will bring together all aspects of a student's life at College. Personal Tutors write their students' references for Higher Education and employment which will include information on enrichment courses, key skills and work experience, as well as their academic programme.

Within our Student Services section are staff who specialise in careers; in assisting with Higher Education applications and in counselling students with personal difficulties. The Director of Student Services is Fran Evans.

Subject tutors keep personal tutors regularly informed if they feel there is any problem that needs attention. If, for example, at any time a subject tutor feels that a student is falling behind with homework or has been missing lessons, the personal tutor will be informed and will follow up the problem. The electronic registration system within College provides tutors with up-to-date information on attendance, punctuality and performance. If there are problems which persist, a senior tutor will become involved and a student may be required to negotiate a formal study contract with agreed targets and dates for action and improvements.

STUDENT QUAY AND PARENT QUAY

Student Quay gives students the ability to view up to date information online regarding the following:-

- **Personal details eg address, phone numbers etc**
- **Exam timetables**
- **Current timetable information**
- **Progression data**
- **Attendance and punctuality data**
- **Examination results**
- **Performance management data**

You can access this data through your son/daughter on Student Quay or you can set up your own log-on which enables you to access Parent Quay. Instructions on how to do this will be circulated during the Induction period.

PROGRESS REVIEWS

Central to our system is the regular use of progress reviews. The dates of these reviews are detailed in the "Essential Information and Key Dates" leaflet issued at registration. In order to review progress a great deal of information is collected on key aspects of students' performance and presented to students for their own evaluation. The information consists of:

TARGET GRADES CURRENT GRADES UNDERPINNING PERFORMANCE CRITERIA (RAG RATINGS)

An explanation of each of these terms can be found below

Target Grade - This is an individual aspirational (but realistic) grade set for each student in each subject/course. These are reviewed each half term and therefore can change throughout the course.

Current Grade - This is the likely grade a student might expect to achieve given the current level of performance. It is important for students and parents to recognise that this is only a prediction and it is based on the previous half term's work and commitment. These are also reviewed each half term and therefore can change throughout the course.

Underpinning Performance Criteria

This is a rather fancy term for all those elements which underscore a student's ability to succeed and include:-

ATTENDANCE EFFORT MEETING DEADLINES PARTICIPATION

At key dates throughout the year subject tutors grade students according to these criteria. The sheet at the end of this guide gives you the descriptors for these green, amber or red grades. Again, this information, along with a target grade and current grade is fed back to students in their teaching groups, tutor groups and through Student Quay for their comment and reflection, and therefore you have access to them through your son/daughter and through Parent Quay.

Attendance is one of the most critical factors in a student achieving success: we report this to parents broken into the percentage attendance for each half-term in the formal written report and in the progress summary. However students (and therefore parents) also have daily access to

detailed attendance data through Student Quay and Parent Quay. We are also working with students to agree clear minimum standards for attendance. We expect 100% attendance and punctuality and we believe it is only fair that if a student's attendance falls below 85 per cent on a course without justifiable excuse that the student may forfeit automatic exam/assessment entry for the subject and/or may be responsible for the costs of entry or withdrawal.

We do not wish to be punitive but rather to encourage students to be responsible. Likewise there are monthly and termly rewards and incentives for students with excellent attendance.

MEASURING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

One of the key aspects for our system is to identify how each individual on a particular course is performing. Students on one-year programmes at Foundation and Intermediate level have clear targets related to progression and the achievement of the qualification for which they are studying.

On Advanced level programmes we try to use more refined systems to match students' potential to their achievement. For example, two students each with a C grade may in fact be performing at distinctly different levels depending on their prior achievement.

We need to have a system which makes judgements on individuals and identifies those who need support, encouragement, reprimand or praise. In order to do so we need to measure a student on the point of entry to the College in terms of his or her achievement, measure what that student might be expected to achieve, and at the end of the process measure what that student has achieved.

Loosely speaking, this is called 'value-added,' that is the distance travelled, the value added to a student's performance during his or her time at College.

VALUE-ADDED

This is a national concept in schools and colleges and it came about in response to published league tables which provide parents with data on a school's or college's results.

The results published in league tables are 'raw' data, that is they simply report results without any attempt to interpret their meaning. But, of course, underlying one set of results can be several different stories.

One group of students producing a 90 per cent Advanced Level pass rate may, in fact, reflect a poor achievement as compared to a second group producing exactly the same result if the first group were to contain 10 students who had achieved largely A*s at GCSE and the second group to contain 10 students largely achieving grade C at GCSE.

A fairer measurement would be the differential between previous achievement at GCSE and actual achievement on an Advanced Level course (whether that be an AS/A level course or a BTEC course).

This is called value-added and this is the area where there has been a good deal of recent research by statisticians nationally and regionally. Warrington, for example, produces value-added information on all its secondary schools. Statistics show that there is a correlation between prior GCSE achievement measured as an average GCSE score and Advanced Level performance. Calculations are made as follows:

Grades at GCSE are awarded the following points: A*=8, A=7, B=6, C=5, D=4, E=3, F=2, G= 1, U=0. An average GCSE score for a student is acquired by totalling achievements and dividing by the number of subjects taken. So, for example, a student who took 10 GCSEs and who gained 3As, 3Bs, 2Cs and 2Ds would have a score of 5.7. We also use this score to ensure that a student's programme is the right level and weighting for them to be successful but also to be stretched and challenged.

This average score is then measured against achievement at Advanced Level where points are given using a system where A= 10, B=8, C=6, D=4, E=2. Interestingly statistics find much greater correlation between average GCSE score and Advanced Level performance than any direct subject-to-subject equivalents. So how does this help us to monitor our students' performance and raise achievement?

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT

The development of 'value-added' has provided us with more information on how students' prior achievement at GCSE relates to their likely achievement at Level 3/Advanced level. We have national statistics indicating the percentage of students achieving Advanced Level grades related to their average GCSE score. This, of course, is very general, based on average national performance. It cannot predict what an individual will achieve but it can put achievement in context and allow us and students to set realistic and challenging targets.

It is unfair, for example, to expect that student Z with an average GCSE score of 4.0 should achieve the same or more than student X with an average GCSE score of 7.0. That does not mean, however, that student Z will not achieve more. To help students set realistic targets and to help us measure their performance we produce Target Grades for each student for each subject and regularly compare them to their current grade of achievement.

As you can see the process is very thorough, very time-consuming for staff and certainly not infallible, but we think it is worth pursuing.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

16 to 19-year-old students are young adults and should be treated as such. Our policy is to involve them fully in our systems for managing their progress. We ask them to formally reflect on their progress each half term with their personal tutor and twice yearly with subject staff on specific Review Days. This involves the completion of self-assessment documents taking into account target

and current grades and their RAG rating. It also involves an interview with subject tutors (and possibly personal tutors). During these interviews students agree targets and actions with their tutors to take them forward.

Formal reports are also used to assess performance and set targets for future improvements. These reports are completed online through Student Quay and therefore you have access to them through Parent Quay (or Student Quay through your son/daughter). If you wish to have a paper copy, please contact the personal tutor.

The dates for reports can be found in the "Essential Information and Key Dates" leaflet issued at registration (and the leaflet can also be found on the parent page of the Priestley website).

WORKING WITH PARENTS

We hope you have found the guide useful and would welcome any thoughts you have on any of the issues we raise. Often parents ask what they can do to help their sons and daughters. Direct help is often just not appropriate at this level (unless you are an expert in Advanced Level Mathematics ... Physics ... Public Services ... English Literature ... Business ... Dance!) but interest, involvement, awareness of issues and talking things through with students is invaluable. Sometimes they may not thank you for it at the time but we have no doubt as to the positive benefit of parental support.

If you would like any further clarification on any aspect of this guide, please contact your son's/ daughter's personal tutor in the first instance.

Other key members of staff managing this process are:-

George Contos

Deputy Principal

Fran Evans

Director of Student Services

Mark Eccleston

Senior Tutor

Tracie Gibbons

Senior Tutor

Dan Martin

Senior Tutor

Mark Salmon

Senior Tutor

UNDERPINNING PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

RAG Rating

Each student is allocated to the 'best fit' category taking all factors into account. The purpose is to identify those students who are at risk of not fulfilling their potential, and to intervene quickly and appropriately in order to support them to get back on track. The RAG rating therefore reflects the current level of risk.

GREEN

- Attendance 92% or over (or has had genuine reason for absence).
- Always hands work in on time (or with one lateness in exceptional circumstances)
- Consistently good application and commitment to class and independent study
- Currently working at a level which is at or above their target grade
- Well organised file / folder with a thorough record of work completed and /or reference materials
- Participates regularly and constructively in class activities

AMBER

- Attendance between 86 and 91%
- One or two pieces of work handed in late without any exceptional circumstances
- Limited effort with tasks incomplete or done to the minimum requirements
- Currently working at a level one grade below their target grade
- File / folder which has significant gaps
- Rarely or only occasionally participates in class activities
- Recently (within the last three weeks) joined or changed groups

RED

- Attendance 85% or below
- More than two pieces of work handed in late consecutively
- Lack of application, effort or commitment in recent weeks
- Currently working at a level which is more than one grade below their target grade
- No file of work or a file/ folder which is poorly organised
- Inappropriate or disruptive participation in class

PRIESTLEY

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