**Department Assessment Policy 2021-2023**

**Politics A-level**

**The Importance of Feedback and Learning Outside the Classroom – ’50:50’ Mantra….**

Learning will not happen instantly and takes time; attending lessons is not enough (although important!), you also need to be working outside of class, to learn new information and consolidate learning. In the process, you will make mistakes but hopefully feedback will enable you to learn from these mistakes. Better to make a mistake during the year and correct it, than make your first mistake in the final assesssment! Feedback is essential for your learning and will consist of whole class (teacher runs a session in lessons), written (teacher marking), peer (where you feedback on someone else’s work in the class) and self (where you assess yourself).

There are 66 weeks of teaching weeks in total at College to help you learn and prepare for your final assessments. The classes are shared equally between two teachers for 2.25 hours, with each teacher delivering one of the two units; one of your tutors will be the “Lead Subject Tutor” who will be responsible for formalised 1-2-1s, writing your Student Reviews, seeing your parents at parents evening and for writing Action Plans.

In line with the College’s ’50-50’ initiative, each week, homework will be set and could take between 4.5 to 6 hours in total. Each teacher therefore could set you up to 2.25 to 3 hours homework per week. If for a particular week, a homework task from one teacher only takes you 1 hour for a week, then you will have a further 1.25 to 2 hours to conduct further reading and consolidate learning. Perhaps visiting the Library’s Godalming Online page to see the electronic resources or popping in to read a book or a magazine.

**The Final Assessment**

At the end of the two years, students will complete three 2 hour exams each worth 33%.

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| **PAPER 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas** | **PAPER 2: UK Government and Non-core**  **Political Ideas** | **Paper 3: Comparative Politics – US or Global** |
| * 30 mark UK Politics essay question, from a choice of two. * 30 mark UK Politics source essay question, from a choice of two. * 24 mark ideologies essay question, from a choice of two. | * 30 mark UK Government essay question, from a choice of two. * 30 mark UK Government source essay question, from a choice of two. * 24 mark ideologies essay question, from a choice of two. | * 12 mark “examine” question, from a choice of two. * Compulsory 12 mark “analyse” question. * Two 30 mark essay questions, from a choice of three. |

**Types of Assessment (and Feedback)**

* **Homework (Weekly):** Homework does not necessarily need to be completed at home! You can use free periods during the day to complete these tasks outside of lessons. To keep a good work/life balance, you might like to treat College as an 0845 to 1615 day and use your free periods in the library completing tasks. This will minimise the work you need to complete at home and might make you more productive.
* **Benchmark Checkpoints (Half-Termly):** After a period of teaching, there will be the opportunity to sit a mini ‘mock exam’ which will be an assessment under timed conditions using past exam questions. Or the benchmark checkpoint may consist of several smaller pieces of assessment, culminating in a grade. Any assessment should allow you to access the full grade range from A\* to U grade, given the topics covered so far and exam technique. Benchmarks are an indicator of how well you have understood and can apply the content to questions you will meet in the final exams at the end of the two years. Timed benchmark assessments are extremely important and should be treated like the actual exam. They are an ideal point to see how you are progressing and to get valuable feedback. You will make mistakes in these assessments and so the follow up work is to test whether you have learned from those mistakes to become better at the subject and exam technique.

**Tracking your Progress: Student Reviews, Action Plans and Parents Evenings**

The College’s policy is to deal with the student first but we also report to your parents at regular intervals to let them know how you are progressing and to inform them of what our expectations are through four Student Reviews (Reports) spread throughout the two years at College and also four parents evenings. If the department feel you are under-performing based on evidence such as benchmark grades and your approach to learning in between these periods, then your Lead Subject Tutor may place you onto a Formal Department Action Plan and we will formally write to your parents after a 1-2-1 with yourself and to try and get you back on track in a supportive way.

**Student Review 2, the ARG and Predicted Grades**

At the end of the first year (June 2022), your Lead Tutor will have a 1-2-1 to discuss your Annual Review Grade (ARG) and also finalise your Predicted Grade which might be used for UCAS applications for University and other destinations.

The ARG is determined by your Lead Tutor, in communication with your other teacher and will rely on the following evidence:

1. **Benchmark Checkpoints Performance Grades (1 to 4).** Benchmark 3 and 4 grading will carry more weight to this grade but Benchmark 2 will also have some influence. Benchmark 1 will have a very little weighting as it was the first time you sat a timed assessment.
2. **Approach to Learning:** How you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work. How you have pro-actively sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers (perhaps via email/Teams chat?).

The ARG plays a key part in determining the context in which you progress to the second year. Students who receive an A\*-D grade (A-level) are encouraged to continue with their studies into the 2nd year. However, for students who receive a U or E Grade (A-level) as their ARG, it suggests that for whatever reason they have struggled with the transition from Level 2 Courses (GCSE) to Level 3 Courses (A-level/BTEC). This will be evidenced by poor performances throughout their benchmarks and an inconsistent or poor approach to learning in their student reviews and via formal Action Plans. Students who receive an E/U Grade we would be extremely worried about your progress and your ability to pass the course. A comprehensive action plan would be created and we would expect to see improvements over the summer with the work that was set. You would also be required to attend lunchtime workshops for the remainder of the course and we would be in more contact with your parents to ensure that you are staying on track.

The College adopts a consistent and optimistic approach to predicting grades to ensure that they are both aspirational and achievable. A predicted grade is what we believe a student is likely to achieve by the conclusion of their course in positive circumstances and the predicted grade provides universities and colleges with some understanding of a student’s academic potential alongside their Personal Statement and a written Reference from their Personal Tutor. The ARG is important in forming the basis for the predicted grade as well but the predicted grade will also be aspirational for the students’ ambitions although it must remain realistic and cannot be based on the idea that only now will the student start to work harder in the second year! The College policy is that the predicted grade cannot be more than one grade above the ARG.

**Other Considerations**

* *LATE POLICY:* In line with the ‘College Assessment Policy’, the department are under no obligation to provide feedback to a student who does not meet the internal deadlines for weekly independent tasks, benchmark assessments or coursework drafts. Students who fail to prepare adequately for the lesson as requested, maybe excluded for part of the lesson and asked to work independently at the back of the classroom. A failure to meet ‘PREP’ work requirements consistently will result in a reference to the pastoral team and a phone call home to parents.
* *RETURNED WORK:* Work will be assessed and returned within 10 working days of it being submitted.
* *PLAGIARISIM:*  Plagiarism is submitting another person’s written work as one’s own original work or using someone else’s idea without referencing the source or using pictorial work without permission or referencing the source. If there is a suspicion of plagiarism, the Head of Department and Senior Tutor will be informed and a meeting will take place. If a student is found guilty, they will be subject to disciplinary action by the College and the awarding body will be informed. Students should be aware that the College is subscribed to software designed to detect plagiarism.
* *ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXAMS:* These are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working which must approved by the Learning Support department. For example, use of a computer or extra time in the exam. Since these arrangements are your ‘normal way of working’, you must practice them in class and with your homeworks – please see the Learning Support department for how you might do this. Homework is always set to take between 4.5 to 6 hours to allow students who have extra time for example, more time to complete the homework compared to their peers. Equally, in timed assessments it is vital that we are accommodating any access arrangements you might have. Your teachers will speak to you individually, and in confidence about how they will best be able to support you through your studies with us.

**Benchmark Checkpoints, Student Reviews (Reports) and Mock Exams 2021-22**

Below is an overview of all the key assessment checkpoints

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| **CHECKPOINT** | **DATE** | **DETAILS** |
| **Benchmark 1 Checkpoint** | Oct 2021 | **30 mark U1 essay question** |
| **Parents Evening (For All)** | Nov 2021 | **Meetings with your parents to discuss how you have settled in and transferred from GCSE to A-level learning based upon:**   1. **Approach to learning** (how you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work, how you have sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers) 2. **Performance Grade** in Benchmark 1 and from your homework tasks |
| **XMAS BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 2 Checkpoint** | Dec 2021 | **30 mark U2 source essay question** |
| **Student Review 1** | Jan 2022 | **A review of your progress in the first term (12-13 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor:**   1. **Performance grade (A to U)** (based on benchmark 1 and 2 but also your homework tasks) 2. **Approach to Learning** (how you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work, how you have sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers). |
| **Parents Evening (Targeted)** | Mar 2022 | **Meetings with your parents only where teachers may have a concern about your progress since Student Review 1 in January.** |
| **EASTER BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 3 Checkpoint** | April 2022 | **30 mark U1 essay question** |
| **Benchmark 4 Checkpoint** | June 2022 | **End of year exams on U1 and U2** |
| **Student Review 2** | June 2022 | **A review of your progress for the academic year (30-35 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor**   1. Approach to Learning 2. Performance Grade (Annual Review Grade or ‘ARG’ – performance for whole year (see notes above in main doc.) 3. Predicted Grade for UCAS (University Applications) |
| **SUMMER BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 5 Checkpoint** | Oct 2022 | **24 mark ideologies essay question** |
| **Parents Evening (All)** | Oct 2022 | **Meetings with your parents to discuss how you have settled in to the second phase of learning:**   1. **Approach to learning** (how you have engaged since Student Review 2 including completion of summer homework and the first five weeks of teaching – deadlines met, engagement in class and communication with teacher) 2. **Performance** with reference to your BM5 essay. 3. **How to support you:** Discuss how parents can further support you and what is coming up in this year |
| **Benchmark 6 Checkpoint** | Dec 2022 | **12 mark US/global question.** |
| **Student Review 3** | Dec 2022 | **A review of your progress for the academic year since last Student Review (July) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor**   1. Approach to Learning 2. Performance Grade (based upon benchmark 6 and homework tasks) compared to Predicted Grade |
| **XMAS BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 7 Checkpoint** | Mar 2023 | **Mock exam on U3** |
| **Student Review 4** | Mar 2023 | **A review of your progress for the academic year (30-35 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor (see above)**   1. Approach to Learning 2. Performance Grade (based upon benchmark 7 Mock Exam only) compared to Predicted Grade |
| **Parents Evening (Targeted)** | Apr 2023 | **Meetings with your parents primarily where teachers may have a concern about your progress since Student Review 4.** |
| **EASTER BREAK** |  |  |

**Rationale for Assessment Programme**

It is really important that when you come to sit your final assessment, you are prepared and able to perform at your highest ability. Therefore, because Politics is predominantly assessed under examination timed conditions, the benchmark assessments are designed to practice the skills need to sit a timed exam, so that you are ‘exam fit’.

This is reflected in the focus on exam skills in the nature of the benchmarks. Earlier benchmarks will be supported with essay writing scaffolding, with later ones having less support. The big mock exam in the second year is a key assessment and should be treated very carefully – it is perhaps the only time you will be able to sit in an exam hall under timed conditions to complete an assessment. It is positioned there for you to learn from the experience with enough time to correct any issues before you sit the final A-level assessment after Easter.

**Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries use the UMS grade boundaries, to ensure consistency across the two years.

* A\* = 90%
* A = 80%
* B = 70%
* C = 60%
* D = 50%
* E = 40%