

NEWSLETTER

For all parents and carers of students at Sir George Monoux College
January 2021



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Our warmest greetings to everyone at the start of 2021! With so much happening currently that has significance for education we wanted to make sure that parents and carers have an accurate and full understanding of what we are doing at the college to keep students on the path to success and what you can be doing at home to support young people. This starts with being well-informed, something which is as important at the age of 16 – 18 as at any stage of a student's education.

Although we begin the year with considerable restrictions and, for many people, worry and concern, 2021 is not the time to jettison hope or ambition: with a little determination and good organisation, one day at a time, our students can meet their goals and progress without compromise. There are 3 key messages to understand further to the changes announced by the government earlier this month to exam arrangements and college opening:

"We want our students to be determined and motivated in 2021, uncompromisingly so. At home this should be visible through well-organised routines, reliably followed every day. Put the ambition into action!!"

Dave Vasse (Principal)



1. Our students will be formally assessed this year on all their courses and need to be studying hard for the rest of this year. In this newsletter, Holly Bembridge (Vice Principal for the curriculum) explains everything you need to know at this point about how we are organising learning and assessment.
2. It is critically important that students are planning now for their future destination in higher education and/or the workplace. Further into the newsletter, James Gould (Vice Principal for student services) explains about the events, milestones and support that the college has in place this term.
3. We want you to be confident in the knowledge that the college is able to keep students safe and supported. We summarise in this newsletter our Covid-safe regulations and look ahead to how we will make it possible for students to return to college later in the year.

LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT A GUIDE FROM HOLLY

An important note on how your child will be assessed this year.

Although exams won't go ahead as scheduled, and there hasn't yet been a clear statement from government as to what exactly will happen instead, there are some things we DO know about what is being planned. Both the Minister for Education and Ofqual have been clear that teacher assessments will be used, but it will be different from last year. Instead of predictions based on what had been done *before* lockdown, this time students will be assessed on things they are learning now, and they will be assessed based on the work they produce – probably through assignments or mini-exams.

Their final grades will reflect the work they do now and in the coming months.

Therefore, it is essential that your child continues to participate fully in education, attending online lessons and completing all work set to the highest standard they can. We know this will be sometimes difficult, and we're working hard to support students. Please let us know if you are struggling. And for those students who lack technology and can get in safely, college is open from 9am-4pm every day.

How you can support your child to learn remotely

First of all, we know that remote learning isn't a replacement for the classroom, but as we have to work this way for now, we want it to be the best it can be. At home, there are a few things you can do to help your young person get the best out of online learning. We know that it won't be possible to do all of this – that you have other children, other demands on your time, and often limited space and resources – so please be reassured that this is a list of suggestions. As much as you can do is great:

- If possible, give your young person access to a laptop or tablet. MS Teams can be accessed via a phone or even a games console, but they are likely to do better work on a machine designed for the purpose.
- As far as possible finding them a quiet spot to work where they will be relatively undisturbed is helpful. Even just headphones for when they are online will help.
- It is useful during online lessons for students to have a working microphone. They can pose and answer questions in the chat stream, but talking is often better.
- Lessons run from 9.30am – 1pm. Set the expectation that your young person is up and dressed, with tech, pens and paper ready by 9.20am.
- Every student should be doing at least 15 hours per week independent study. Check that they are doing this, and if they say they have nothing to do, you can check the assignments tab on their MS Teams group page. You will see their name with a list of assignments and dates, and whether they have completed them. Anything marked IND is for independent work. If they are up-to-date with this work, there are many suggestions for extension study tasks on the yellow sections of the Stretch PLC, which is also to be found on MS Teams. Students aiming for the highest grades should be hungry in their determination to complete the Stretch PLC tasks.
- Assignments on MS Teams marked ASS are formal assessments which are likely to contribute to their overall grade – make sure they are putting their best efforts into doing these well.
- My colleague Matt produced an excellent 3 minute video about how you can keep track of your child's progress with their tasks and homework etc. Please find it here on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/8HYDtEidt0>
- If you are at home, check in with them periodically about the work they are doing. Take note of where they are so you can get a good sense of how much they have done in the intervening time.
- If you overhear a teacher asking a question and they are calling on someone else to answer, ask your young person what their answer would be, and see how it compares with what the teacher says.



“It is so important that students understand that final grades this year will be based on what students do from now until the end of the year. Parents must keep encouraging and motivating their child to work hard every day.”

Holly Bembridge (Vice Principal)

- Watch out for them quickly minimising screens, or hiding phones – social media in particular will pull their attention away from lessons. Help them to reduce their use of social media as much as possible.
- If they are working hard, congratulate them: motivation can be difficult in these circumstances, and being noticed for the good we are doing is even more powerful than being told off for the bad!

A big thank you to all of you who are supporting our students so well. We know it is a tough job, but young people appreciate you for it and so do we!

Free access to Microsoft Office for our students

Word, Excel and PowerPoint are free if downloaded using college email. Students need to use their college email address to download Office 365 (includes Word, PowerPoint, even TEAMS the full app) here:

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/education/products/office> Teachers will usually want work submitted in these formats so make sure you have it.

Feedback

Our teachers are well trained to use MS Teams, and we continue to learn and share so that we can keep making improvements. We always welcome your feedback about things we are doing well and things that could be better. If you'd like to get in touch, please email sarah.devonish@sgmc.ac.uk

PREPARING FOR NEXT STEPS GUIDANCE FROM JAMES

During the Spring Term we encourage students to reflect on their ambitions, set long-term targets, research their preferred destinations and complete work experience. Despite the obvious challenges to this brought upon by Covid-19, we are looking forward to a term full of activity. Completion of these activities will be crucial to future success – work experience, for example, is an important part of a university, apprenticeship or job application. Even though lessons finish at 13:00, students are expected to complete assignments or engage in these activities during the afternoon. I have described these below.

Remember some of our key terms: “**Passport**” refers to our scheme in which students take time out to reflect on their progress, skills and future; “**Talent Lab**” is the name we give to activities that students get involved in outside of lessons – a focused way of working on developing your talents, hence “Talent Lab”.

- Each week, a group of students will be required to complete our Monoux Employability Passport. This will help students develop key employability skills and includes a Zoom workshop with employers linked to your young person's Pathway. With face to face work experience unlikely to happen this year, completion of this Passport will be a key addition to a CV and university application. In addition, we have collated a large bank of employers who are offering online work experience opportunities. These are all available for students to view on the Careers channel of the Monoux Hub (MS Teams).
- Talent Lab will be online with a daily afternoon activity for students to engage with – this might be something fun, a talk to stretch thinking, or the opportunity to try something creative at home. We will also use Talent Lab online to talk to students about how to maintain their well-being during this period. The lockdown period is also an ideal time to encourage students to complete tasks and further reading, and teachers and support staff will be speaking to students about personal goals they can set.
- Our annual Careers and HE Fair will be on the 25 and 26 February. During these days there will be over 100 talks and workshops from universities, apprenticeship providers, alumni and employers – this will either be at college or online depending on the restrictions at the time. As the workshops will be online, parents and carers will be welcome to join some aspects of this day. Following the fair, we have the Monoux Passport Days on the 5 and 6 March. For Level 2, Level 3 Year 1 and first year A Level students this will include their first attempt at shortlisting of universities and apprenticeship opportunities.

I hope you found this information useful. As ever, we are keen for student and parent feedback on any of these initiatives – either where we could improve or where we are getting it right! Feel free to email me at james.gould@sgmc.ac.uk to share your thoughts or, if you are an employer or working in a large organisation, let me know if you want to help in some way. We are always looking to expand the range of partners that we work with.



“Despite the obvious challenges, our students will be busy planning ahead this term with live interaction with employers, universities and apprenticeship providers. There's no time to delay!”

James Gould (Vice Principal)

Staying safe

We know that parents and carers are doing so much to support young people with their home learning and emotional well-being at the moment. Your young person might be finding this a challenging period in their lives and we understand that you will be balancing your support for them with other responsibilities you have. At the same time, this period will be so crucial to their progress, and all staff at the college are committed to doing everything we can to help. This includes support for student well-being and finances, or finding a quiet place to study with good technology. Here are some details of the support on offer:

- All students have a member of staff who will be their **Support Link** during the online learning period. They will call your young person regularly on their mobile or via Teams to check on their wellbeing and engagement with lessons and assignments. We think this is important to make sure that young people still feel 'connected' to the college and maintain focus on their studies. Please encourage your young person to engage positively with the Support Link – and if we are struggling to get in contact with them we will let you know. Students and parents will continue to receive text messages when students miss hand-in dates for work, and additional phone calls from their Support Link if there is a significant concern. As students' final grade will be based on the work they complete during lockdown, this is hugely important.
- **Covid-19 reporting:** It is important that we continue to monitor the health of our student population so we know whether to expect attendance to online lessons, to provide support and continue with contact tracing if your young person has used the Library. If your young person develops any Covid-19 symptoms, test positive for the virus or someone in your household develops symptoms, please let the college know by emailing info@sgmc.ac.uk
- **Free School Meals payments** of £70 will be made on the 15 January to eligible students, representing £10 a week until the February half term. This is the amount allocated to Colleges by the Government, and will be followed by a **bursary payment** in the next few weeks – we will send further communication on this to students' email addresses. If your household is in financial difficulty, please email info@sgmc.ac.uk and we can put you in contact with local foodbanks who may be able to help.
- **Laptops and tech:** We have been giving laptops to as many students as possible on a priority basis. We still have a very small number of laptops and data dongles available to loan to students who do not have access to one at home. However, we have limited supply and are continuing to prioritise students based on their need. Students can contact info@sgmc.ac.uk to apply for one.

- The **Library** is open from 9:00 to 4:00 Monday to Friday for students who do not have technology at home, a quiet place to study or who are vulnerable. In the Library, students can access lessons online or complete work. There will be no canteen facilities, so students should bring their own food if needed. Masks must be worn and strict social distancing will be maintained to keep students and staff safe.
- During the coming weeks, students who come into college may be requested to take a **Lateral Flow Test** for Covid-19 on entry to the college. This test provides results within 30 minutes. *See below for further details on testing arrangements at college.*
- The college is also open from 9:00 – 4:00 Monday - Friday for students who might be distressed, or need somewhere safe to be. If you feel that your young person is unsafe, or at risk of harm, you can also tell any member of staff or email info@sgmc.ac.uk. Outside college hours you will need to contact external support agencies or 999 in an emergency. We are aware that young people will be spending a lot of time online, and we will be sending out some key messages regarding **online safety**. You might also find websites such as <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>, <https://www.internetmatters.org/>, and <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> helpful when having these conversations at home. These websites also have information regarding social media and important issues such as ensuring privacy settings are secure.
- **Counselling** will continue online. In addition to regular appointments, there is a daily 'Safe Space' where any student can raise a well-being concern with a Counsellor, even if they don't have an appointment. The times of these are advertised on the Monoux Hub. The team are also offering a group called 'resilience programme' for students who have been particularly affected by Covid -19.
- **Key email addresses**
 - ◇ General queries including requests for laptops and tech - info@sgmc.ac.uk
 - ◇ To report absence – studentabsence@sgmc.ac.uk
 - ◇ Queries about attendance marks - absencequeries@sgmc.ac.uk
 - ◇ Queries about Teams – teamshelp@sgmc.ac.uk
 - ◇ To re-set passwords - passwordreset@sgmc.ac.uk
 - ◇ Bursary queries - bursary@sgmc.ac.uk

Safety regulations

We ask all parents and carers to support our strategies to keep people safe by talking to students about the importance of social-distancing and wearing masks.

Please understand that it is now our policy to send students home with further warning if they do not wear a mask in the areas of the college where this is expected. From February, we will only allow students an exemption from wearing a mask if they have provided medical evidence. Existing college-produced exemption cards will be discontinued and replaced with a new card. Students have been notified of this and the deadline for application for exemption is 31 January.

The college now has a fully equipped facility and trained staff for Covid19 Lateral Flow Testing. We will provide more details in a separate communication to you but, in summary, we expect to test all students when they return to college using the LFT facility. How and when we use testing will always be subject to government guidance which may change over time.

Year 12 students must work hard to graduate into Year 13!

I am sure that you will agree, having read this newsletter, that this is an incredibly busy time for students and that they need every bit of support that you are able to offer. The single most helpful thing that you, as a parent or carer, can do is to be well-informed and show an interest, praising hard work if you see it.

We require all students in their first year of a course (so, Level 2 students or those in the first year of a Level 3 course, A Levels or vocational) to “graduate” if they wish to continue with us at college next year. We introduced the **Monoux First Year Graduation Scheme** in order that students had a comprehensive understanding of all of the aspects of being a student that contribute towards success. On the Passport Days in March we will be asking students to reflect on whether they are on track to graduate and I have attached to this newsletter some more information and questions that students should be considering. If we believe that a student’s attendance is unacceptably low, if they have missed work/deadlines without good reason or if their engagement has been poor, they will not graduate.

An important part of the scheme is the opportunity for students to graduate at **Gold, Silver or Bronze** level, as different from a standard graduation. Gold, Silver and Bronze graduates will have shown the highest levels of attendance, engagement and skill during the year or will have achieved exceptionally well despite adversity. Higher level graduates will be rewarded and, in addition, we will include a section in our university reference to say that a student has achieved this higher level and what exactly that means.

My very best wishes to all parents and carers. Thank you for your support.

Dave Vasse

Principal

Prepare Now to Graduate in 2021

Monoux First Year Graduation Scheme



1

Good or improved punctuality or attendance in spite of setbacks

Attendance to lessons during lockdown is just as important!

2

Talent Lab engagement

Please see Monoux Hub > Enrichment Tab for daily Talent Lab sessions at home

3

Monoux Passport completion and Next Steps programme

The next Passport Day will be on 4th/5th March

4

Participation in work experience and/or community activities

The Higher Education & Careers Fair will take place on 25th/26th February

5

Positive attitude and excellent behaviour

Your attitude affects your productivity. Maintain positive behaviours online with teachers and others

6

Proven ability to reliably meet deadlines and complete pieces of work even if this wasn't the case at the start

Teachers are likely to be assessing your final grade, so every piece of work counts!

7

Positive contribution to building the reputation of the college

Please be aware of what you do/say on social media

8

Increasingly effective online and remote learning

Limit your use of social media. Put your phone on silent during lessons and when studying. You must demonstrate good concentration by responding to tasks set.

9

Successful completion of first year programme of study in line with target grades

Use this time to build good routines and push for the highest grades

10

Progress in English and Mathematics

English and Maths workshops will be starting the week commencing 18th January