

14/12/2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Before we finish for the holidays, here is some key information for next term and a reminder that lessons finish and College closes at 12 o'clock on Friday 16th December. Please also see a copy of the email sent to your child today.

### **Beginning of Term**

The first day of term is Wednesday 4th January with all students returning. Key dates for 2023 are here: [Key Dates 23](#)

### **Homework over Christmas**

Christmas can be a difficult time of year for many people, including our students. Our staff have created a page full of activities and recommendations so that they know we are holding them in mind during what may be an even harder year. There are recipes, crafts, films, music and a whole host more. Please find the link here:

[Winter Wellbeing](#)

We will endeavour not to set additional extraneous work over the holidays as we believe students need a chance to recharge. However, there are some assessments in Vocational subjects so this is unavoidable. As you will see below, practice exams for most Year 2 A Level and GCSE courses are at the beginning of February so building in some revision time might be useful while balancing the importance of relaxation and rest in supporting students' development.

### **Practice Exams for Year 2 and GCSE students**

In those subjects with final Summer assessments there will be a Practice Exam week beginning 30th January. A timetable for this week will be released in the new year. Lessons for Year 2 students will be suspended over that week and students will sit one exam per subject under full exam conditions.

These exams provide a valuable opportunity for students to practise under the same conditions they will face in their final exams. The exams department will be in touch with further information in the new year.

Examinations are back to pre-pandemic arrangements with some mitigations in place such as greater gaps between them. There is grade protection to provide some mitigation and protection of student outcomes. Ofqual have published an open letter to students which details these contingency arrangements and the changes that are being put in place to compensate students for the disruption caused by the pandemic. The letter can be found here: [Ofqual Open Letter](#)

## Learning Coaches - Support for Students

We recognise that the pandemic impacted many students' learning, before their time at college. In order to support students, we have employed a number of learning coaches and mentors to work alongside students in small group support sessions. We have already invited specific students to workshops and we will write to you individually if your child has been identified as needing support and is not attending. If you would like your child to access support please let us know on: [parents@varndean.ac.uk](mailto:parents@varndean.ac.uk).

## Enrichment

Most enrichment courses will continue after Christmas but there are some Year 1 students who will be invited to apply for their next enrichment course. Information has been sent to relevant students recently and these new courses will start after Christmas. Details of our enrichment programme can be found here: <https://varndean.ac.uk/enrichment/>.

## Support for improving the site

Today is the final chance to support the planning application to develop and improve our site for students. Please do click on the link and leave a message of support. [Varndean College Planning Application](#)

And finally,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a healthy, happy and peaceful festive break. We run an annual Festive card competition in the student body and we had so many wonderful entries this year. This year's winner is Lily Kershaw. Click [here](#) to view.

Thank you for all the support you have given to all of our staff and us as a senior leadership team. Our students, you as parents, the staff and our Community continue to make us the exceptional place we are. So, thank you once again.

Wishing you good health and a lovely break.

Best wishes,

Donna-Marie Janson

Principal