

10 December 2010

To: Parents of Pupils in Year 13

Dear Parents

University Decisions

At this juncture in the UCAS application cycle, I would like to inform you of some points that I have already made to your daughters and sons in Sixth Form Assembly.

Responses to Offers

The PGS policy of encouraging all students to submit UCAS applications before the half term holiday, when little more than 10% of the cycle's total entry has been received, has again seen our students rewarded with early offers. By now over 85% of PGS candidates hold at least one offer.

Many of our students, therefore, will shortly be in a position to make responses to the universities; deciding on firm and insurance choices. It is especially important that great care is taken in the choice of the insurance offer. In 2011, clearing, when vacant university places are opened to candidates who have not met their offers, is likely to be more fraught than ever. In 2009 there were 32500 places in clearing, in 2010, 19405. Even fewer places are likely to be available in 2011. I have already received notification from universities, usually having places in clearing, that they expect to have no vacancies in 2011. There will, however, be a record number of UCAS applicants, many trying to avoid the proposed fee rise for 2012. I want to see as few PGS pupils as possible involved in the clearing scramble on results day in August.

Every year, however, when looking at PGS students who have missed both offers, I find cases where candidates have made the grades for offers that they have rejected. They then find themselves in clearing, looking at courses and institutions often not as good as those turned down. While they will have preferences, candidates should be prepared to take up a place at any of the courses and universities entered on their UCAS forms. Taking a place on one of these, chosen after careful research and reflection, really should be better than finding something under pressure in clearing. Rejecting an offer that should be attainable, even on a bad day in the examination room, in favour of an offer that still might be

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something of a stretch, is not a risk worth taking. Insurance offers should provide genuine insurance.

I would strongly advise candidates not to hold an insurance offer that is very close to a firm offer. A firm offer of AAA with an insurance of AAB does not offer much of a margin for error; a firm offer of AAA with an insurance of no higher than ABB is advisable. Similar principles apply in the IB where a one point slip in each subject taken could give a differential of 6 points.

PGS students should not respond to their university offers before talking things through with their parents and teachers. In school they should consult their tutor and specialist subject advisor. In addition, I am always available to offer advice.

Deferred Places

While nothing definite has yet been published, it is likely that the projected rise in university tuition fees will apply to all students starting courses in 2012, even those applying in the 2010-11 UCAS round for a deferred place. PGS pupils currently planning to take a gap year might want to bear this in mind. Universities might accede to a request to change the offer of a place from 2012 to 2011.

Student Finance

Students intending to start university in 2011 can start making financial arrangements before the publication of results in August. Full details of university finance can be found on the Student Finance website:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm>

Yours sincerely

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