

COVID-19 : Information for Admissions Teams – UCAS 2022 Cycle

Teaching and Learning for Year 12 into 13 students

Backwell School was in lockdown from Monday 4 January 2021 to Friday 5 March 2021. During this time, every timetabled lesson was delivered as a “live” lesson that students accessed via Microsoft Teams. Whilst no student was disadvantaged by a lack of technology as the school was able to provide laptop access where required, students were sometimes affected by Wi-Fi issues and engagement with remote learning over an extended period of time. A small number of vulnerable students attended school on a daily basis under Sixth Form supervision. When students were required to isolate due to COVID-19, they were able to join their lessons via Microsoft Teams and were given guidance and materials to ensure that they kept up with their learning.

Teaching and Learning for Year 13 leavers

The teaching and learning experience for our Year 13 leavers was as above for the second year of their study, except that in November 2020 they undertook in-class mock assessments that were completed under remote supervision if the student was isolating. For information on the impact of COVID-19 on their first year of study, please read on:

Backwell School went into lockdown as of Friday 20 March 2020 and from then on students were set and submitted work remotely via our virtual learning platform. Initially this took the form of at least one substantial piece of work a week per subject, following the curriculum. As of Monday 27 April 2020, remote teaching was adapted to include the use of weekly audio PowerPoint presentations to deliver the curriculum.

From Monday 15 June 2020, Year 12 Backwell students had regular “live” lessons via Microsoft Teams. This took the form of a minimum of two lessons per subject per week, increasing to three to four 50-minute lessons over the final weeks of term 6.

Other than spending at least one afternoon on the school site to focus on their Future Plans, the vast majority of Year 12 Backwell Sixth Form students continued to learn remotely until the end of the academic year, as “live” lessons were judged to be successful. Any student who was reported as underachieving or struggling with remote learning was brought in for at least one day a week for supervised study and to ensure that they had some “face to face” subject specialist time.

Furthermore, Music students who did not have access to the appropriate technology for composing at home, were able to make use of the school music studio once a week until the end of term.

Assessments, Examinations and UCAS predicted grades

In the week commencing Monday 28 June 2021, Year 12 students completed trial exams under examination conditions in our sports hall. These papers were a minimum of 1 hour and 30 minutes in length, testing students’ knowledge of their courses. These were the only formal “mock” exams completed last academic year, although termly in-class assessment also took place, except in term 3.

Every student in Year 12 was given a forecast grade at the end of Year 12, based on evidence from all of their work across Year 12, including the trial exams completed during remote learning. This formed the basis of their UCAS predicted grades. During term 1 of the new academic year, students have been given the opportunity to complete further assessments and/or to provide evidence that they are working above this grade.

Those students who were due to complete AS or A Level examinations in the summer of 2021, were awarded a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG), calculated in line with the national and school guidance. The following was the process at Backwell School:

- In March/April 2021, curriculum and subject leaders were asked to identify appropriate prior evidence such as termly assessments and mock exams that were common to all students in the cohort. This formed the basis of an initial grade based on prior evidence that could be used for up to 60% of their final TAG. The choice of these assessments was quality assured by the Senior Leadership Team.
- In term 4, students were given guidance as to the content they would be assessed on in term 5 and revision lessons were delivered. In term 5 (April/May 2021) students undertook at least one high control assessment and one medium control assessment so that they all had the opportunity to improve on the grade achieved using their prior evidence. Teachers ensured that exam access arrangements were in place. All assessment marking was standardised and moderated and teachers undertook unconscious bias training.
- The Senior Leadership Team quality assured the results of these assessments, checking that grade boundaries used, etc, were appropriate. The team also undertook a comparison with historical school data and a panel was convened to assess each application for special consideration. Percentage uplifts to Teacher Assessed Grades for special consideration were applied in line with exam board systems and following our school policy.
- Finally, the Trustees of the Lighthouse Schools Partnership met with the Headteacher, Mr Nunes, and other Senior Leaders of the school to verify and approve the methods used in forming the TAGs.