

20 March 2020

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Student,
(Please also share with Parent/Carers as appropriate)

We are making the final preparations for our transition to supporting most students at distance from Monday morning and I have outlined the plans for this in previous letters. At the same time the Government has now published more information about the groups of students that the College may need to provide more direct onsite access for. We have been liaising with our most vulnerable students and the agencies that are supporting us in our work with these, but if you feel that the College may need to include you in this planning in order to attend the College from next week please get in touch initially through your PPM.

My previous letter outlined that in relation to children of Key Workers, our initial assumption is that the age of our students does not automatically require their attendance at College, but we are open to that if circumstances need this and there is not another safe or suitable alternative. Again, please contact your PPM if this is something you would like to discuss in order that we can plan our support for students who need to attend on site from next week, as from Monday attendance at the College should be by prior arrangement and as a point of personal support to those who most need this. I shared safeguarding and support information in my previous letter and this is posted to our website also.

We have perhaps understandably received a number of queries from anxious or concerned students and parents, following the Government announcement on Wednesday evening that assessments and exams that were planned for May and June are no longer taking place. At the time of writing, we have received no further update or guidance on the system that OfQual and the main awarding bodies will be using to award grades to students. Announcements on this are expected soon of course and we share the frustrations of students whilst there is not clarity about this. In the meantime, please do not contact the College or staff directly with queries and requests that may pre-empt the announcements about the methods that may be used in due course.

The College will of course need time to read, digest and consider our responses or actions once announcements are made on assessments and examinations. We will communicate to all students and parents within a few days of the Government or OfQual announcements. We do not intend to take any actions ahead of that in respect of any courses or individuals. Please bear with us in this respect and our advice is to continue learning and planning as though some assessment will still take place, even if these might be changed or at a different time. In particular, those taking vocational courses with assignments and courses with units containing non-examined assessments, such as A level coursework, can reasonably assume at this stage that these will still need to be concluded and will be accounted for in final awards.

We have also had queries over the last couple of days in relation to bursaries and those who receive support through our free college meals system. Arrangements have now been made for those who would have received such support at lunchtimes in college and this will initially be through a payment in lieu of this instead. Those students can expect to receive a weekly payment of £13.60 from next week and this will be a direct bank payment, so look out for that if you are normally in receipt of that support and we will be extending that to the Easter holiday weeks also.

Finally, I have spoken to many of our final year students and one of the overwhelming emotions is the sense of having missed out on your 'final day' with friends and staff in a traditional sense as a result of the challenging national circumstances. I am keen to engage in a discussion in due course to explore how we can help to ensure that leavers still get an opportunity to celebrate and mark the end of your journey at WQE with staff and friends. Now is not that time of course and I hope to be in contact in the future about this, not least to ensure that the class of 2020 get their moment without the clouds that challenge us at this present time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wilson', written in a cursive style.

Paul Wilson
PRINCIPAL