Dear students and parents/carers,

I am writing to update you on the situation regarding COVID-19 and the college. I am incredibly pleased and proud to report that our phased return has been successful and we are moving to the next stage of returning to site, from after the Easter holiday period.

I would like to thank students and staff for their positive approach to returning to site. It is clear everyone welcomes the opportunity to resume face to face education and has been incredibly mature in respecting health and safety needs on site. Together we have been safer and made this a success story.

We are now approaching the Easter break. College term ends on Thursday 1st April and the summer term begins on Monday 19th April. It is now a requirement that colleges return to full time face to face teaching on site from the start of the new term. As per our plans, having successfully completed four weeks of phased return, the college is now intending to recommence full time face to face classes from Monday 19th April.

I hope that what follows below helps to inform and reassure you that it is now safe to undertake this next step and return our young people to the site.

**Lateral Flow Testing:**

**Key headline – please make sure you keep testing regularly at home**

We have conducted over 2400 lateral flow tests and already have handed out 2700 home testing kits to students and staff. There have been almost no positive cases related to the student and staff groups and the testing regime has ensured health and safety is upheld and that the risks of bringing students and staff back to site are lowered.

We are closing the college based testing centre from the Easter holiday period and moving over to twice weekly home testing for students and staff. Test kits will be regularly distributed by the college and you can also order kits directly from the government online.

From the Easter holidays onwards, I ask that we all do our bit to maintain health and safety by testing regularly at home and reporting results as directed in the test kit guidance. It is really important, for all our safety, that testing continue from home until we are told by the government to stop.

I would like to take a moment to thank those involved in setting up the college testing programme. From early planning over the Christmas holiday period, a team of staff and volunteers have delivered an ongoing testing centre capable of processing 1500 people, which is a phenomenal achievement.

**Health and Safety onsite:**

**Key headline – please make sure you keep following health and safety guidelines when travelling to and from college and when on site**

As already mentioned, we have been really impressed with how seriously all students and staff have taken returning to site and ensuring safety in doing so. Post the easter holidays we need to continue that approach and vigilance. Health and safety protocols will continue as before, with expectations that people seek to social distance where possible, regularly wash or sanitise hands, wipe down touch surfaces after use and stay home if displaying any COVID-19 type symptoms.

**Face Masks:**

**Key headline – unless directed otherwise, we shall start back after Easter continuing to wear face masks**

I am aware that the continued wearing of face masks is a challenge. Currently, the government guidance does not state if face masks remain compulsory after Easter or not. We have been advised an announcement will be made during the Easter holidays, possibly by the Prime Minister, regarding face masks. Until such a time we are asking students to continue wearing face masks when on site for the first two weeks of the new term (from Monday 19th April to Friday 30th April). We will review this policy before during the first two weeks and seek to reduce face mask use from May onwards, if it is the correct health and safety call to make.

I hope you understand and support why we believe this is the right decision to make. Returning all our students and staff to site will reduce social distancing and we need to use all mechanisms we have to ensure the best levels of health and safety. The government guidance is clear that, in a situation such as we find ourselves in, namely restricted space on site and reduced ability to social distance, we must use any other health and safety measures available to us to ensure safety. Asking all students and staff to continue wearing face masks when on site for the first two weeks of next term will create a safer period of transition.

If the government makes an announcement during the Easter holidays, we shall communicate with you via college email and the Weduc portal for about any changes to the above policy.

**Worried about return:**

**Key headline – talk with your support team about how you feel and find a best solution together**

As mentioned above, the government has now directed colleges to ensure the return of all students to site for face to face teaching. This is now a requirement and we are complying by providing full face to face teaching. We will not be continuing remote learning in the same form as before.

We truly understand that the post Easter period will be worrying for some people, be it for themselves or for those they live with. If you feel this is your situation, please reach out to your progress coach to talk through the issues and find a solution. Please also read the government guidance on shielding and isolating. We will work with you to create a support plan between you, your progress coach, teachers and home.

The college is resuming face to face lessons and so all our energy will now be directed at making this as great a success as possible. For those students who are required to self isolate or cannot attend college due to medical reasons, we will make all reasonable efforts to support students and maintain education remotely but a dual teaching model, as used recently, will not always be possible.

It is important I share with you that, post the Easter holidays, we have been directed that any student not in college must be recorded as absent, unless on an authorised absence.

**Teacher Assessed Grades:**

**Key headline – the college already has a system in place to produce TAGs**

There have been, and will be, college communications on the Teacher Assessed Grade process to replace this summer’s examinations. The college anticipated such an eventuality back in the autumn term and added two additional progress points to our progress monitoring system. This provides a regular progress grade per student, based on work completed. We have now adapted this system to enable us to provide every student with positive opportunity to complete assessed work that can be used as evidence upon which to base a TAG.

Subjects are communicating with students about which assessments will be used and this process will continue until late May (completing just before the May half term).

Whilst it is hard for students and parents/carers to not know the grade awarded, we are unable to provide you with this information prior to the national results days on the 10th August (A level / L3 BTEC) and the 12th August (GCSE / L2 BTEC). Please be reassured that our system will be the fairest possible and ensure all students given positive opportunity to show the best they can do. I would also stress to students that the Ofqual definition of TAGs are ‘assessments of the standard at which a student is performing, based on a range of available evidence’. What this means is your Teacher Assessed Grade cannot be a prediction of what you could or might achieve in the future but a reflection of the standards you have been able to show over the last year or two of study on that course. On that basis, I would really recommend to all students that working hard on the assessed work for your course, between now and the end of May, could have a real impact on the final grade you are awarded.

Ofqual have produced a blog article for students and parents/carers to read that helps explain grades this summer. It can [**be found here**](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2021/03/30/feeling-worried-about-grades-this-year-is-understandable-here-are-some-things-that-might-help/)

I hope this letter provides you with the information needed to feel confident about returning to college and achieving excellent results this summer.

We look forward to seeing you after the Easter break.

Stuart and the King Edward VI College staff