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Dear S5 pupils,

I hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones well. We may not have seen one another for several weeks, but I am thinking of you and your families, and look forward to a time when we are together again.

Firstly, I want to reassure you that we are focused on a number of key priorities, all with the intention of providing the best possible outcomes for you, our learners. SQA certification is certainly a key priority, and we are following SQA procedures to ensure that all of our pupils' efforts are rewarded. Another key priority that staff are working on is the early launch of courses which will be delivered, in the early weeks at least, against the backdrop of unprecedented circumstances which bring a unique set of challenges. We are determined to ensure that we maintain our high standards, but are aware of the effects that a loss of momentum can have upon learners. We will therefore begin courses next week, which is significantly earlier than normal, making good use of what would ordinarily be 'study leave' time. In doing so, we will ensure that teaching and learning is adapted to meet your needs in this temporary 'new normal'.

We have collated answers to the most common questions we have been asked recently, which we hope that you will find useful. We will continue to update our school website at <http://www.bearsdenacademy.e-dunbarton.sch.uk/> and will also continue to use our twitter account [@BearsdenAcademy](https://twitter.com/BearsdenAcademy) as well as individual department accounts. As well as other updates, the school website contains links and advice on Digital Learning Resources, which can be used for study across all subjects.

Please be assured that we, as staff, will do everything we can to support you through the challenges ahead. We are all determined to ensure that you continue on a successful learner journey. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any way in which I can support you.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr G Stevenson
Acting Depute Head Teacher

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to do any further work for S5 courses?

No. The SQA have stated clearly that there is no requirement for you to complete any more prelims or mock exams, or homework tasks for the purpose of determining an estimate grade.

Will my S5 grades be based solely on my prelim performance?

No. Your teachers will review all the evidence that is available to them to assess whether you have met the course aims. They have a strong understanding of your performance and know how you compare to other learners in each department, and in previous years.

Your teachers will take account of any available work that you have completed throughout the course. Using their professional judgement, and their knowledge of your work and your progress so far, they will make an estimate of the grade and band you would have achieved under normal circumstances. Estimate grades will be based on your demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each course at National 5 and Higher.

The SQA will examine the data provided to ensure consistency — both across the country and in comparison with previous years, before making a decision on the qualifications you are to be awarded.

Why can't I come in to school to collect work or to hand work in?

Social distancing rules, designed to protect all of us and society as a whole, mean that this is not possible at present. We will, therefore, maintain contact with each other online and work hard to support anyone who is having difficulties.

When will I get my results?

Everyone at Bearsden Academy and our SQA colleagues are working to ensure that you will receive your results no later than Tuesday 4 August. SQA strongly recommend that you sign-up to MySQA to receive your results by text and/or email. If you have already received your results through MySQA previously, you will continue to do so, and we recommend that you review your profile to make sure your contact details are up to date.

When will my S6 courses start?

Courses will start on Monday 11th May. Look out for further updates in the coming days, and we will make really good use of the time leading up to the summer holidays to make the best possible progress on your S6 courses.

I'm revisiting subjects that are unfamiliar to me, what if I find the new work difficult?

Further information will follow on how and when you can continue to maintain contact with your teachers. They are working hard to prepare tasks with full awareness of the fact that you are not together in the classroom, so tasks will be designed with this in mind.

I have a concern or question and would like to someone to talk to; what can I do?

Your Year Head and Guidance teachers are very much still here for you. We have continued to support pupils throughout this time and would be happy to hear from you, especially if you have concerns, queries or just want to catch up. We miss our interactions with you more than any other aspect of our working lives. Send us an email and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

I am feeling low and would like to speak to someone about it, what help is available?

We would encourage you to talk to family and loved ones about any issues or concerns that arise. Keep in touch with friends through social platforms, have a daily video call or chat through WhatsApp – there are many ways to keep in touch. Staying active and exercising regularly can have a really positive impact upon our mood, as can relaxation or even thinking of creative (socially distanced) ways to help others in your community.

As mentioned above, your Year Head and Guidance teacher are still here for you, and would be more than happy to hear from you. In addition to this, East Dunbartonshire Council can now provide a telephone based counselling service available to pupils aged ten and above. Young people can call Lifelink on 0808 196 3700 between 09.00 to 16.00 from Monday to Friday. The service can support young people with a wide range of difficulties including grief and loss, anxiety, low mood, anger and relationship and family issues.

Will Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) continue when the school is closed?

EMA payments will continue. It is assumed that pupils are accessing learning online through Show My Homework, Teams and other appropriate online platforms.

What about UCAS and college applications?

College websites have provided updates on the support they are providing to those in the process of applying, and should be checked regularly. Applications for some college places remain open.

UCAS have provide a statement on their website stating that the grades pupils receive will be as valid as those in previous years, and that there is no reason for the current admissions cycle to be disrupted. Universities UK has confirmed that institutions will be flexible and do all they can to support pupils progress to higher education. Remember that young people throughout the UK and overseas are in the same position. Visit the UCAS website for updates.

We hope that you find this information useful, and very much look forward to hearing from anyone who requires clarification, support or advice.