

September 2024

Dear parents and carers,

As students are settling into year 13, I am writing with some important messages about the weeks and months ahead, and please note that this, and all general letters can also be found on our website.

<https://ncpontefract.ac.uk/letters/>

### **Cedar**

As many of you are no doubt aware, Cedar is a great way to keep track of students' progress and attendance at college and allows you to email teachers. If you haven't created an account, please use this link to do so. You will need a next of kin email address that we have on file and the student's reference number that starts with L00. **Please note that the Progress Tutor is usually the first port of call for queries or problems.**

<https://cedar.ncpontefract.ac.uk/auth/account/create>

### **Exams, assessments, and AI (Artificial Intelligence)**

Most students who are enrolled on applied general qualifications will be sitting **external** exams in year 13, often as early as January 2025. Please be aware that external exams cannot be rescheduled and are a compulsory part of the course. Missing an exam will almost certainly result in failing the course unless there are significant mitigating circumstances, or unless the student resits the exam at their own expense later - this is not always possible. Please assume that there could well be an upcoming exam for applied general subjects such as BTECs, but students will be informed by their teachers. Please check the exam board website before booking any holidays in 2025.

Looking ahead for A level subjects, the awarding bodies have begun to release the dates for these external exams in the summer of 2025. In 2024 the exams started very early in May and ran up to the end of June, so again, please check on exam board websites before any holidays are booked. We will support students with revision in college, including a 10-week revision countdown with weekly advice and reminders.

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly relevant in education, and staff will be supporting students in the safe use of AI. However, all students are being reminded that any work they produce for assessment must be authentic to them and cannot have been generated using AI. Nationally, the improper use of AI has already led to some students being disqualified from coursework and/or full qualifications, severely impacting their progression to positive destinations.

### **Study support and access arrangements**

For parents/carers of students who have study support needs, please log into Cedar with them and check under 'Learner Support' that their implications for teaching and exam access arrangements are accurate. You will need to do this together as only students can see this information when they are logged into Cedar. It is important that students get the right support and that they only receive access arrangements that have been officially approved. Please note that due to the size of the college, the arrangements for smaller rooms may differ from those experienced at school. If you have any queries about this, please direct them to the SENDCo [sarah.oneill@nclt.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.oneill@nclt.ac.uk)

### Next Steps

Students are currently being supported with decisions and processes relating to their progression to university, apprenticeships or employment. The internal UCAS deadline is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December. Students will be supported through tutorials and the careers department in college over the next term to meet this. The majority of our students progress to university or other higher education. However, many are convinced at an early stage that university is 'not for them' and whilst we support them with all positive destinations, we would urge them to explore *all* their options and visit universities. For a small fee, an application can be submitted to UCAS so that students retain the option to go to university even if they have doubts. Lots of students make very late applications because of a change of heart, and I would encourage all to keep this door open until after their results next summer. Have a look at the UCAS website for information about funding for university (undergraduate) courses including Disabled Students Allowance, how to apply for Student Finance and short videos to answer common questions. <https://www.ucas.com/sfe>

### Attendance and Holidays

Attendance is an extremely high priority here at New College, and whilst we encourage students to get the balance right between study and social time, we also tell them that extra sessions and lessons may be added to their timetable so they must be wary of booking regular appointments or part time work around their timetable. It's worth noting that timetables do sometimes change - so again, study periods should not be considered to be free time. Holidays taken during term time cannot be authorised and can have a significant impact on academic progress. In some cases, where attendance is already low, holiday absence will result in escalation of intervention levels. Please support the college in trying to ensure that missed learning is minimised and refer to the term dates and exam timetables when booking holidays. Recent statistics show that attendance of less than 75% leads to one grade lower achievement. <https://ncpontefract.ac.uk/term-key-dates/>

Finally, please contact progress tutors if you have any concerns or you would like advice about supporting students through their second year of college.

Yours sincerely,  
Vicky Marks



Principal, New College Pontefract