

Monday 16 December 2013

Dear Parents and Guardians

Principal's Winter Newsletter

As we approach the end of the autumn term and look forward to the holiday period, we reflect on what has been a very busy, productive and successful term for the Academy.

Inducting 180 new Foundation level students into the Academy way has been a pleasure. They have settled in very well and have added greatly to our growing community. Likewise, new and returning Level 3 students have fully embraced the high aspirations and expectations of the UCL Academy. This term, members of staff working with Level 3 have developed robust systems and processes to ensure that the students are working effectively. Students have been monitored and tracked by their Heads of Houses and Assistant-Principal, Ms Lucas, and we are seeing the impact of this through improved attainment. The Level 3 and Level 3+ STEM mock exams took place earlier this month and the students have received feedback on their areas for improvement.

UCAS applications

There is currently a lot of excitement around the UCAS application process and we are delighted that a large number of students have received invitations to attend interviews at Cambridge University, Oxford University and University College London.

Career Breakfasts

The Career Breakfast events have been a very successful and rewarding initiative for the students. Two events have already been held focusing on medicine and engineering and more are scheduled for the New Year. We are very grateful to all that have participated as the events provide invaluable information to the students about various professions. We are also very keen for parents to get involved wherever possible, be it through taking part in a breakfast event or through the offering of placements at their place of work. If you are able to offer any support for this initiative, please contact us by email on enquiries@uclcademy.co.uk.

UCL links

Our relationship with UCL has strengthened further over the last term. In terms of our activities, there are three key areas of interest:

- 1) The UCL Guest Lecture Series – We have been delighted to welcome two leading UCL academics to the Academy this term; Dr Francisco Diego of UCL's Space Science Department and Dr Daniel Richardson of the Cognitive Neuroscience Department. Their lectures were a huge hit with all attendees and we look forward to the lectures planned for the New Year.
- 2) Object-Based Learning – This term we gratefully received 6 fascinating objects from UCL Museums and Collections. They have been the focus of projects by Level 1 and Foundation students and have proved very popular with the students.
- 3) Mentoring – This is perhaps the most exciting development. 80 Undergraduate UCL students have applied to be mentors to our Level 1 and Level 3 students and the first sessions are to be held on Thursday 16 and Friday 17 January. The programme will use a platform called Brightside to enable secure and monitored communication between the mentor and mentee. An information session for parents will be held in January.

Spring term arrangements

To enable the Academy to fully prepare for what is expected to be another busy term, arrangements for the start of the spring term have been amended slightly. On Monday 6 January only the Level 3 and Level 3+ students will return to the Academy and will have the opportunity to take any STEM resits and non-STEM mock exams. All other students will return to the Academy on Tuesday 7 January at 8.30am.

At the end of this term, we say goodbye to Assistant-Principal, Ms Noctor. We thank her for her hard work and contribution to the Academy and wish her every success in her new role.

Please find attached to this letter, a letter from your child's respective Assistant-Principal detailing the many activities that have taken place in their year group this term. The Academy Winter Newsletter will also follow at the end of this term.

I would like to thank you for your continued support and wish you all a peaceful holiday period.

Yours faithfully



Geraldine Davies
Principal



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Dear Parents and Guardians

Head of Level 3's Newsletter

It has been a very busy term for the new Level 3's as they have adapted not only to the demands of A Level work but also a new school and new environment. We have been very pleased with their progress; both internal and external observations of the teaching and learning across Level 3 have shown us the quality of thinking, exploration and evaluation that is going on during learning sessions. Observers have commented that our students are genuinely excited about their work and there is a level of trust developing in the classrooms and open learning spaces that encourages deep learning. Our focus groups with Level 3 students tell us that the students appreciate their Self-Directed curriculum and are enthusiastically making the most of opportunities on offer - cultural, sporting and spiritual alike. They have enjoyed the careers breakfasts and UCL Lecture Series - we always have a full house at these events as the students quite rightly appreciate that these are occasions to learn about the world outside the Academy from experts in different fields which very few sixth formers get the chance to experience. Our visitors have been unanimous in their praise of our students describing them as courteous, articulate and interesting young people taking a keen interest in the outside world and everything around them. I myself have very much enjoyed getting to know the students this term - particularly their mature grasp of when to take things seriously and when to have fun. Perhaps the only word of advice I might give some of them to reflect on over the Christmas holidays is their time-keeping. The outside world will not wait for them; they need to be in the right place at the right time. A handful of our students still have some trouble with this.

This term, the focus has been on making the transition to A level and Academy life. We have divided the year group into three groups - those who are progressing well and within reach of target grades, those who have some work to do to strive for their target grades but are on track to do this, and those who have some transition work to do in terms of focus,

motivation and acquisition of key concepts. We have a full timetable of intervention sessions for those in the latter group which, if the students make the most of these, should ensure quick progress into group two followed by group one. We also have additional support available for mathematics, physics and chemistry which students can access throughout the day at times that fit into their busy days. There is plenty on offer too to stretch and challenge the many students who have made the transition successfully; the years of A level study can fly by so quickly, we do not want any of our students to be standing still for too long, just long enough to reflect and gather renewed energy to move forward.

Next term, we will begin to plan for university applications so that our Level 3's are in a strong position to make the best use of the UCAS post-AS programme which will help them research universities and courses, complete their UCAS forms online and support them in writing their personal statements. Part of this programme is delivered by UCL admissions team so ensures that our students have the very best and most up-to-date information as to how to impress universities all over the country and beyond. We also have mock exams directly after half term week. It would make sense for students to be at home over half term taking revision seriously. The more accurate a picture the mock exams give of each students' knowledge, understanding and skills, the more they help teachers determine exactly what intervention is needed to ensure individual success in the summer.

Even though the summer seems a long way away, I would like to draw your attention to some important dates for you. All students will return to a full timetable of lessons at the Academy on after the AS exam season ends. This is an important period for the students as the foundations are laid for A2 study and sections of the A2 specifications are covered as well as the afore-mentioned UCAS programme run by Dr Ankerson and UCL. The current plan is that term finishes for all L3 students on Friday 18 July 2014 and full attendance up to this date is compulsory for entry onto A2 courses. AS results day this year falls on Thursday 14 August 2014. It is important that students come to collect their results in person wherever possible as, at this point; we need to make final decisions about individual programmes of study for next year.

Overall, I'd like to congratulate all your sons and daughters on a lively and full first term at the Academy. They all deserve a good rest over the Christmas break and we look forward to welcoming them back on Tuesday 7 January. We have achieved a great deal together and I hope they have enjoyed their start to Level 3 life. We hope to see many of you at our Christmas Concert on Tuesday 17 December at 6.45pm.

With best wishes for a happy and relaxing holiday.

Yours faithfully



Ms A Lucas
Assistant-Principal (Level 3)