

The De Montfort School

UNLOCKING YOUR CHILD'S POTENTIAL



Four Pools Road, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 1DQ | Telephone: 01386 442060

15 July 2020

Subject: Year 10 - TDMS educational provision from September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following on from my letter on 13th July regarding Year 10, I would like to now give some further details regarding the rationale underpinning our decision to propose that students drop one of their four options. I would also like to give some more detail regarding the support that will be available should your child really wish to continue with their fourth option.

Firstly, I do apologise, that your child is being presented with making difficult choices at what has already been a stressful time. Of course, in a normal world, we would not be having to make such radical decisions so rapidly, allowing us no time to follow our normal process of consulting with you and our students. As you know, I have always preferred to consult first, but these are unprecedented times and the guidance regarding a full reopening of schools was very complex and the timescales so tight, forcing us to make some executive decisions.

Q1. Why has the school decided that Year 10 going into Year 11 should drop one of the four options?

For the vast majority of students, we are convinced that taking three options forward at this stage is the right decision to make because:

- Our students have inevitably lost much in-school learning time during the lockdown period and having more time on each of three options (4 periods a week in place of 3) from the beginning of September, ensures they have a much better chance of recovering this time
- We are taking a cautious approach and we are always mindful of our students' mental health and well-being. We must be prepared for a second lockdown, which could potentially occur at any time. Another lockdown, would naturally result in large numbers of, then, Year 11 students becoming extremely anxious and requesting to drop their fourth option
- If there were to be a lockdown with the four option model in place, students dropping a fourth option would not be able to have any additional teaching time on their remaining options, they would just have private study. In our model, with the possibility of a future lockdown in mind, all students are getting additional teaching time on three options from the beginning of September
- The new Year 11s have not only missed out on much of their learning, they have also missed out on their major end of Year 10 assessments. This is a real concern, because it means they have not been able to get the depth of feedback they need. This would be a greater worry over four options. To compensate for this, we will be moving the Year 11 mocks forward, so the students can get the feedback they need as soon as possible on their return to school
- GCSEs are now examined much more than ever on terminal assessments and, whilst there has been talk of reducing the examination content, no real details have emerged yet. We must not underestimate the likely challenge in the examinations

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- For many students, taking 3 not 4 options forward, will take some pressure off them, knowing that the time that has been lost does not have to be recaptured across all four of their option subjects and they are getting extra time in the three they are continuing
- Class groups will be smaller, helping to provide the opportunity for more individualised support
- It might seem contradictory that we propose an option drop, when we deliberately started options earlier, to enable our students to have a greater grounding, get ahead, and to take four rather than three options. However, starting early has given them a much better grounding than they would have had in many schools and this extra grounding has not been lost
- In effect, for students continuing with three options, we are ensuring that all three options are fully secure. For those students who feel able, with support from the school, to be successful in all four, they will also be more secure in the first three, but will also receive support with the fourth
- The decision to move to a three option model for Year 11 was endorsed by our School Improvement Advisor and is in keeping with other schools who have been running a four options model

Q2. If I am dropping one of my four options, how should I choose which subject to drop?

- There are many factors to take into consideration:
 - Is there a subject that you know is your weakest and that you would be very worried about being able to fully catch up and do well in?
 - You need to be mindful that different subjects are important for different careers/future study
 - The key is to talk it through at home and with us at school if you are unsure

Q3. Must I retain all EBacc subjects?

- We do strongly recommend that your child does not drop an Ebacc subject, as these subjects have increasing currency going forward into the Sixth Form and Higher Education
- As a result, we really want all students to continue with at least one EBacc. However, each case will be judged on its individual merits

Q4. Can my child continue with their fourth subject?

- Yes, whilst we are strongly recommending that our students drop a subject, **we are allowing students to continue with their fourth, where this is the right decision to make**

Q5. What support will the school provide if my child continues with the fourth option?

We have already thought of a number of ways in which we can support, but there will be more ways to follow.

So far, we will have the following support provision:

1. We will, of course, enter and pay for your child's examination in the fourth subject
2. We have built a strong reputation for our extra academic support and we have always supported our Year 11 students through after school boosters. TDMS staff will especially want to support those that have shown huge resilience in maintaining all four of their options
3. Where your child's fourth subject is also being provided in one of the Sixth Form lessons being provided after school, we will look at any possibility of some access to resourcing/staff at these times, whilst assuring everyone's social distancing and their safety
4. We will re-introduce our very successful 1:1 staff mentoring that we put in place for Year 11s this year. This was invaluable in providing a source of additional support and guidance and someone who "champions" your child
5. Students will be able to take mocks in their fourth subject and receive feedback on these
6. Google Classroom will continue to provide a bedrock to our provision, especially as we are acutely aware that we may well have another enforced lockdown. This resource will continue to be developed on our return, so staff, when setting work for their classes, will be fully mindful of those students who are trying to learn more independently and will therefore be thinking of them
7. Where appropriate, we will explore the redeployment of some core PE time as additional private study time

The bottom line is that every student's position is different, so we will look to support your child in the best way possible for them as an individual. In a nutshell, we believe that 3 options is a sensible decision for most of our students, but for a small group, we will make four work!

The key thing is to get the discussions started, we are here to help.

Please use the following link <https://forms.gle/hWzisN8G8LN2Lxv98>

Please do continue to take care and remember we are here to support you and your child through this difficult time.

Miss Green and Mr Dolan are in school this Friday 17th July and Mr Dolan has also kindly agreed to be available Monday to Wednesday next week. Decisions don't have to be made overnight. There is also time to see staff as we will be back at school from the 1st September and Year 11s have their official restart on the 4th September.

Finally, my staff and I would like to thank you for your continued support and the confidence you hold in our school.

Yours sincerely,

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

Guy Nichols
Headteacher