



Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we approach the Christmas holidays, I would like to offer some reflections upon the mock examinations that Upper Sixth students sat in November, some guidance on the work that academic departments have asked students to complete, and some important information concerning the second set of mock exams scheduled for next term.

A level students sat mock exams in November in most academic subjects, having spent some time revising in preparation for these assessments. The November mocks provided students with a valuable opportunity to develop their exam-room experience; they also highlighted areas where students will want to deepen their subject knowledge and refine their timed assessment technique before the next set of mock examinations and public examinations in the summer. Students have reviewed the outcomes of the mocks with their subject teachers, tutors and houseparents, and have begun to identify strategies for making the most effective use of their revision time and addressing any knowledge gaps identified by academic staff. They have been asked to spend some of the Christmas holiday working on these academic priorities, so should strike a sensible balance between revision and relaxation this month.

All departments have set holiday work to be completed before College returns in January. For students studying English, geography, history and DT the successful completion of NEA work (constituting at least 20% of students' final marks) will be a high priority, as will the completion of BTEC assignments. All students have been advised to ensure that these tasks are completed to a high standard and submitted to final deadlines. Departments have set work that comprises consolidation of ongoing learning, revision of key knowledge from last year and preparation for the second set of mock exams. Students have received revision lists and instructions from their teachers and will need to ensure this work is completed to the best of their ability before January. An effective approach to preparation over the Christmas period would see students committing to **between 20 and 25 hours of revision a week, with 4 or 5 clear days off** over the holiday. Such a commitment is typical of Year 13 students preparing for the same public examinations at a range of schools and sixth form colleges across England.

The second set of A level mock exams is scheduled to commence on **26 February 2024**, and these will give a pretty clear indication of how likely students are to meet their aspirations for final public examination grades. All students need to approach the second set of mock exams with every determination to perform to the highest standard of which they are capable; this begins with effective revision planning, the completion of academic holiday work, and a full grasp of the content covered so far. Successful academic outcomes in August 2024 will be the direct consequence of good academic routines developed prior to the Lent term.

This has been a positive but challenging term for students in the Upper Sixth, who have had to balance a number of competing academic and extra-curricular demands while finalising their plans for life after Ampleforth. It is very pleasing indeed to observe that so much has been achieved in during the Autumn term.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas, when it arrives.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Vowles
Head of Year 13