

# **UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL**

## **Statements of School Policy & Practice (2009/2010)**

### **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

1. General Principles of the UCS Academic Ethos
2. General Principles of the UCS Curriculum
3. The Curriculum Policy
4. Structure of the Curriculum
  - The Lower School
  - The Middle School
5. Homework
6. Assessment
7. Reporting
8. Internal and External Examinations
9. Learning Support
10. Tracking
11. Academic Discipline
12. Academic Enrichment, Cross-Curricular Learning & Gifted and Talented
13. Recruitment, Review & Professional Development
14. ICT for Teaching & Learning
15. The School Library, Information Support & Independent Learning
16. Higher Education and Careers

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.1 General Principles of the UCS Academic Ethos**

UCS believes in giving its students breadth, choice and balance at all stages in their education, in providing strong intellectual values as well as opportunities for creativity, and in allowing, as age and maturity permits, increasing subject-specialisation.

The educational culture at UCS seeks to provide challenge, variety and freedom for its students as well as to foster curiosity, intellectual independence and imagination. In the 'conventional' taught curriculum students are encouraged to generate a love of learning for its own sake and also to learn to develop the skills and understanding necessary to make important choices about their own educational direction. Each subject/department aims to combine a rigorous programme of study with a range of enrichment opportunities to enhance a student's appreciation and understanding of a subject as well as to connect this learning with skills and knowledge gained from other subjects. Each teacher seeks to encourage students to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding but they also try to demand that the students reflect upon the nature and content of their learning, that they develop habits of critical inquiry and that they gradually become autonomous and self-sufficient learners.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.2 General Principles of the UCS Curriculum**

The academic curriculum at University College School follows the customary pattern of providing a wide range of subjects in the Lower and Middle Schools, subsequently narrowing to provide specialised study in the Sixth Form. It is designed at all stages to enhance a pupil's academic experience and his appreciation of the breadth of knowledge. The academic curriculum is supported by a timetabled programme of PSHE, in coordination with the school's extensive pastoral system, and by an equally extensive programme of sports education. Although a degree of narrowing is inevitable at GCSE and at AS/A level, it is school policy to offer pupils the widest possible choice in their combinations of subjects, unrestricted by the constraints of an imposed 'blocking' system.

In the Entry and Shell Years boys follow a common curriculum founded upon the best features of the National Curriculum, but extending beyond the National Curriculum's restrictions to provide a wide variety of additional work. Boys are not required to sit national tests at Key Stage Three, but they are expected comfortably to meet and to exceed their demands. In the Lower Remove this broad curriculum expands further to provide pupils with the option of studying a further classical or modern language.

For their GCSE programme, all boys study Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, at least one modern language, at least one science, and a further five subjects.

In the Transitus, pupils will normally study four subjects to AS level. Students may choose to continue with all four subjects to A-level in the Sixth Form or to narrow down to three subjects. Pupils at this level continue to follow the school's sports programme; on Friday afternoons there are additional opportunities for non-athletic activities.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.3 UCS Curriculum Policy**

It is the policy of the school to give its students experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. We aim to provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those with a statement; and where a pupil has a statement, we aim to provide an education which fulfils its requirements. We ensure that all pupils acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy as well as giving pupils personal, social and health education which reflects the school's aims and ethos. We endeavour to give appropriate careers advice for our pupils and, for those above the compulsory school age, we provide a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs. Overall, our policy is to allow all pupils to have the opportunity to learn and make progress and to provide an effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

We believe that all our students have a right to a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual abilities and differences into account. In curriculum design, we are guided by our belief in the integrity of traditional academic subjects and in their value in providing the best framework for young people as they develop a full appreciation of the breadth of human knowledge. Equally, we regard physical and creative experience as being vital in the full development of students.

We keep the UCS curriculum under regular review, as we seek new and original methods to support the acquisition of knowledge and skill, in order to help students to develop not only intellectually but also socially, personally and emotionally as they prepare to take their places in the world.

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In the Entry and Shell Years boys follow a common curriculum founded upon the best features of the National Curriculum, but extending beyond the National Curriculum's restrictions to provide a wide variety of additional work. Boys are not required to sit national tests at Key Stage Three, but they are expected comfortably to meet and to

exceed their demands. In the Lower Remove this broad curriculum expands further to provide pupils with the option of studying a further classical or modern language.

For their GCSE programme, all boys study Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, at least one modern language, at least one science, and a further five subjects.

In the Transitus, students usually study four subjects to AS level. Students may choose to continue with all four subjects to A-level in the Sixth Form or to narrow down to three subjects. There are opportunities for students to take an additional AS subject if they drop one of their A2 subjects. Students at this level continue to follow the school's sports programme; on Friday afternoons there are additional opportunities for non-athletic activities, as well as further opportunities for sport.

In the Lower and Middle School 6 periods of curriculum time are allocated to physical activity, while in the Sixth Form, there are 3 periods and the option of a further 3 periods during the Activities Programme.

### **Access to the Curriculum**

The school believes in ensuring that all students have full access to the UCS curriculum, regardless of their learning needs. The only situation where a student might suffer any restriction would be where access might have implications for the health or safety of a student.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.4 The Structure of the Curriculum**

#### Overview

The UCS has a one-week timetable consisting of 45 periods of 35 minutes each. While such a structure places certain constraints upon allocation of teaching time for individual subjects, it is school policy to try to allow individual departments choice, where possible, as to the allocation of single, double and triple periods. The current structure allows for a balance to be struck between the differing teaching and learning demands of individual subjects.

#### The Lower School

In the Lower School there are nine periods in the teaching day (except for the Entry on Friday, which has 8 periods), each of thirty five minutes. The subjects studied are Mathematics, English, French, Geography, Combined Science, Latin, Music, Art, Technology, Drama, PSHE, PE and games. In the Entry year ICT is not taught as a separate subject but instead through a designated ICT lesson within two subjects, Geography and Science, a total of two lessons per week. In addition, from 2009, a pilot 'enrichment' lesson is offered, called Ideas, which endeavours to provide both skills-based and subject-based enrichment.

In year 8, the three sciences, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, are taught separately. From 2010-11, following a pilot scheme in 2009-10, ICT will be taught through a designated subject area, in this case an extra lesson of History each week.

As some boys joining the Lower School have not previously studied French, this is taught in sets, thereby allowing such pupils to receive special attention. With this exception, all subjects are taught in mixed ability form units, usually consisting of 22 or 23 boys.

#### The Middle School

In the Middle School the curriculum remains the same as that taught in the Lower School, with the following modifications. The teaching of Mathematics now takes place in sets, for the benefit both of those who find the subject more demanding and of those who are capable of working at a faster pace. The Sciences have an increased time allocation, and the opportunity is provided for the study of up to two further languages: Greek, German or Spanish. In year 9, for those few students who it is thought are not best suited to studying a third language, a course in European Cultural Studies is available.

Boys nominate their choices for GCSE studies at the end of the Lower Remove and pursue those studies through the following two years. All boys continue with English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. In addition they choose seven other subjects, selected from the following; Biology, Physics, Chemistry, French, German, Spanish, Latin, Greek, History, Geography, Business Studies, Art, Design and Technology, ICT, Physical Education, Drama and Music. Pupils may choose freely from this 'menu' with the sole *proviso* that, to maintain sufficient breadth in their studies, they are required to include at least one modern language from those that they have previously studied and at least one science subject.

These arrangements provide the pupil with some scope to tailor his own GCSE programme, focusing upon his particular skills and interests, while maintaining a sufficiently broad approach. The school's policy is to provide guidance to pupils and to parents by means of a booklet provided for each pupil and backed by a series of parents' meetings held in the Spring and Summer Terms of the Lower Remove Year. In addition, it is expected that each boy will receive detailed and individual advice from his form teacher and from his Deme Warden. Whilst UCS provides an unusual degree of choice for GCSE students, it also aims to ensure that a student does not limit later degree choice by their choices at this early stage in their academic career.

Boys remain in the same form and Deme groups throughout the Middle School, but each GCSE subject is studied in sets drawn from the whole year group. As a result of this arrangement sets are generally restricted to around twenty students, although in some subjects sets may be much smaller. As a general rule, sets will not exceed 23 students, unless on an exceptional basis.

### The Sixth Form

All students usually study four AS Levels and either three or four A2s; it is occasionally possible for a student to study either fewer or more AS or A Levels and such a decision is made in consultation with parents, Deme Wardens, and Heads of Department. UCS continues to allow students a completely free choice of subject options and there are no fixed timetable blocks and the curriculum expands to allow students the opportunity to study a broader range of subject options. In addition to the subjects offered for GCSE students may also choose Economics (Business Studies is no longer an option), History of Art, Philosophy, and Politics. The History department offers three syllabus options: Late Modern, Early Modern and Medieval History; Mathematics offers Maths with Statistics or Mechanics as well as Further Maths (which is taken in two subject blocks). It is usual for many students to continue with four A Levels in the Sixth Form year. Set-sizes in the Transitus and Sixth Form tend to be much smaller than in the Middle and Lower Schools, with the largest sets usually being around 14 students.

Students continue to be members of Demes, although there is a team of two full-time and two part-time Sixth Form Tutors who coordinate the T7 programme and UCAS applications. The T7 programme is taken in addition to the four AS subjects which all students take and forms a programme of personal, social and health education; it takes place on Tuesdays in period 7 and although based principally on Form-based discussion groups also includes year-group lectures and seminars. In addition to

preparing all students to meet the challenges of adulthood, it also prepares students for the UCAS process and by being based in Form-Groups allows the Form Tutors time to develop a close relationship with their Forms. This in turn ensures that the process of a student's application to university is monitored and supported closely and that all students are encouraged to prepare for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of their future life.

On Friday afternoon the Activities Programme provides a programme of non-sporting, community-based and specialist sports' activities. This programme operates for the Autumn and Spring Terms in the Transitus and during the Autumn Term of the Sixth Form. During the Transitus, students choose from a wide variety of different activities, some academic, some recreational or sporting and some community-based; all students are encouraged to try a different activity each term (although there are some activities, such as Mandarin, which require two terms of study). In the Sixth Form, those students who have not taken part in some form of community service are required to do so – this is often arranged by the students themselves on the basis of a particular area of their own interests.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.5 Homework**

The school believes in the value and purpose of homework as a means of practising skills learned in lessons, of learning or revising the skills and knowledge acquired during lessons and of developing an increasing capacity for working independently.

It is the school's policy to set homework regularly for all students in all years. All pupils in the Lower and Middle Schools are issued with a Homework Diary, in which homework assignments are recorded. Form-teachers check these diaries regularly. Parents are encouraged to oversee this and to monitor their son's homework habits. In this way, pupils are encouraged, both at home and at school, to develop a responsible attitude towards independent study.

Such homework should be designed to serve one or more of the following purposes:

- a) making acquaintance with new material by reading, researching, learning or annotating it;
- b) learning examples of a type already understood or practising processes already explained;
- c) written practice of work already covered in class;
- d) project work.

The amount of homework set varies from one year group to another. At present the following quantities are considered appropriate: the Lower School are set exercises in two or three subjects per night such as would take an average student twenty to thirty minutes each to complete; the Middle School are set exercises in three subjects per night such as would take an average student thirty to forty five minutes each to complete. In these year groups the setting of homework exercises is regulated by a timetable prepared by the Timetable Team. Copies of this timetable are communicated to parents. As part of the preparation for GCSE it is expected that from time to time homeworks will be set which require longer than the allotted time (for instance in preparing or completing coursework or controlled assessment); in these instances individual departments and subject teachers attempt to balance the timing and frequency of such extra demands in order not to adversely impact on the students' learning in other subjects.

The setting of homework in the Sixth Form while less formalised in its procedures is considered as important and significant a part of Sixth Form study as it is in the Lower and Middle Schools. The complexity and depth of advanced study, however, make it more important than ever to inculcate and to encourage habits of working at home, as well during free time at school. The essential functions of homework, outlined above, remain valid in the Sixth Form, and it is expected that teachers will routinely set assignments to be completed in the pupils' own time to advance the students' coverage of the syllabus and to reinforce work carried out or explained in class. The obligation upon subject teachers to assess such work applies as strongly in the Sixth Form as in any other part of the school.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.6 Assessment**

UCS considers that assessment of student work is an essential part of aiding a student's intellectual development and is vital in developing a dialogue between a teacher and a student over the student's progress and attainment in learning.

It is school policy that homework and class work, once completed, must be assessed. Assessment criteria appropriate for each year-group are established by each teaching department. Homework based upon the learning of material will normally be backed up by a test, and written work will be corrected in such a way that the pupil clearly understands the nature of any error that she or he has made. The notation used in such assessment is a matter of departmental policy. Written comments will be designed to be helpful to pupils in understanding both the mistakes that they have made and the successes that they have achieved. Criticism will often be necessary, but all assessment should be accompanied by constructive advice as to how the pupil may improve the standard of his or her work. Where possible and appropriate all assessment aims to encourage students to learn from their mistakes and to improve their understanding of a subject.

It is considered to be the responsibility of each department to encourage good standards of accuracy and fluency in English as well as high standards of presentation.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.7 Reporting**

The parents of students at the school receive reports in three formats. Twice in the academic year they receive a report folder containing the collected reports of all those who teach their son/daughter an academic subject. Parents are invited to add their own comments to these reports if they wish. In addition, parents are invited at least once in each academic year to attend a meeting at school at which they may discuss with members of the teaching staff their child's academic progress and future options. At the end of the Upper Remove and the Sixth Form, parents receive letters from their son's/daughter's form teacher summarizing achievement and progress. In addition to this formal structure, it is school policy to encourage parents to contact form teachers or Lower School or Deme Wardens in writing, in person or by e-mail, whenever a problem arises over the pupil's academic progress.

At the same time, the school conducts a system of internal reporting. This is based upon a series of comments written by each subject teacher in order to inform the form teacher and the Warden of the pupil's progress and application, and to raise any concerns that might be appropriate. These comments are communicated to the pupil by his form teacher in the course of a confidential interview in which the form teacher will summarise the content of the comments and encourage the pupil to respond to them. It is not school policy to communicate these comments *verbatim* to the pupil, nor to communicate them directly to parents, although in many cases they will form the basis of an informal progress report. In this way the school seeks to encourage absolute frankness, both in the reports of the subject teachers and in the response of the pupils.

In a similar vein, a programme of self-assessment is conducted before GCSE choices are made in the Lower Remove and again in the Sixth Form. In their first term of AS level study, Sixth Formers complete a form on which they are invited to comment upon the problems that they feel they have encountered, and the successes that they think they have achieved in making the difficult transition from GCSE to AS/A level studies. The content of these forms will subsequently be discussed with form tutors, in conjunction with the comments written at half-term by the student's teachers, to provide an overview of the pupil's development, viewed from distinct angles. Self-assessment for all students from year 7 onwards forms an integral part of the PSHE programme.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.8 Internal & External Examinations**

It is UCS policy to prepare students rigorously for both internal and external examinations and to provide firm support for students as they progress through the various examination stages.

#### Internal Examinations

In every year, except those in which public examinations are taken, internal examinations are set at the end of the summer term. The object of these examinations is to test and to reinforce the work that the pupil has undertaken in the course of the academic year, and to provide information concerning the pupil's progress during the year. In addition many departments run interim tests and examinations at various stages throughout the school year. It is not school policy to make the pupil's progress through the school dependent upon his or her performance in these internal examinations.

#### Exam Hurdles

The only exception to this rule of unobstructed progress through the school occurs at the end of the Upper Remove Year. While the school does not operate a specific hurdle for a boy to proceed from GCSE to AS/A level studies, it is made clear to parents and pupils that fewer than six GCSE passes at grade B or above is an insecure foundation for AS/A level study here. In making a decision about a pupil's suitability for further study, the particular circumstances and interests of the individual concerned will always be paramount. In most cases, it is not formally required that a pupil should have achieved specified levels at GCSE in the subjects that he chooses to study at AS level. In practice, however, AS level choices are carefully monitored by form teachers, Deme Wardens, Senior Tutors and Heads of Departments, and students will be extensively advised upon the suitability of their subject choices. In certain cases, notably in Mathematics and in Modern Languages, pupils may be refused access to AS level courses if it is felt that their performance at GCSE indicates an insufficient basis in the subject. In all cases, the overriding principle of the advice given will be to secure the best interests of the individual pupil.

#### External Examinations

Where a choice exists, it is the normal policy of the school to enter all candidates for the highest tier in GCSE or other public examinations, giving them the opportunity of the highest possible grades. Parents will be informed if we believe it to be in the interests of a particular candidate to be entered for a lower tier.

The school will make all arrangements necessary for pupils to be entered for public examinations for which they are being prepared at UCS. If parents wish their child to sit an examination at UCS for which he/she is being prepared externally, they must contact the school's Examinations Officer as early as possible and always by half-term in the Autumn Term before the summer to which the exam entry relates. We cannot undertake that such external examination entries will always be possible. The following principles should be noted:

- Public examination entries will normally only be considered for pupils in the Remove (Year 10) and above, although occasionally there are some exceptions to this rule.
- Public examination entries involving foreign languages that are not taught at UCS present particular difficulties and will not normally be possible, although there are occasional exceptions to this rule.
- Similarly, public examination entries in subjects with a significant coursework component present difficulties and will not normally be considered.
- Before any examination entry can be made the school's Examinations Officer must, by half-term in the Autumn Term, have received full information of the examination board, the subject and component codes, the name and full contact details of the tutor involved and of the institution responsible for exam preparation. It is the responsibility of the pupil (and his family) to provide this information.

#### Re-sitting External Examinations

It is the policy of the school to offer students in the Sixth Form the possibility of re-sitting certain AS or A2 modules during the Spring Term of year 13 or along with the majority of A2 modules in the Summer Term of year 13. Students will normally hold discussions with subject teachers, Heads of Department, Deme Wardens or Sixth Form Tutors over the possibilities of re-sitting; the decision will be made by balancing the student's overall needs and ambitions with their level of commitment and application. The ultimate decision is made by the Headmaster who assesses the overall burden of a student's workload.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.9 Learning Support**

It is the policy of the school to support the learning of all students, provide full curriculum entitlement for all students as well as to identify and recognise the different learning needs of all students. Where students have a statement of special educational needs, the Learning Support department ensures that it supports their learning according to their requirements. The department also seeks to identify the specific learning difficulties or EAL needs of all students in the school and to provide appropriate support for their learning.

Although the school does not have the provision to support more serious learning difficulties, the Learning Support Department can offer professional assistance and support to a range of students who are experiencing difficulty in learning. The department's primary function is to identify those students with learning difficulties and to work with them, their parents and their teachers, in determining the best strategies to support effective learning. The department makes use of MidYis baseline testing as a means of tracking student progress and in helping to identify a student's learning needs. The department also ensures that all relevant information about a student's learning profile is available and actively communicated to teachers and that any subsequent changes are communicated rapidly.

All students are screened when they enter the school, so that their particular learning needs can be judged and feeder schools and parents are encouraged to inform the school of any relevant information regarding a student's learning profile. For those students where there is particular concern, on the basis of our internal screening process or from teacher, tutor or Lower or Deme Warden referral, parents will be consulted and, if necessary, formal assessment will take place; specialist outside help will be recommended, where appropriate. On the basis of its screening programme and other information, the department aims to provide flexible, and where necessary, regular support, most often through individual tutorial sessions; for some students, small tutorial group work may be considered more appropriate. The department also works to ensure that a student receives appropriate support in all relevant areas of school life and that all teachers are fully aware of strategies to support individual students' learning. The department also encourages all teachers to share concerns with it over any student's learning and any member of staff can refer a student to the department at any time. This referral will usually be made after consultation with the Form Tutor and the Deme or Lower School Warden.

The department also coordinates appropriate support for those students who require extra time or use laptops in public examinations.

The Learning Support Department organises a range of different initiatives, within year-groups and within particular academic departments, to promote the development of learning and study skills. The department works closely with the PSHE programme.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.10 Tracking**

It is UCS policy to monitor carefully the academic development of all students as they progress through the school and to observe closely the different aspects of a student's learning at each stage of their development. The tracking system combines with the systems of assessment and reporting to provide a continual process of charting a student's development and as such we believe it is a key process in ensuring each student is fully supported and encouraged during their time in the school.

Tracking of student progress is an area where the academic and pastoral systems work very closely together. Throughout the school the primary overall responsibility for monitoring closely a student's overall day-to-day and month-to month progress lies with the Form Tutor and Deme Warden; each individual subject teacher is likewise responsible for a student's progress in their subject. Various forms of assessment data are available to the Form Tutor when a student arrives at UCS and during a student's time in the school an informal profile is gradually produced which charts a student's progress. In addition, the Learning Support Department uses baseline testing information (MidYis) in years 7 and 9, to provide further guidance in assessing a student's progress, identifying any particular learning needs and developing strategies to support them; UCS does not currently use MidYis as a fixed guide or means of setting arbitrary targets but instead uses it through the Learning Support department as a rough indicator of a student's strengths and weaknesses; the initial screening is used similarly. UCS, as a general rule, expects students to exceed their MidYis predictions and for this reason the information is not shared with the students or parents.

The principal formal mechanisms for tracking progress are the various forms of internal and external reports, which themselves result from test-results, class-work and homework in individual subjects; in the Sixth Form, there is student self-assessment in the form of Progress Reports in which student reflect on the progress they are making in each subject. Some individual departments have formalised their own procedures for tracking student progress in the form of whole year-group tests or by collating scripts from internal examinations. Form Tutors work closely with their Lower School or Deme Wardens in working out strategies to deal with those students who are not making sufficiently good progress; they also consult closely with individual subject teachers and Heads of Department over individual students who are perceived or reported not to be making progress. All Form Tutors, Lower School and Deme Wardens, teachers and Heads of Department regard the personal relationship which is built up with the student as the key to successful tracking and monitoring of student progress and these various informal means of evaluating a student's progress provide a continual source of vital information to supplement that gained more formally.

UCS encourages a wide range of strategies for supporting students who are not making progress. The role of the Form Tutor and subject teacher is important in developing a trusting and frank relationship with a student and students are

encouraged at all levels of the school to become involved in working out the best strategies for them to make better progress through identifying strengths and weaknesses and areas of particular concern. Subject teachers and Form teachers aim to identify the areas where a student is not making progress and to try and understand possible reasons why a student is not making progress and to attempt to work out strategies to support the student.

Individual teachers and Form Tutors encourage students they see as not making appropriate progress to attend one-to-one tutorial sessions or small-group tutorials whenever they perceive that a student's learning may benefit – these take place either before school, at lunchtimes or after school and are usually run by the subject-teacher or Form Tutor. Supervised study classes take place each lunchtime and although these are mainly used for students who have failed to complete homework or a class assignment, they can also be used for students over whom there are more general concerns. Many individual departments run extra classes for those students who are not making good progress on a regular or occasional basis. Lower School and Deme Wardens, in consultation with Form Tutors and teachers also run extra tutorials and will meet regularly with students whose progress is causing concern. When a student continues to cause concern, the Form Tutor and Lower School or Deme Warden, will usually arrange a meeting with a student's parents and it is also at this stage that, depending on the nature of the concerns, the Director of Learning Support and/or the school counsellor may be consulted; additionally at this stage the Headmaster might be consulted and meet with a student either individually or along with their parents.

During the school year 2009-10 a Working Party will meet to identify ways in which the tracking and support of students can be more effective and consistent and will focus in particular on how the school can identify and work with the students who are generally underperforming but who are not significant cause for concern. In addition, the Working Party will look at ways in which the school might better use 'objective data', such as MidYis.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.11 Academic Discipline**

It is school policy that the classroom teacher has the primary responsibility for the academic discipline of each class he or she teaches. The teacher should be confident in defining and maintaining clear, consistent expectations and standards of behaviour in each class; whilst the boundaries of acceptable behaviour will vary from subject to subject and from year to year, the teacher should establish boundaries inside and outside the classroom within which he or she feels comfortable enough to teach freely, imaginatively and effectively. The teacher should expect to establish and maintain an atmosphere conducive and appropriate for learning at all times; for instance, a teacher should never feel that it is inappropriate to demand silence from a class in order to create an effective atmosphere for learning. All teachers should ensure that they create an atmosphere in which they feel comfortable and able to teach effectively.

All teachers should be aware that whatever their experience and previous rapport with students, difficulties can arise unexpectedly; it is common for teachers under these circumstances to internalise and often avoid facing up to such difficulties, sometimes due to anxieties about their ability or fears of being judged harshly. It is the policy of the school that of all Heads of Department, senior members of staff and colleagues should be receptive and supportive to any teacher they see encountering difficulties and to be proactive in offering help or advice. Where such advice might potentially cause any conflict or disquiet, one of the Deputy Heads can be consulted in confidence. All teachers are free to request help with any of their classes at any time – help can range from observing other teachers of the same class, asking a Head of Department or senior member of staff to sit in on a lesson or to requesting further Inset or other training. It is essential that UCS is a school which does not tolerate or condone poor behaviour and poor working habits in the classroom or outside it; this is the common responsibility of the whole community.

#### **Poor Behaviour**

Since the majority of problems with a class arise from intermittent to persistent low level misbehaviour (such as chatting, answering back, inattention), the teacher should always try to identify the causes of such behaviour should it arise and take immediate steps to confront the student or students over any behaviour with which he or she is uncomfortable. Most students, when talked to in a constructive and firm manner, will be cooperative and the ideal resolution to any disciplinary situation is one in which the teacher can establish appropriate codes of behaviour through discussion with the student(s) on a one-to-one basis; in any such situation, the teacher must inform the student's Form Teacher, the Deme Warden or Lower School Warden and the Head of Department that an issue has arisen but that it has been resolved. If the teacher finds a student or group of students unresponsive to demands detailed guidance of procedures

and sanctions can be found in the *Guidelines on Academic Discipline* section of the Staff Handbook.

### Poor Standards of Work

The two main areas of a student's work are: work completed in class and work done outside class. The main area where a student might be a cause for concern is in completing work set for homework. The teacher should set appropriate homework for the time allocated for the class and expect that it will be completed in the time set by the teacher (as long as the time allowed is reasonable). It must also be remembered that clarity and consistency are essential to be maintained by the teacher if a class is to develop effective attitudes to homework; for instance, work should not be set for the sake of merely setting a homework and all homework needs to have a clearly communicated purpose; any learning which is done for a test to be taken during a specific lesson should result in that test taking place in the designated lesson; homework tasks should not implicitly penalise those who have LS needs or work more slowly than others (such might be the situation where a homework is to finish off what was done in class).

Where a student is failing to work effectively or constructively in class, the teacher should, in the first instance, discuss with the student the reasons for their difficulty. Often discussion will reveal that a student has concentration difficulties, finds certain kinds of work challenging, that they are simply unmotivated or that they do not understand what is required of them. The most common way in which such problems manifest themselves is through poor behaviour (and all teachers should be careful when dealing with poor behaviour to assess the underlying reasons for it). It is sometimes the case though that some students find it very difficult to achieve anything during lessons. If a student fails to complete a homework or written task or is manifestly failing to work in a subject a number of options and sanctions are available to help the student to complete work; these are provided in detail in the document *Guidelines on Academic Discipline* which is to be found in the Staff Handbook.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.12 Academic Enrichment, Cross-Curricular Learning & Gifted and Talented**

UCS believes that the formal subject-based curriculum and preparation for public examinations is not the only method of providing an exciting and stimulating educational experience and is committed to ensuring that all students have access to a wide range of enriching activities and opportunities to complement and supplement their classroom learning.

UCS has many activities and opportunities which provide intellectual 'enrichment' and cross-curricular learning for students of all abilities: many departments have clubs or societies for different year-groups which help to foster a love of learning for its own sake and nearly all departments organise trips or visits for those taking their subjects at some point during each year. The school runs one of the most ambitious and wide-ranging arts' festivals of its kind in the country and a huge number of interesting and stimulating speakers visit the school during Festival Week (there are a number of visiting speakers throughout the rest of the year too); the organisers of the Festival attempt to devise a programme which not only tries to challenge students' intellectual horizons but also tries to draw links between disparate subject areas. The school also hosts a Science Week, which devotes a week to different lectures, seminars and demonstrations on a variety of science-based topics. The school dedicates a three period session on a Friday afternoon for an Activities Programme for those in the Sixth Form, during which students can choose from a wide range of activities (some sporting, some cultural, some social and some practical). Cosmos is a programme of Middle School intellectual 'enrichment' which is open to all in a given year-group, is voluntary and takes place in lunch-hours once a week; it is based on the 'Philosophy for Kids' programme. The school also runs a great number of foreign trips each year, from language exchanges to sports and cultural tours.

#### **Gifted and Talented**

It is school policy not to restrict opportunities for enrichment from anyone in the school and we believe that, since we are an academically selective school, all our students have interests, skills and aptitudes which can benefit from further enrichment. A Working Party in 2008-9 concluded that UCS would benefit from further development of cross-curricular opportunities and from better coordination of its enrichment activities; as a result of this a member of staff has been appointed to coordinate enrichment for the school. During 2009-10 the Enrichment coordinator will be reviewing the enrichment provision for years 7-8 and in the sixth form and consider ways in which opportunities for cross-curricular learning can be further developed and better coordinated.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.13 Recruitment, Review & Professional Development**

It is the policy of UCS to recruit intellectually ambitious, technically proficient and imaginative teachers as we believe that the learning of students is best directed, supported and encouraged by dedicated, talented and inspiring teachers. The process of recruitment of teaching staff and relevant support staff is most commonly driven by the needs of individual departments and as such Heads of Department and, along with the three deputies and the Headmaster, are closely involved at all stages. Although there are many criteria for a successful candidate and the school looks to recruit teachers who are able to contribute strongly to the cultural, administrative and sporting life of the school, the primary criterion is always on teaching ability and the specific needs of the relevant department or departments. In assessing teaching ability, the school also seeks to identify outstanding potential as well as current ability, and, depending on the particular needs of a department, might equally recruit experienced teachers as it might newly qualified teachers. As an organisation committed to equal treatment, the school does not see age or experience as a bar to potential recruitment but endeavours to find the best person to fit the specific demands of any given post.

The procedures for training and inducting new staff are flexible but comprehensive (according to the level of experience and position of the new member). The training of all teachers who join the school is supervised by the three deputy heads and a general programme of induction is coordinated by the Vice-Master; it is usual for Heads of Department to take specific responsibility for the induction of new members of their department but this position might equally be shared or delegated to an experienced member of a department. The induction of Heads of Department is overseen by the three deputies. The school follows government guidelines for the training and mentoring of newly-qualified teachers and, when, occasionally, an unqualified teacher is appointed, a specific, tailor-made programme is created for the teacher by the Head of Department and the Vice-Master. It is usual for all new members of staff to be observed by the Head of Department and to share mutual observation or team-teaching with other members of the department. In addition, all new members of staff are reviewed as part of the annual process of review.

From 2009 all members of the teaching staff will be reviewed each year by their head of department. The focus of the review is primarily on 'Teaching and Learning' matters and on professional development. The member of staff completes a form identifying issues to discuss and then meets with the head of department to talk through the year's work, issues related to teaching, progress of students, as well as discussing matters of professional development and the member of staff's wider responsibilities in the school. In addition to this, all members of the teaching staff are expected to undertake mutual lesson observation or team-teaching with another teacher in their department – the main focus here being again an issue related to teaching and learning. All members of the teaching staff are also required to fill in a report on their previous year's teaching and results in early September of each

academic year. All heads of department meet with the Deputy Head (Academic) in the Autumn Term and talk through the departmental reviews, the department's performance in public examinations and other related matters. This meeting also focuses on the professional development of the heads of department. This process of annual review is complemented by a triennial 'Whole-School Review'; this allows a member of staff to be reviewed by a senior member of staff and draws on the annual reviews as well as lesson observation by the senior member of staff and the head of department. Where appropriate, a member of staff can request a 'Whole-School Review' more frequently than every three years.

Although the review process is the most important mechanism through which a member of the teaching or support staff can raise issues regarding professional development and by which their Head of Department can monitor their development and advise the member of their department as to suitable courses or further training, there are many other ways in which professional development is encouraged and supported. The Inset budget is large and all staff are encouraged to identify suitable courses to attend. Although prolonged absence is not encouraged, the school is keen to support staff who wish to continue studying, who wish to take further professional courses or who wish to undertake some kind of training relevant to their existing role or to a possible future role. UCS not only seeks to provide opportunities for all teachers to develop the craft of teaching, it also looks to support teacher development by encouraging teachers to develop their academic, administrative, academic and extra-curricular abilities. UCS also recognises that from time to time teaching or support staff may benefit from additional support in the form of counselling and the part-time counsellor is available for short-term support or can advise on options for longer-term help.

There are three formal school Inset half-days during each school year. The programme includes statutory training requirements as well as opportunities for professional development (according to the priorities identified within the school development plan); these can be proposed by members of SMT or by members of the common room. The Insets also allow opportunities for focusing on a variety of aspects of teaching and learning or as well as on a variety of whole-school issues.

As part of the 2009 Development Plan the school aims to develop more structured ways of encouraging a culture of training and professional development as well as creating a culture of shared pedagogical practice and enquiry. This matter will be researched by a sub-committee of Academic Board during 2010.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.14 ICT for Teaching and Learning**

It is UCS Policy to utilise ICT as effectively and imaginatively as possible in delivering interesting lessons, in developing the learning and skills of all students and in extending the ways in which different types of learners acquire knowledge and understanding.

#### **ICT and Students**

It is school policy to try to equip our students with the ICT skills required to meet the demands of continued study and professional life and to enable students to use ICT to extend and develop the ways in which they learn; we aim to educate students to be confident both in using existing technology and also in acquiring new skills in what is a rapidly evolving area. We try to provide our students with the broadest possible experience of ICT by locating our training of ICT skills within traditional subject areas, so that ICT is seen as a tool rather than as an end in itself. Furthermore, it is our policy to ensure our students are protected from the risks associated with ICT; we promote safe use of the internet and ICT and aim to educate our students about the moral and social implications of ICT usage in our society and other cultures.

#### **ICT and Staff**

The school is committed to developing and extending the uses of ICT in teaching and learning and sees as central to this process the training and development of its teaching and non-teaching staff. The school has recently appointed a member of staff as Director of Digital Strategy for Teaching and Learning. In the first instance, the Director will coordinate the training and development of ICT within academic departments and among the teaching support staff and will provide a bridge between IT Support and the day-to-day use of ICT in the classroom. An ICT Committee has recently been formed, whose members consist of the Deputy Head (Academic), the Director of Digital Strategy for Teaching and Learning, the Technical Services Manager, the SIMS Manager and representatives from the academic and support staff. The Director works with heads of department in determining ICT needs for departments, as well as coordinating the training and development of personnel within departments, either through individual or small group training sessions, or through larger scale internal Insets. ICT budgets are not funded from department budgets but each Head of Department submits their requests for the following academic year during the Spring Term. In 2009-10 much focus will be given towards developing staff and student use of the VLE and on developing a rolling programme of staff training. In addition, we aim to develop better ways of using ICT to enhance communication throughout the UCS community.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.15 The School Library, Information Support & Independent Learning**

The school library plays a vital and dynamic role in fostering a love of wide reading, in supporting the acquisition of academic research skills and in developing more general information literacy. The Head of Library and the Assistant Librarian are full-time and there is a Library Assistant who works term-time only. All students who join the school (at any level) are given a series of introductory sessions in which they are shown how to make best use of the wide variety of resources in the school library. From 2009-10, all Transitus students will have further sessions, during which they will be given more advanced advice on academic research skills. The library now runs a reading scheme for the Entry year which it will develop as that cohort moves through the school; this aims to complement and extend the current 'core reading' scheme, run by the English Department. The library is open from 8am until 5pm and is usually open for one or more weeks of the Easter vacation.

Although there is no official school 'policy' focusing on Independent Learning, it lies at the heart of the school ethos and its aim to create a culture of academic and intellectual excellence. The pastoral and academic structures actively encourage students to take responsibility for their learning; the gradual training of students to exercise choices wisely through conversation, discussion and reflection is founded on the principle of developing independence of mind and action. The PSHE programme forms an integral part of this process and in particular the role of the Form Teacher (where possible) in delivering this. The frequent opportunities for discussion, self-assessment and reflection as a student progresses through the school are designed to underpin the less formalised structures which support independent learning. No less important to the development of high academic aspirations is the role of teachers in providing effective role models and the commitment of the school to encouraging further study and professional development plays a subtle part in the process of maintaining and developing an academic and intellectual culture.

## **Section B: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Academic Progress; Assessment & Reporting**

### **B.16 Higher Education and Careers**

It is UCS policy to provide an effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. In accordance with these aims the school aims to ensure that support and advice is provided both at key moments of decision-making in a student's time at UCS and throughout their time in the school. As nearly all our students will go on to higher education, the principal focus of advice and support is geared towards preparation for higher education, however, we endeavour also to offer suitable advice and support for post-A Level careers which may not involve attending higher education. The emphasis of our advice and support is on encouraging our students to make effective and productive choices which balance short-term interests with long-term possibilities.

The Head of Careers and an Assistant Head of Careers oversee careers guidance and they work closely with the Senior Tutors and the PSHE Coordinator in preparing students for higher education and beyond. Preparation for this begins in the Lower School, where the initial discussion of careers and higher education is delivered through the PSHE programme, and it is during the Middle School that the formal careers programme begins. The school encourages all students to seek some form of work-experience, in the Lower Remove and particularly in the Transitus (mainly in the summer vacation between the Transitus and Sixth Form years). In the Upper Remove, the Morrisby assessment tests form the basis for a series of interviews which are aimed at complementing the advice of Form Tutors, Deme Wardens and subject teachers in helping students make suitable subject choices for A Level. The school also seeks to ensure that parents become actively involved in the preparation of students for life after UCS.

The preparation of the students in the Sixth Form for higher education forms a key part of the T7 Programme and this is coordinated by the Senior Tutors, with the help of the relevant Form Tutors. The process of university application is supervised by the Senior Tutors and they ensure that all relevant staff are involved in preparing students with UCAS applications, for university entrance and aptitude tests and with specialist Oxbridge and Extension Classes. The specific preparation of students for Oxbridge and for applications to particularly competitive courses at university is coordinated by individual heads of department, with the Senior Tutors assisting in subject areas not covered by UCS academic departments.